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Winter India/Chapter 18

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CHAPTER XVIII

LAHORE



VEN the Delhi bullocks were blanketed the day we left for Lahore and the farther, colder Northwest. We had bought more and more razais as we went up-country, until the *bichauna*, or rolls of traveling bedding, would barely pass through a car door, and, finally, yards of heavy pashmina cloth to wind around us in makeshift Indian fashion. The memorial Mutiny cross, standing high on the Ridge, was the last seen of Delhi; and there followed a few wayside stations with shivering platform groups, an uninteresting sunset over a dusty, barren plain; dinner at Saharanpur, and merciful darkness, while we jolted on until five o'clock in the morning.

It was dark night when we were whirled through Lahore's frosty streets, to find warm rooms with real coal fires in open grates. We reappeared with the latest British breakfasters at the long table d'hôte, and in the city of his youth we found a whole table full of Kipling characters—English army people and civil servants. We could almost call them all by name, and life at that hotel was a continuous dramatization of stories known by heart. What a company they were! And how they denied their maker, or portrait-painter, when we said Kipling to them! There was the major's wife, fat, brune, and long past forty, wrinkles drawn in lines of pearl powder around her eyes and under her chin. She wore a youthful sailor-hat, a frizzed front, and a Bath bun, and had all the kittenish ways of sweet sixteen. Her most devoted cavalier, in a cloud of attentive subalterns, was a callow blond, young enough to be her grandson; and if there had been no one else in the hotel, we should have had entertainment enough in the kitten-play of this elderly charmer. When not making eyes and simpering at her courtiers, she queened it over the "leftenants'" and captains' wives, and was inclined to snub a commissioner's daughter. She looked us over critically through a lorgnette, just as we had stared at the tigers and chetahs at the Zoo, and put to us those direct British questions that the rural Yankee cannot match. Having disclosed our relationships, our nationality, our past and future itinerary, and explained the other tourists as far as we knew them, we reversed the situation in Li Hung Chang fashion, and interviewed the interviewer. It always touches the sensitive nerve and

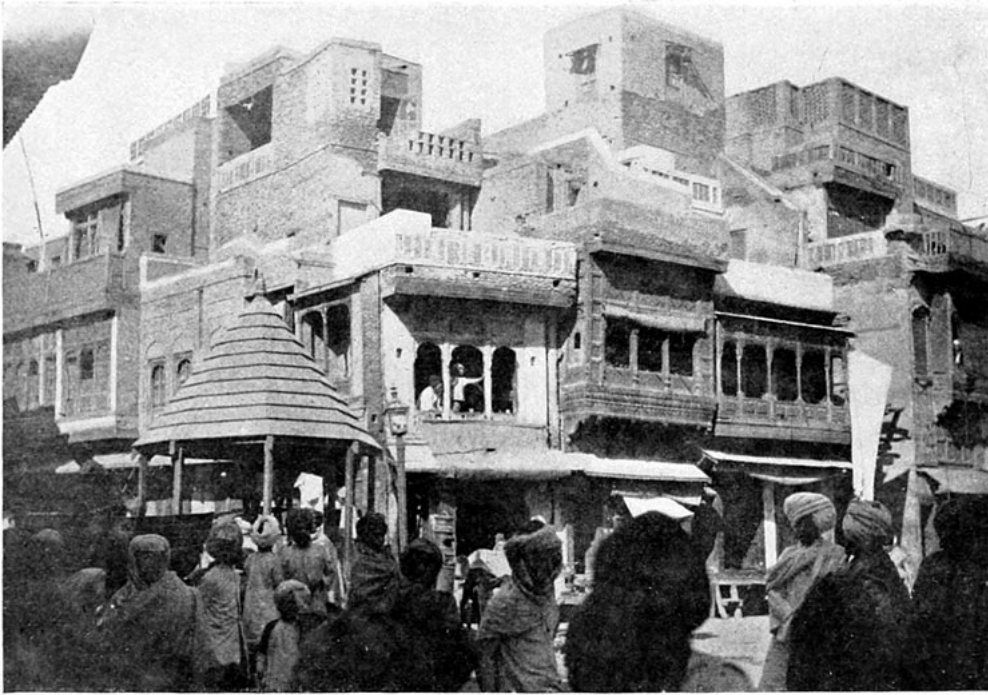
presses the button of Anglo-Indian loquacity to mention Kipling, and away went the major's lady like a steeplechaser when we said that Lahore only meant Kipling to us. "No one in India reads Kipling," she said impressively. "We do not esteem him at all. He does not tell the truth about anything. Why, he was a very common, low sort of person here. He only associated with the 'Tommys,' as you see by his books—all full of things about the sergeants' and the soldiers' wives and their class. Of course, as he never associated with ladies, or went with the nice chaps of the regiments, how could he know anything about society, about Government House, or the Simla sets? Why, in that ridiculous story—" and she told me in detail how he had it all wrong about the Gadsbys, the Hauksbees, and others; for she knew some people who were in Simla that year, and it was this way, etc., etc. In fact, all those ancient and historic scandals were degrees worse than Kipling makes them out; for the Anglo-Indians allow no imagination to the novelist, every tale must be identified with some real event in their own experience. As to whether Kipling truly delineated native character—"Dear me, how should I know anything about the nasty creatures! As if we paid any attention to them! Government has schools and does altogether too much for them, anyhow." And then the memsahib, who of course did not speak Hindustani, who never came in contact with native women of any but the servant class, and who fitted exactly into the situation that Mrs. Steele upbraids, denounced that champion of the native people. It was quite like the Creoles of New Orleans and Mr. Cable; but having heard Macaulay berated, Max Müller scoffed at, and Sir William Hunter denounced, it was taken with many grains of salt.

More interesting than anything inside the Lahore Museum is the fine old bronze cannon before its door—the Sikhs cherished Zamzamah, a national trophy glorified to them by history and legend, and immortalized to all English-speaking people as the gun bestrode by Kim the Rishti, when the Lama first appeared to him. The rich collections in the "wonder-house" were assembled and arranged by the elder Kipling, the white-bearded curator whom the Lama met there. Its unique treasures are the Greco-Buddhist sculptures which General Cunningham found on the site of the ancient Gandhara (modern Peshawar), capital of the Scythian empire when Buddhism was the state religion—majestic statues of Gautama as priest and prince, and bas-reliefs as exquisite as the Alexander sarcophagus. The arts of later India are well shown, and fine old carved and inlaid doors, panels, balconies, window latticings, and house-fronts serve as models for the students of the art school which J. L. Kipling founded and directed to such successful degree before he left India. Copies of these old carvings are sold at prices that torment the American, who, after paying their cost and transportation, nearly must pay for them over again at his home custom-house, in order to protect steam furniture-factories. Silver, brass- and copper-work, lacquers, potteries, textiles, and embroideries from the Panjab are gathered there, and the model of the Koh-i-nur has pathetic interest in Lahore, its last home. In January the stone walls and stone floors of the museum create an ice-edged atmosphere more benumbing than the death-dealing chill of the Lateran galleries in Rome, and one soon flees from it.

The tomb of Anarkali, given first place in the guide-book, and warranted the most interesting thing in Lahore, drew us to the domed white building, in turn occupied

as the English civilian church and as local offices. Anarkali, pretty "Pomegranate Blossom," was one of Akbar's wives, and, being seen to smile when Akbar's son, Jahangir, entered the harem, was buried alive. Akbar held the trial after the execution, and must have had a very bad conscience, judging from the beauty of the little mausoleum and the white marble sarcophagus, covered every inch with the finest ornament and lettering in relief. It is a thing to be kept under glass and shown as the chief treasure of a museum; but British officialdom has shoved it aside, out from under the center of its dome, to an alcove where we pursued it around desks and braziers and wooden chairs, a babu in woolen neck-comforter obligingly lifting a heap of papers that we might see all the sculptured surface. Throughout Lahore splendid Moslem tombs were turned to practical use after British occupation. Even Government House was adapted from the tomb of Akbar's cousin, with additions to meet later requirements. When such desecration began, the angry Mohammedans foretold death within a year to all such vandals, and when any prophet's reputation was at stake he took care that poison, as a last resort, should verify his forecast. The Bengali babus perched on high stools around the mausoleum were amused at our indignant comments. Nothing could please them more than any affronts to Mohammedan prejudices or sensibilities, and the hatred between the men of the two religions is something one slowly realizes. The Mohammedan despises the Hindu and his sacred cow, and loves to kill and eat the peacock, while, in return, the Hindu delights in defiling Mohammedan precincts with the loathed dog and pig; and in Lahore the Sikhs are against both religions and have long scores to settle. In "On the City Walls," Kipling shows the turmoil accompanying any religious festival. The Mohammedan deeply hates the babu, but until the recent establishment of the Aligarh College had made no effort to put forward Mohammedan youth as rival to the glib Bengali in preparing for public service.

The street crowds of Lahore were more picturesque even than those of Delhi. A different type of man had appeared overnight, or rather the occasional whiskered giants seen on the Chandni Chauk were here universal—more beard, more turban, yards and yards more cloth in the baggy trousers and shoulder shawls. The long coats of the Persians, the flaring, crossed Chinese coat of Turkestan and Tibet appeared, and there were stray Afghans, too, picturesque and ferocious giants, wearing peaked turbans, sheepskin coats, and striped shoulder shawls. When we had left the orderly civil lines and had gone through the city gates, we entered the land of the Arabian Nights, more of color, incident, and picturesqueness to be seen in the bazaars of Lahore than anywhere else in India. Queer, ramshackle houses towered along the narrow streets, some frescoed in colors, their fronts broken by balconies, loggias, bay-windows, and latticings of dark, carved



THE ROOFS AND BALCONIES OF LAHORE

wood, with flat roofs and parapets at every elevation—roofs that Kim ran over, roofs where the women gasped in "The City of Dreadful Night"; for, although Lahore is so far north, it is one of the hottest places in summer,—Meean Mir cantonment the acknowledged "oven of India," where epidemics always rage their worst.

All Lahore was muffled and bundled in cotton clothes and brilliant chuddas, and all sought the sun that crisp, frosty morning, until the streets held a living, moving rainbow mass and every shop-front seemed set for color effect. Women in gay head-sheets and children in satin jackets sunned themselves in window-frames of dark-brown fretted woodwork; and Mohammedan women in white cloaks falling full from round crown-pieces, with latticed holes for the eyes, wandered in the brilliant company, giving it still more the air of a fancy-dress ball. The carnival crowds, moving against such fantastic background, made one listen for slow music to accompany this stately spectacular march. It seemed as though the Lahore bazaars were but painted wings, drops, and flies, the crowds one well-drilled theatrical troupe—a continuous performance kept up for our benefit. All the industries were picturesque, every shop decorative, and we stood fascinated, to watch the baker reaching down into the deep mud oven with a hooked wire and bringing out pancake loaves of bread; the dyer stirring his vats, wringing out lengths of cloth and festooning them over the front of his shop; the printer, next door, stamping block patterns on turban ends, and the Kashmiri men and boys, cross-legged in alcoves, embroidering gold turban ends or fine shawl borders. One Kashmiri in purple satin jacket and a yellow turban worked with gold wire, while a small boy in a sleeveless red jacket and a woman in a head-sheet of vivid pink looked on. Heaps of oranges and pale bananas, red Kashmiri apples, and green Kabul grapes made set color studies on every fruit-stand. The dried-sweetmeat shops were as rich in combinations of browns and tawny orange, and the curry-shops were as satisfying with their strands of red peppers and baskets of red, white, yellow, brown, and greenish meal. Candy-sellers crouched in the open with

trays of sticky sweets, beseeching us to keep our shadows away. Having thus defiled a tray of *gujack*, we bought it and found many idlers willing to eat the defiled sesame brittle, made of sesame seeds, sorghum syrup, seedless raisins, almond meal, and crescents of thin cocoanut strips, the rich "fudge" rolled out in a thin pancake over a foot in diameter. Silk-shops, brass- and pottery-shops, gem-cutters' and shoemakers' dens, were all decorative and interesting. The tea-shops, with steaming samovars, were significant of the dreaded Russian advance and influence. The red beans of New England and pop-corn had a familiar look even in such strange environment.

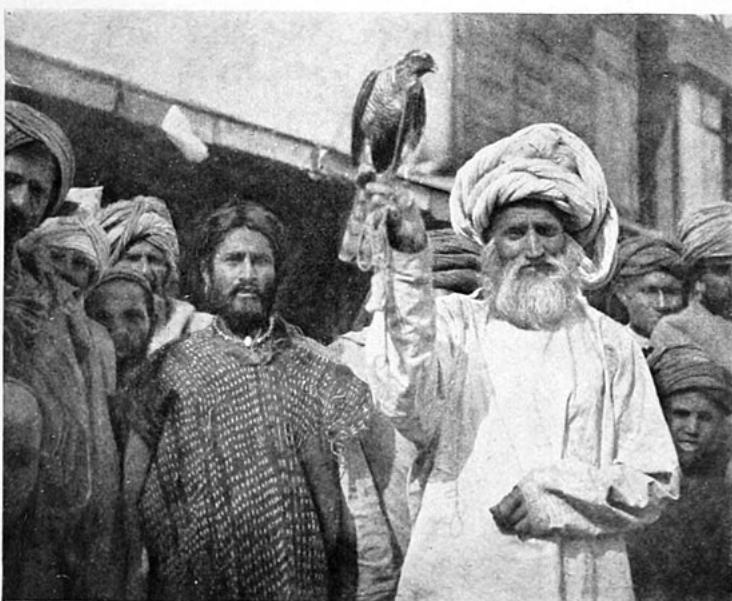
After a revel in this living picturesqueness we went ruefully back to conventional sight-seeing and did the Jama Masjid, with its superb inlaid arches, and saw the relics of the Prophet. We saw Runjeet Singh's tomb, its carved doors and gay mirror and plaster interior, where Sikh priests shouted from the sacred books, waved peacock feathers, and threw jasmine garlands over us. We saw also Akbar's fort and palace—tawdry and flat after the splendors of Delhi; our fancy arrested by the inlaid hall known as the Naulahka, name also of a quarter of the outer city of Lahore. When the Sikhs captured Lahore they wreaked themselves on these halls of Jahangir and Shah Jahan, and the British barrack-builder has done the rest. The Scotch corporal who showed us through dwelt mostly on some finely damascened and grained guns, chain-mail, swords, and Sikh knives in the armory. In one pavilion the fantastic mirror and plaster walls were crying aloud at some hideous European carpets and furniture—the rankest of "Tottenham Court Road furniture." Small wonder that the Viceroy exhorted the Indian princes to patronize their own craftsmen when it came to palace furnishings. This pavilion commands a fine view out over the parapet of the city wall to the park below, with the blue windings of the Ravi beyond distant trees; but the best-remembered palace sight was a Sikh sergeant's wife, who was a walking jewel-show, covered from crown to ringed toe with such an array of ornaments as one might expect an emperor's favorite to wear. We expressed our thanks for the pleasure of seeing her, to the amusement of the Scot and the pride of the Sikh proprietor of the jeweled jade.

After a hasty tiffin with the Kipling crowd, who were full bent on the regimental tea and polo-match of the afternoon, we took a hastier look at the unusual animals of the "lion and tiger museum," where the most remarkable sight was a monkey holding a looking-glass that it might see to pick its teeth and prick its throat with a dangerous-looking darning-needle. We hastened back to the native city, and from the time we left the "Europe shops" and the avenue of trees with shabby tram-cars jingling by and penetrated the city gate, we moved in an ideal East, an Arabian Nights' revel of Mohammedan picturesqueness. The half-mile bazaar between Vazir Khan's and the Golden Mosque is the heart of Lahore, all the people and trades of the Panjab being exhibited there. In that narrow lane between the balconied houses, where every window flaunted some flaming turban or shawl, and each alcove shop was set for theatrical effect and overflowed to the street, there moved the same brilliantly costumed company of the morning. All picturesqueness and color centered in greatest intensity at the gateway of the Vazir Khan Mosque, single figures and groups in tableaux tempting the kodak, until we feared we should have no more film left after Lahore. Before that glorious portal, its facade a dream of soft old Persian tiles, there congregated barbers, beggars, peddlers, money-changers, letter-writers, and smithies, prostrate bullocks, venders of fat-tailed sheep, donkeys loaded with vegetables, hawkers,

idlers, and busy people of every kind. "Remove thy heart from the gardens of the world, and know that this building is the true abode of man," is written in slender letters on the blue and green Persian tiles of the mosque front; and



SCHOOL-BOYS IN THE VAZIR KHAN MOSQUE, LAHORE.



AFGHAN FALCONER, PESHAWAR.

SCHOOL-BOYS IN THE VAZIR KHAN MOSQUE,
LAHORE

AFGHAN FALCONER, PESHAWAR

a legion of beggars have taken the Vazir at his word, lounging on the steps and in sunny corners all day, and sleeping at night in the quiet court overlooked by two minarets. Professional menders sit patching rags as though waiting for kodaks to come that way, and a balcony off the cloister overlooks the busy street, exactly as an opera-box commands less spectacular effects.

There was a sound like the chirp of many birds, and a school-teacher led three hundred small boys into the court. Each youngster put his books, coat, shoes, and turban-cloth in a heap, and knelt by the tank to bathe hands and feet before

prayer. The teacher patrolled the lines with a stick, trouncing a laggard here and thrashing a boy there into the line and order of piety. When the unruly and restless flock were purified, a leader among them gave a call, and all filed in under the arches and prostrated themselves on the inlaid floor, facing westward to Mecca. One small turban explained to us that they came there every day to "pray to God," and the pious scamp showed me on the last leaf of his school-book: "In the name of God, the Most Merciful, this is my book. The property of Hassan Khan. Do not steal."

When we had seen the three gilded bubble domes of the Golden Mosque reflected in the tank of its white court, and the Hindus going through their purification rites at the temple by the bo-tree, the bearer was for carrying us back through the Delhi Gate to the silver-shops and Europe shops and the shops for Kashmir work and Bokhara silks, to hunt for green slippers with seed-pearl toes, for Peshawar shoes woven of strips of leather on models used by Alexander the Great's shoemaker—to hunt for Yarkand jade and Ladak turquoises, but our interest in such shops was gone. "Drive back," we said; and, repassing the mosque, we threaded again all those brilliant bazaars, were blocked in a narrow lane by a funeral, and came out finally on a common by the fort, where men and boys were flying kites. A crowd was jeering and cheering the fliers, and one bearded parent soundly boxed his son's ears when he bungled in launching his paper shield. "Drive back," and we worked slowly again to the Delhi Gate, where the crowds had even increased. Once more we threaded the brilliant labyrinth and saw the kite-fliers reel in their chargers. A spectacular sunset fired the sky, and when for the fifth time we traversed the narrow lanes, they were lanes of twinkling enchantment, every window and alcove carrying its kerosene-lamp and torches flaring by the Vazir Khan. The frosty air was laden with the bazaar's mixed smell of raw sugar, incense, spices, grease, and wood smoke, and only a dinner-company of Kipling's own could have drawn us away.

It was almost a surprise the next morning to find the streets, the shops, the crowds, the tiled front of the mosque all there, to find Lahore bazaars solid realities, and not dreams. We saw Shalimar Gardens, the triple-terraced home of the nightingale, once an imperial pleasure-ground, arranged like one seen in dreams, but now a rather dusty, dreary place of formal flower-beds, fountains, marble cascades, and canals, that becomes a palace garden of enchantment when illuminated for viceregal functions. More interesting was the drive to the Ravi and across a bridge of boats, where the passage of bullock-carts and trains of donkeys was regulated by the bridge-keeper's drum-beats. We found Jahangir's tomb deep down in a square marble terrace in another formal garden, where orange-trees hung full of fruit and flower-beds were masses of bloom. This son of Akbar, the reputed Christian, who at least wore a rosary and was so bad a Moslem that he drank to inebriety, spent his summers in the Vale of Kashmir with his clever Persian wife, Nur Jahan,—Nur Mahal, the Harem's Pride, told of in "Lalla Rookh," and who seems a very real personage. He is laid away in an octagonal chamber deep down in a solid square terrace, in such a cenotaph as rivals that of Anarkali. Instead of white relief carving, Jahangir's sarcophagus is inlaid, quite the most beautiful piece of pietra dura that I had seen. Flowers and arabesques are inlaid

with large pieces of amethyst, lapis, jade, and carnelian, and the ninety-nine names of Allah in fine black marble letters surround the sarcophagus. Runjeet Singh despoiled the tomb of its upper pavilions and marble pavement, but the British have repaved and restored the terrace—and viceregal tea-tables are now spread directly over the body of Jahangir, and all is as gay as when he made it a feast-place before his death.

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