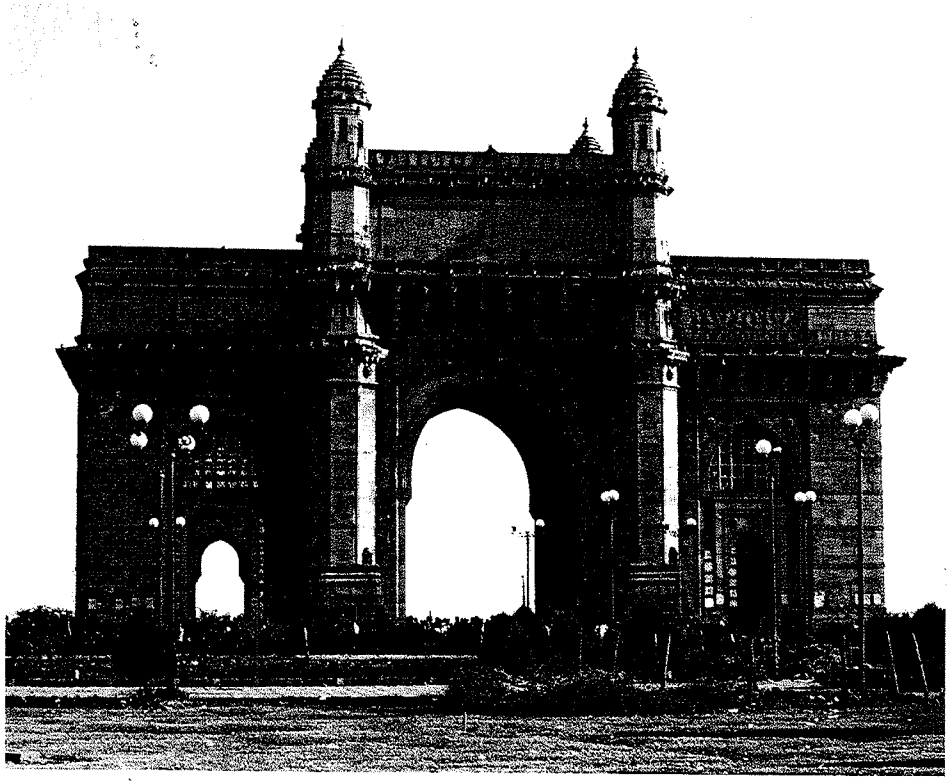
As the 1st Battalion of the Somerset Light Infantry marched through the streets on the morning of 28th February 1948 thousands packed the roads leading to the quayside, many an eye dimmed with tears. Spontaneous cheers of 'England Zindabad' and 'Jai England' greeted the troops as hundreds reached out to pat 'the boys' goodbye. 'I would think today of the finest act in the long and historic connection between the United Kingdom and India – the grant of freedom to our country, an act of courage and vision which will stand the test of time ... I wish you well, my friends, it is my earnest hope that friendly relations will continue to exist between Great Britain and India and that the two countries will play their part in the preservation of the peace of the world, which is so essential for the welfare and progress of mankind. Godspeed and every good wish for the future.' As the Governor's words faded there was a rush after the men as they embarked on the launches, farewells echoing across the water until they were far out to sea, and as the ships steamed from the bay the strains of 'Auld Lang Syne' floated from the quayside and out into the Arabian Sea.

The Gateway of India. Modelled on the Gujarati architecture of the 16th century and built to commemorate the visit of George V and Queen Mary in 1911.



Davies. Splendours of the Raj.

CHAPTER 8

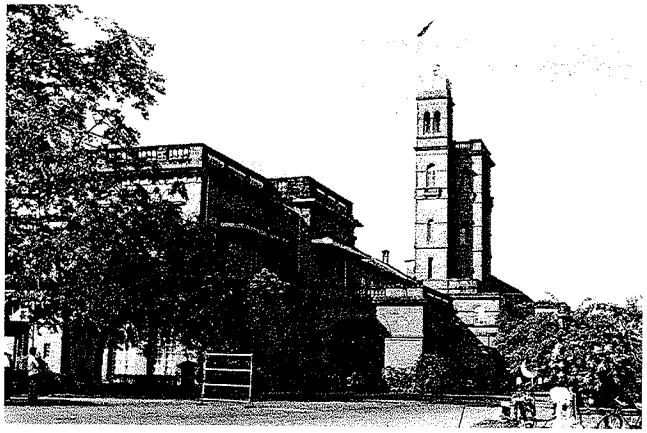
SARACENIC DREAMS

High on the table-land of the Deccan plateau, 120 miles east of Bombay, lies Poona. Once it was the capital of the fierce Maratha Confederacy which dominated Western India for over one hundred years until its final defeat by the British at Kirkee in 1817. With the establishment of British paramountcy it was transformed into a major military cantonment and hot-weather resort for Bombay. Even with the growth of the hill station of Mahabaleshwar, Poona retained its popularity and acquired a social cachet of international renown.

As a satellite of the greatest commercial city in India, it is no surprise to discover buildings of a similar form and style to those in Bombay. Christ Church, Kirkee was designed by Paris and Molecey, assistant architects to the Bombay Ramparts Removal Committee, after earlier designs by an amateur archaeologist and clergyman called Gell, ran into severe problems. It is an unpretentious affair which would go largely unnoticed in an English village, other than that its western face is protected from the monsoon by a cavernous wooden verandah. A far more eloquent essay in the tropical Gothic style is the Poona Law Courts, designed by Major G. J. Melliss, the local executive engineer, a vigorous and disciplined composition on which F. W. Stevens worked as assistant engineer, although it is pure, unregenerated Gothic and betrays none of the Indo-Saracenic nuances which were to develop so spectacularly in Stevens's later works in Bombay. Other prominent public buildings are consanguineous expressions of Bombay architecture – the Poona Engineering College, the Sassoon Hospital (by Wilkins and Melliss) and, in Eastern Kirkee, the Deccan College, an august institution founded by the first Parsee baronet, Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, well executed in grey trap-stone.

However, the ambience of the town was set when Sir Bartle Frere decided to vacate the old government house at Dapuri, and to build a new edifice at Poona, or more precisely near a pass or 'Khind' dedicated to the elephant-god Ganesh, which gave the house its name: Ganesh Khind. Located just outside the city the house is approached through dense dry thicket. It was designed by James Trubshawe.

Architecturally it is most unusual, defying any obvious classification, but its spiritual antecedents are Italianate and the tall, eighty-foot high flag tower has been described accurately as a 'Victorian rendering of an Italian campanile'. Like the Lawrence Asylum at Ootacamund, the building is inspired by Prince Albert's ambitious Osborne House on the Isle of Wight, the progenitor of many Anglo-Indian Italianate compositions. It is crowned by a brightly painted open metal cupola carrying a flagstaff, but in fact the tower only



Government House, Ganesh Khind, Poona.

provides elegant accommodation for the water tanks. The building is a rambling affair lacking in cohesion, executed in grey stone with pink granite dressings, but the garden frontage is a sheer delight for the loggia opens out into a *cortile*, or recessed courtyard, with a marble pavement, providing a cool retreat large enough for formal entertainment. Quite why the Italian concept of the cortile should not have been taken up more widely in India remains a mystery, as it provides an ideal solution to the problem of climate and a charming variation from the ubiquitous peripheral verandah. Internally the principal rooms are the drawing room, complete with minstrels' gallery, and the ballroom with a clerestory at first-floor level lighting the bedroom passage behind it. Today the whole complex houses Poona University, an ideal use for the building. Contemplative students rather than dyspeptic majors and ADCs stroll past the stone medallions of former Governors, but the gardens replete with canna lilies, palms and bougainvillaea are as brilliant and colourful as ever.

Ganesh Khind was influential, at least in Poona, for it set an architectural as well as social fashion. As its popularity as a resort grew, the rich Parsee magnates built their country retreats in Poona, and the finest was closely modelled on Ganesh Khind. Garden Reach was commenced in 1862 by Colonel St Clair Wilkins for the Parsee, Mr Rustamjee Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, but he lost a fortune in the cotton boom, and it was completed for the Jew, Sir Albert Sassoon. The two houses are fruits of the same architectural inspiration. Garden Reach has a high flagstaff tower carrying water tanks surmounted by a similar open metal cupola, and the drawing room ceiling, executed by local hands, is an imitation of that in the ballroom of Ganesh Khind. The finishings to Garden Reach are a testimony to the opulence of Poona society. The rooms are floored with Carrara and Chinese marble and the dining room is connected to the main house by a long, open gallery with verandahs either side. Beside it lies an open room with carved wooden sides where the Sassoon family celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles. The

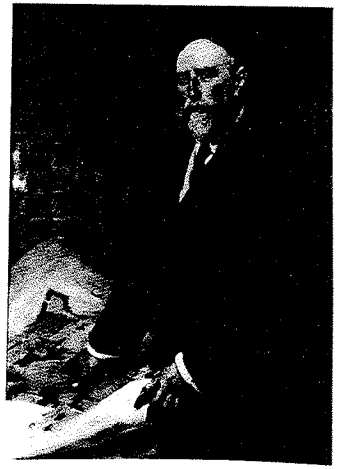
interior is furnished sumptuously with a stained glass window carrying the arms of Rustamjee Jeejeebhoy, marble copies of the best Italian statuary and a bust of Garibaldi, the hero of the day. The gardens, washed by the river Mula, are enclosed by a high wall. Elaborate English cast-iron railings of a Regency Gothick pattern mark the road frontage, all overlaid with cascades of brilliantly-coloured foliage. Today the house belongs to the Readymoney family, but the days when Poona was on the social map of the world have passed. Over the river the Aga Khan's former mansion is known now more widely as the spot where once Gandhi was kept under house arrest.

'If used with freedom and taste, no style might be better adapted for Indian use than Gothic; but in order to apply it there ... various changes in arrangement must be made which unfortunately the purist can not tolerate', wrote James Fergusson in 1862. He considered 'the most correct Gothic building yet erected in India is the College at Benares, designed by the late Captain [afterwards Major) Markham Kittoe.' Kittoe was not educated as an architect, but he was an enthusiast who devoted much of his life to architectural study. He was an urbane, artistic individual, not averse to personal gestures; it was he who donated the font to St Paul's Cathedral, Calcutta. Queen's College, Benares was built between 1847 and 1852 and it is one of the earliest secular public buildings in the 'correct' Gothic style in India. Designed in a Perpendicular manner in Chunar stone it has a lofty central tower with corner towers joined by open arcades. It is an unusual building with all the vigorous assumptions of a prototype. Fergusson complained that Kittoe 'had not sufficient command of the details of the style to adapt them to the new circumstances, and his college is from this cause a failure, both as an artistic design and as a utilitarian building.' As a result of this lack of refinement it has been altered subsequently.

If Kittoe's early exercise in secular Gothic was a poorly digested piece of historicism, elsewhere a whole series of buildings were raised which took tropical Gothic architecture beyond its European antecedents and infused its forms and massing with Indo-Saracenic motifs and elements, in the same way that pure Gothic architecture was being adapted in Bombay by a process of hybridisation.

William Emerson, future President of the Royal Institute of British Architects, was active in Allahabad in the 1870s following the success of the Crawford Market buildings in Bombay. It was he who designed the Cathedral and Muir College, and also, I suspect, had a major influence in the design of two other public buildings which exude those French Gothic details so beloved of Burges and his pupil. The Thornhill and Mayne Memorial stands on the edge of Alfred Park, where, in 1858, Queen Victoria's proclamation announcing the transfer of the government of India from the East India Company to the Crown was read by Lord Canning. In 1906 a vast memorial statue of Victoria by George Wade was raised over the spot. This was removed in 1957 and its Italian limestone canopy now stands looking rather forlorn, bereft of a centrepiece.

Cuthbert Bensey Thornhill and Francis Otway Mayne were close

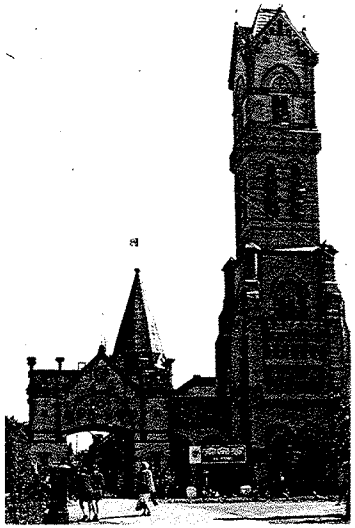


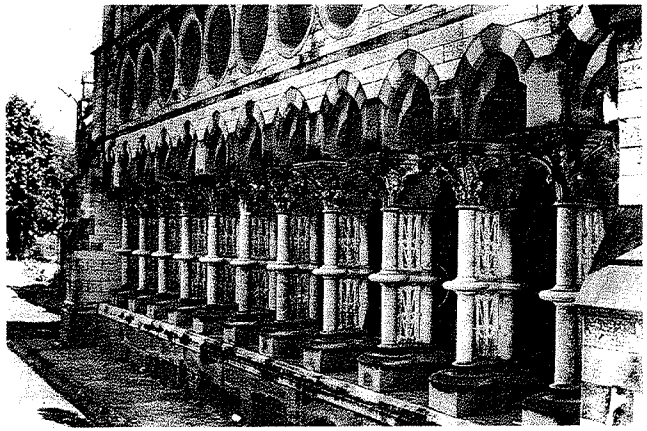
Sir William Emerson by Sir James Jebusa Shannon, RA, with the plans of the Victoria Memorial, Calcutta.

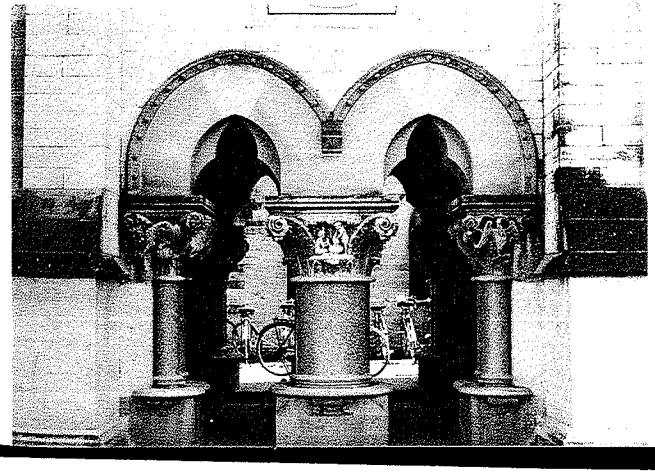
friends in the Bengal Civil Service. Thornhill died at sea in 1868 and lies buried in Aden. Mayne died four years later in Allahabad. Two stained glass windows in their memory can be seen in St John's Church, Naini Tal, one of the most invigorating hill stations in India, but their real memorial is the public library, museum and reading rooms which they endowed in the city which they served so well. The building was completed in 1878, a wonderfully accomplished piece of French Gothic designed by Roskell Bayne of Calcutta, but it has such a distinctive Burgesian touch that Emerson may well have been involved in some capacity. Faced in a creamy sandstone from Shankergarh, enriched with red stone dressings, it is designed as three loosely connected parts – a substantial *porte-cochère* over which rises a low octagonal spire, a massive central tower, and a separate reading room flanked by an arcaded Gothic cloister. The cloister acts as a verandah and is carried on slender paired stone columns linked by curious pierced cast-iron panels. The circular openings over the arcade are filled with pierced stonework, whilst the main reading room is lit by four gabled bays which each contain pairs of narrow lancet windows beneath rose windows. However, the *coup de finesse* is the tower, which has strongly modelled lower stages, crowning gabled bargeboards to each face and small paired arches at the base, each divided by a massive squat foliated column taken straight from Burges. It is the most inventive piece of Victorian Gothic architecture in the city – robust, disciplined, innovative and well-adapted to the climate, apt attributes for a memorial dedicated to two enlightened public servants.

The Mayo Memorial Hall nearby was completed in 1879 for public meetings, balls and receptions in commemoration of the assassinated Viceroy. It is an extraordinary pile with a tower over 180 feet high taken directly from the Thornhill and Mayne Memorial, to which it is so closely related, but it is a much less disciplined composition and it approaches the ham-fisted in its detailing, particularly around the corona to the tower. The main hall is far less inspiring than its prototype, a shallow semi-circular vault with half-hearted crocketed corner finials. Bayne was responsible for this as well, but it shows none of the mastery of the Gothic canons which is evident on the Thornhill and Mayne Memorial. Indeed when it was opened by Lord Lytton he remarked that the building was not the ideal of aesthetic beauty. 'It has', said his Lordship, 'certain incongruous peculiarities', and its general effect is hardly one of repose, although he was slightly less acerbic about the interior which he thought 'thoroughly comfortable and practicable'. The singular disparity between the quality of the two buildings, which were being built concurrently, does suggest that Emerson may have been involved in Thornhill and Mayne and we know he was in Allahabad at the time.

Emerson has been called a 'licentious eclectic' in his later work, a pejorative reference to his free combination of tropical Gothic and Saracenic styles of which the Muir College in Allahabad is a splendid example, yet he was the first to admit it: 'Indeed are not many of the most lovely flowers and plants hybrids, and has not the intermingling of different families of the human race produced some of the noblest







Thornhill and Mayne Memorial, Allahabad, by Roskell Bayne. (Above left)*: View.* (Above right)*: the tower and* porte-cochère. (Left)*: the arcaded Gothic cloister with cast-iron panels between stone shafts.* (Below)*: the massive squat column at the base of the tower and vigorous carved capitals are typical Burgesian details.*

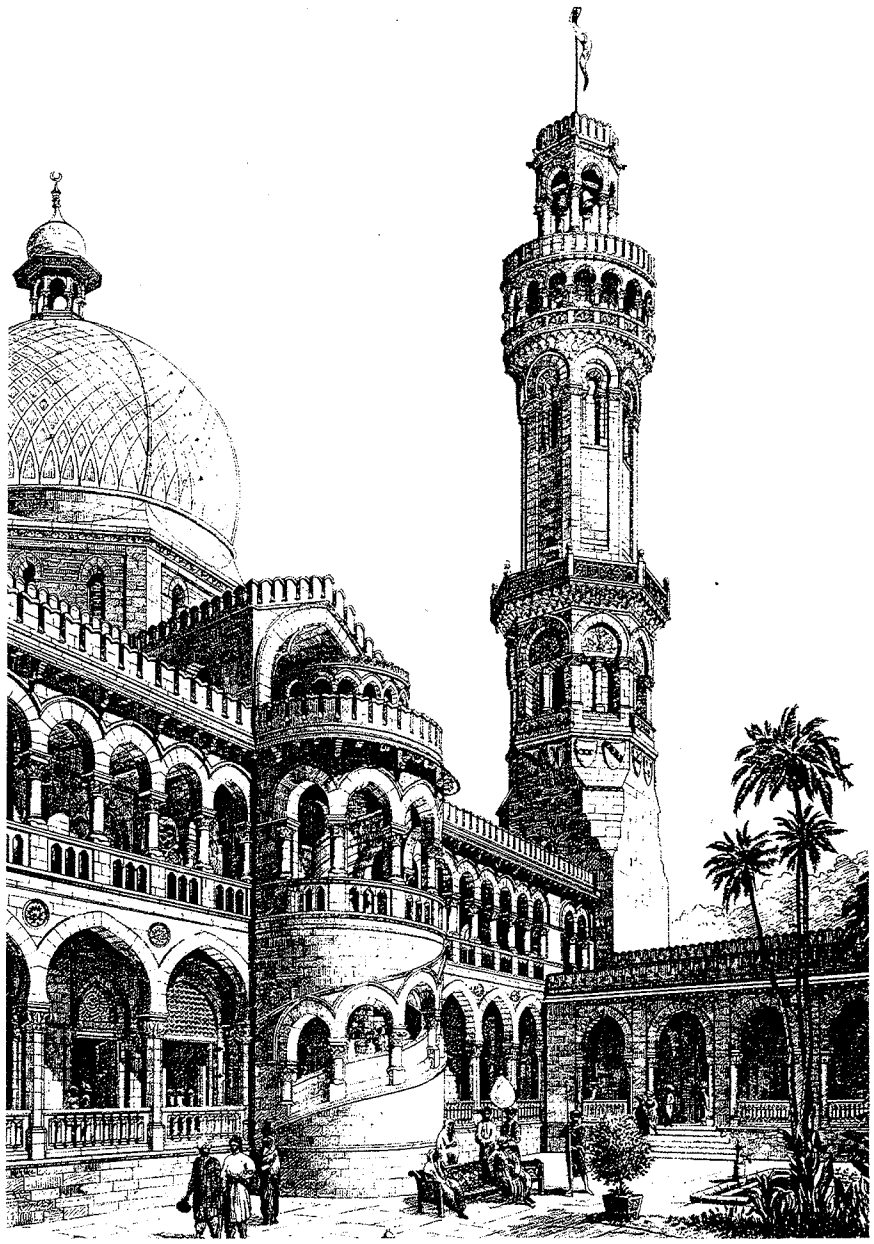
types of men?' And he did it all so well that the romantic conception always overcomes the vulgarity inherent in its expression. To Emerson exuberance was the guiding light and when, in the course of designing the Muir College, he discovered that there were no minarets in Indian Muslim architecture, he went Egyptian.

> I determined not to follow too closely Indian art, but to avail myself of an Egyptian phase of Moslem architecture and work it up with the Saracenic style of Beejapore and the North West, combining the whole in a Western Gothic design. The beautiful lines of the Taj Mahal influenced me in my dome over the hall, and the Indian four centred arch suggested itself as convenient for my purpose, as well as working well with the general Gothic feeling. The details show how the Gothic tracery is blended with the Cairean Moucharabyeh wood-work; Gothic shafts and caps are united with Indian arches; and the domes stand on Gothicised Mohammedan pendentives and semi-circular arches; the open staircase is also a Gothic feature.

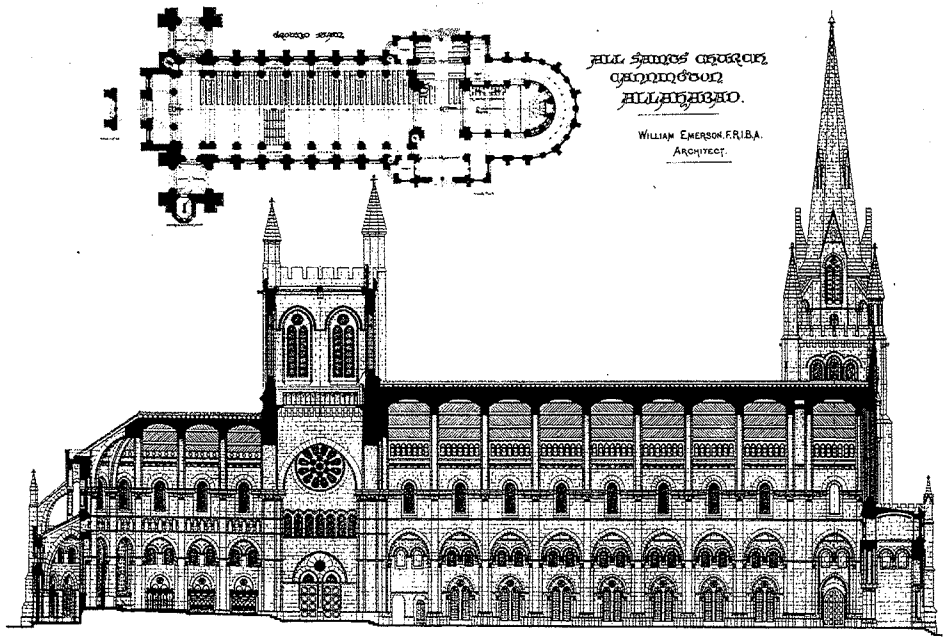
The college is dominated by the 200-foot-high minaret tower. With its emphasis on silhouette, romantic massing of the skyline and soaring vertical lines, the building illustrates Burges's influence on Emerson's designs. The whole composition is finished in cream-coloured sandstone from Mirzapur, with marble and mosaic floors. The domes are clad in Multan glazed tiles. The college forms a quadrangle comprising the convocation hall, lecture rooms, library and professors' room linked by arcaded verandahs which break into traceried Gothic at the base of the tower. It is a wonderfully romantic and evocative image of the East as it ought to be, and when illustrated in *The Architect* for 1873 it was depicted with an idealised foreground, all the multitudes of India brought together in easy harmony outside the new repository of learning.

Emerson's ambitious exercises in architectural miscegenation continued at Bhavanagar where he designed the Takhtsingi Hospital between 1879 and1883 and a vast new palace for the Maharajah between 1894 and 1895. The hospital is clothed in a loose admixture of Hindu and Saracenic motifs, but these fail to disguise a classical conception in the Grand Manner – the form, symmetry and massing are wholly European with a domed centrepiece over a vestigial pediment, domed corner pavilions and a bowed staircase on the garden frontage. The carved ornament is vigorous enough, but there is no real fusion between East and West, just a superficial imposition of one over the other – Imperial camouflage. The palace is the most thoroughly Hindu-Saracenic of all Emerson's buildings, a development of the Muir College in a more Eastern guise, eschewing any trace of European Gothic in favour of engrailed arches infilled with carved *moucharabya* work, serrated parapets, roof pavilions and the dominating effect of a huge minaret tower punctuated at the corners with little *chattris*.

The Cathedral Church of All Saints, Allahabad makes few concessions to the Indian context and demonstrates Emerson's ability to



The Quadrangle, Muir College, Allahabad by William Emerson.



design as easily in a straightforward Gothic style as in a boldly eclectic manner. The choir, transepts and a 'temporary' nave were finished in 1877, but the cathedral was not consecrated until 1887. Following a gift of £20,000 from an American as a memorial to his wife, six bays of the nave were completed by 1891, but the western towers never got built. Burges's influence can be discerned quite clearly in the choice of 13th-century Gothic, inspired by the choir at Canterbury, but adapted to the climate. The church is faced in white stone from Surajpur with red stone dressings and the five lower openings of the apse are enclosed by geometrical patterns copied from examples at Fatehpur Sikri. The pavement to the choir and sanctuary is pure Jaipur marble dappled with light coming through English stained glass, but the effect is reminiscent of Burges's Cork Cathedral.

Garrison churches were provided in every station in India for spiritual solace and guidance. Each old India hand will have his favourite, but the cantonment church at Peshawar is the last that many ever saw. Here situated amongst the trim lawns and bungalows on the edge of one of the most exciting cities in Asia, lay the last spiritual oasis for those en route for the Khyber and frontier duty. Many would not return, their only memorial one of the regimental insignia carved into the side of the Khyber by generations of British servicemen.

A scrimmage in a border station –
A canter down some dark defile –
Two thousand pounds of education
Drops to a ten-rupee jezail –
The Crammer's boast, the Squadron's pride,
Shot like a rabbit in a ride!

If Peshawar Church is imbued with a sombre, elegiac mood, it is for this reason, for architecturally it is a jolly piece of English Gothic imported straight from home. Nine hundred miles away in the centre of India, All Saints, Nagpur was also a conventional piece of Gothic, executed by Lieutenant (later Sir) Richard Sankey of the Madras Engineers in 1851, until it was transformed in 1879 into the Cathedral church by one of the leading English architects of the day, G. F. Bodley (1827–1907). Bodley's remodelling of the church was ambitious involving lengthening the nave, deepening the transepts, and providing a chancel, two vestries and an organ chamber. Above all else, Gothic prevailed – St John's, Ambala in 14th-century brick by Captain Atkinson was a notable addition to the ranks of cathedral churches in India after its consecration in 1857. Even Calcutta succumbed to the blandishments of the Gothic propagandists. St James, Calcutta was designed in 1860 by C. G. Wray and Walter Granville, in an Early English manner with Norman detailing. The interior is handsome, embellished with elaborately carved roof trusses in geometric style and a groined vault over the crossing. Granville supervised its erection and was responsible for substantial departures from the original design. However, it was at Lahore in the Punjab that one of the great cathedrals of India arose between 1883 and 1914 and to the designs not of a PWD engineer but of

(Above) *Cathedral Church of All Saints, Allahabad by William Emerson.* (Below) *Plan and section showing the uncompleted western towers and spires.*

John Oldrid Scott (1841–1913), second son of the great Sir George Gilbert Scott, architect of the University buildings in Bombay. A late 13th-century style was chosen in a local medium of pink brick and sandstone in common use in the city. Internally it is groin vaulted throughout, carried on clustered shafts with an apsidal choir and ambulatory, the apse being distinguished by enormous stone columns with highly foliated capitals. The stained glass to the choir is by Clayton and Bell, and one haunting opalescent memorial window is by Leonard Walker, a long way from his studio in N.W.3.

Lahore is pure Kipling. It was immortalised in *Kim*, who sits 'astride the gun Zam-Zammah on her brick platform opposite the old Ajaib-Gher – the Wonder House, as natives call the Lahore Museum' in the opening lines of the novel. Zam-Zammah (lion's roar) has a Persian inscription around its muzzle which concludes 'What a cannon! Its face, like a monstrous serpent, vomits fire.' However it was Rudyard's father John Lockwood Kipling who, as Curator, did as much to foster a renaissance of Indian arts and crafts in Lahore as he had at the School of Art in Bombay. The Museum collections are wide-ranging, a testament to his zealous conservation of Indian artefacts, and the interior has been described wonderfully by Jan Morris as 'rather dim-lit, almost opaque in fact, as though wood-smoke is perpetually drifting through it'. Many of the buildings in the city owe their form and spirit to John Lockwood Kipling for it was he who enthusiastically advocated the use of native styles and craftsmanship. The High Court, for instance, in the late Pathan style of the 14th century is by J. W. Brassington, who was involved in the Madras Law Courts. There is pure Gothic here too. The Government College was completed in 1877 to the designs of W. Purdon, the local executive engineer, an excellent complex of Gothic buildings with a central octagonal tower and spire in five stages. The main hall has a splendid hammer beam roof with a gallery at first-floor level, and when the building was extended in 1937 a sympathetic matching style was used.

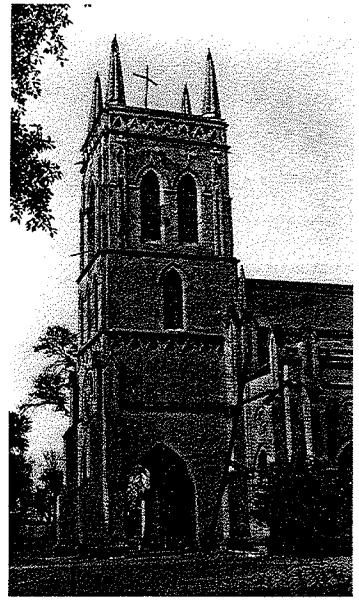
The search to achieve a truly Imperial style appropriate to the country over which they ruled occupied the British for the duration of the Raj. There were two main schools of thought – the aesthetic imperialists and the native revivalists. The former argued that the British should seek to emulate the Romans and impose British architecture with confidence, along with British law, order, justice and culture, not just out of duty but for the glory of the Empire. Civic architecture should embody an expression of all these things to the Indian people. They deprecated all attempts at revivalist architecture and argued that public buildings should stand as a true memorial to the selfless work of the Raj. The great advantage of Gothic architecture was that it was felt to be a Christian, 'national' style, even though, in practice, its actual expression owed far more to Venice and Italy than to English mediaevalism. Later proponents of the argument favoured the style of Wren and the English Renaissance, as the quintessence of English values. They were opposed by the revivalist school who taught that an uninterrupted living tradition existed in architecture, connecting the present and past. The

Lahore Cathedral by John Oldrid Scott built in stages between 1883–1914.

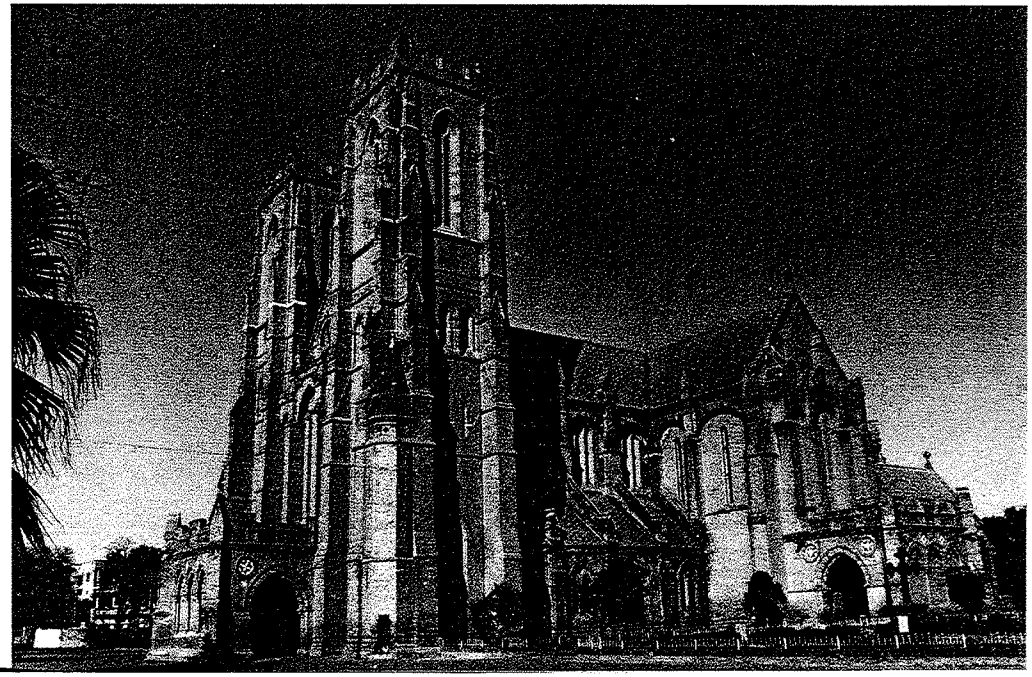
true policy should be to shun all imported forms and ideas, and to foster this living tradition by sustaining the Indian master craftsman or *mistri*, whose craft skills and expertise were in danger of dying out from lack of patronage. From time to time the tension between both schools of thought erupted into outright hostility. The conventional aesthetic imperialists who ran the PWD as an élite club looked aghast upon the interfering civilian architects who wanted to go native and adopt indigenous architectural apparel. It was as if the inner, trousered sanctum of the Raj were under attack from men advocating the use of loin cloths – and not natives, but Englishmen. It was unheard of, dangerously seditious and damned un-English. The revivalists, on the other hand, were exasperated at the obstructive nature of the PWD and as late as 1920 John Begg, Consulting Architect to the Government of India complained that 'the architect in India is handicapped at the outset by a universal ignorance of his functions.'

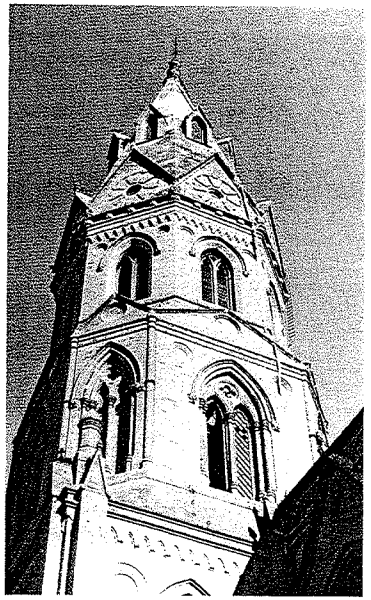
James Fergusson, the great architectural historian, argued the middle ground. Although he thought 'copying the Indian styles a crime' he maintained that 'there are principles underlying them which cannot be too deeply studied.' John Begg agreed and sixty years later urged, 'Let the architect take to India all his real principles, all of his technical skill both in design and in execution, all the essence of his training, but nothing more – there let him absorb indigenous forms and expressions into his consciousness.'

People like Fergusson and John Lockwood Kipling were responsible for inculcating in India the ideals which William Morris was advocating in England, a return to quality craftsmanship and tried and established methods. This was both a reaction against the mass production of the new industrial age and a vision of an art and



Peshawar: typical garrison church, peeling stucco showing the brick core.





Government College, Lahore: the tower and spire.

architecture based on principles of simple structural integrity. Lockwood Kipling's enthusiasm for craftsmanship had been fired by the Great Exhibition of 1851. He had studied art and sculpture under Sir Philip Cunliffe-Owen at South Kensington and worked as a stone mason on the new Victoria and Albert Museum. He was brother-in-law to Edward Burne-Jones.

The search for Imperial identity rumbled on into the 20th century. E. B. Havell, one-time head of the Madras School of Art, remonstrated against the official mind in his polemic *Indian Architecture*:

> The official architect sits in his office at Simla, Calcutta or Bombay surrounded by pattern-books of styles – Renaissance, Gothic, Indo-Saracenic and the like – and, having calculated precisely the dimensions and arrangement of a building suited to the departmental requirements, offers for approval a choice of the 'styles' ... for clothing the structure with architectural garments in varying degrees of smartness ... The European dilettanti who rule India do not generally know that any other system than this is possible or desirable.

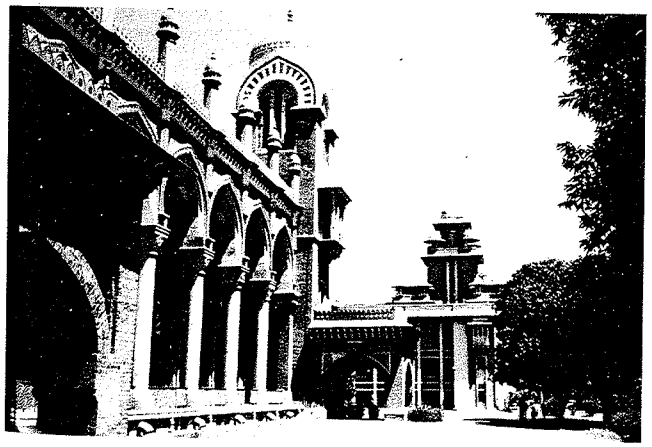
The PWD simply retorted that the unsupervised work of the *'mistri'* was decadent and undisciplined, to which Havell replied that it was all part of a process of hybridisation which had recurred in Europe when a new style was being evolved. And so it all went on.

One notable victim of the struggle was the revivalist, F. S. Growse, an Oxford antiquarian, who supervised the erection of numerous buildings in the Bulandshahar District between 1878 and 1884. He wrote a number of scholarly monographs on local Indian architecture in Mathura and a self-publicising polemic called 'Indian Architecture of Today as Exemplified by Buildings in the Bulandshahar District', i.e. his own work. A Goth by training he was seduced by the principles of Kipling and Havell and gave the native builders their head. The result was such an extraordinary spontaneous regeneration of exuberant Indian craftsmanship that the traders in the principal bazaar 'were vying with one another in the excellence of the curved wood arcades with which they are ornamenting their shopfronts'. Richly carved doors with brass wire inlay (Mynpuri) work were made for the new town hall and the whole district buzzed with exchanges between Growse and the PWD. 'Mr Growse cries out against the strangling effect of Government red-tape, and also against the tyranny of the Public Works Department', wrote one reviewer of his book. The PWD, appalled that he had gone native, promptly posted him elsewhere out of harm's way. However, one of the great benefits arising from serious study of Indian architecture and the resurgence of traditional arts and crafts was the conservation of many of India's finest buildings.

English antiquaries had been interested in the restoration and repair of Indian monuments since the early 19th century. James Prinsep in Benares was a pioneer. But the results were not always to be admired. The reinstatement of the Ashoka Pillar at Allahabad by Captain Edward Smith in 1838 was a dismal failure. Prinsep thought 'the animal on the

top is small and recumbent, and altogether the design is insignificant. Indeed it looks not unlike a stuffed poodle stuck on the top of an inverted flower-pot.' In the early years the PWD did much insensitive work. The beautiful red sandstone palace of Akbar's son at Allahabad was simply whitewashed all over by the PWD in one of those supreme acts of philistine ignorance which were the hallmark of the lower echelons of the service. Techniques did not improve until the foundation of the Archaeological Survey of India in 1861 and the pioneering work of Lord Curzon in the early 20th century (see Chapter 10).

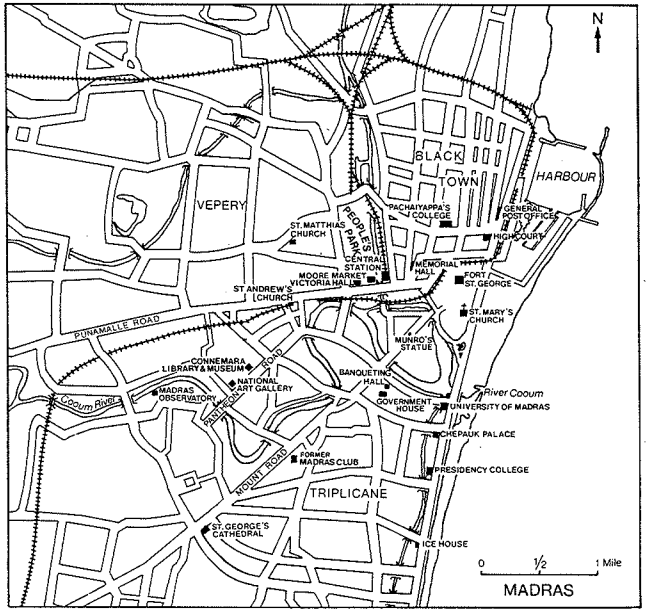
The most prolific practitioner of the Indian revival was one of the most gifted architects in India, Robert Fellowes Chisholm (1840–1915). His principal works are to be found in Madras, where he was the first head of the School of Industrial Art founded in 1855. He set up the Drawing and Painting Academy after complaining bitterly of 'the injurious influence which the large importations of European manufactures of the worst possible designs have had on native handicrafts.' Chisholm was nothing if not versatile for it was he who designed the Lawrence Asylum at Ootacamund (1865) in an Italianate style, after the manner of Osborne House, and who later turned out an equally eloquent essay in Victorian Gothic for the Post and Telegraph Office in Madras (1875–1884), but it was as a practitioner of Indo-Saracenic styles that he excelled. In 1864 the Government of Madras advertised a competition for two new buildings – a Presidency College and Senate House for the University. Chisholm won and was appointed Consulting Architect to the Government. The Presidency College is essentially a cross-fertilisation of Italianate and Saracenic styles designed to sympathise with the nearby Chepauk Palace, which until 1865 had been the home of the Nawabs of Arcot. It was then taken over as government offices. The Senate House is a more ambitious Saracenic exercise. Conceived symmetrically in a Byzantine manner, it has four corner towers crowned by onion domes, each face of each of the towers

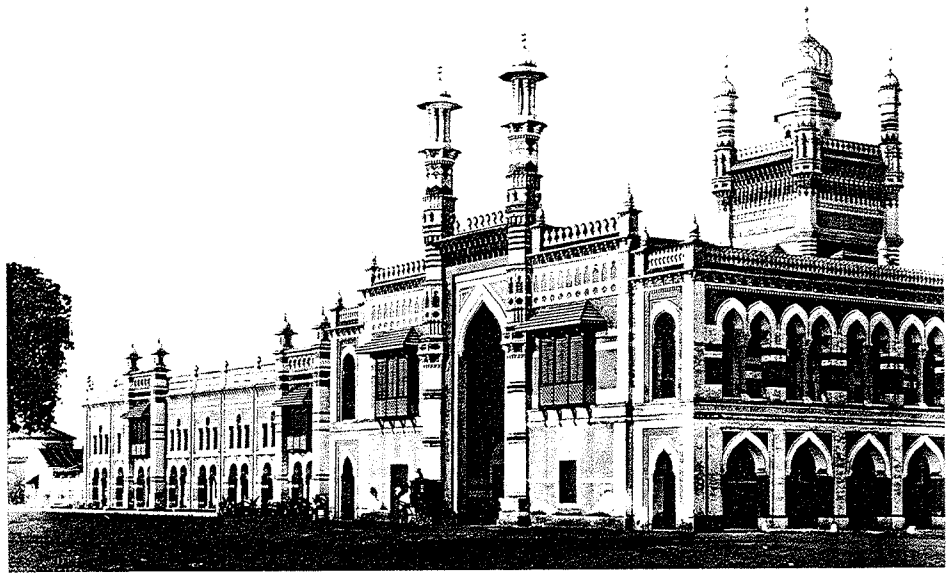


Senate House, University of Madras, on the left of the picture, by Robert Fellowes Chisholm. A fusion of Oriental and Byzantine styles.

bursting into arcuated fans of polychrome brick and stonework with carved voussoirs, tiled domes and pendentives. Outside the south entrance stands a statue of Queen Victoria seated in Imperial majesty under a magnificent pavilion of intricate cast-iron work supplied by Macfarlanes of Glasgow.

In 1870 the Government of Madras resolved to develop and extend the Chepauk Palace into a complex of offices for the Revenue Board, and Chisholm was instructed by Lord Napier to prepare designs that would harmonise with the original palace buildings. Napier was an enthusiastic advocate of native styles and his influence was instrumental in transforming Madras from a classical city into a magnificent Indo-British metropolis. In a lecture on modern architecture in India he asserted that 'the Government of India might ... do well to consider whether the Mussulman forms might not be adopted generally as the official style of architecture.' He considered it 'far superior with reference to shade, coolness, ventilation, convenience and beauty to all we see around us.' The original palace buildings were probably designed by Paul Benfield in the 1760s, a Company engineer of dubious repute who later acquired notoriety as the chief money-lender to the Nawab, but in Chisholm's substantial extensions purer details and superior materials were used, rationalising the confused jumble of native elements employed by Benfield over one hundred years earlier. The result is a happy commingling of new and old work dominated by a central tower which has domed corner spirelets, a massive machicolated parapet and a crowning onion dome. The project was sufficiently





Board of Revenue Offices, Madras, formerly Chepauk palace. A happy commingling of new and old work. The central tower to the right of the picture is part of the original palace.

controversial for Napier to defend it at length in *The Builder* for 1870. 'The Government had endeavoured, with the advice of an accomplished architect, to exhibit in the improvements at the Revenue Board an example of the adoption of a Mussulman style to contemporaneous use ... He has paid the first tribute to the genius of the past; he has set the first example of a revival in native art, which I hope will not remain unappreciated and unfruitful.'

Chisholm recognised the importance of the craftsman, 'the men who will actually leave the impress of their hands on the materials'. He maintained that 'those men have an art-language of their own, a language which you can recognise, but cannot thoroughly understand. For this reason an architect practising in India should unhesitatingly elect to practise in the native styles of art – indeed, the natural art-expression of these men is the only art to be obtained in the country.'

As the complex of public buildings began to grow along the waterfront of Madras, they mutually complemented each other to create a magnificent townscape vista of Indo-Oriental architecture. The government tacitly acknowledged this when the Governor Grant-Duff (1881–1886) enhanced this nascent composition by constructing the Marina, one of the most beautiful seafront promenades in the world, a wide sweep of broad carriageway running for three miles down the Coromandel coast to San Thomé Cathedral, punctuated with palms and all the exotic vegetation of Southern India. In spite of Chisholm's extensive work all over the city the focus of the composition was created by other hands. The construction of the Law Courts between

1888 and 1892 represented the high point of Indo-Saracenic architecture in India – a romantic confection of multi-coloured Moghul domes, Buddhist stupas, canopied balconies, arcaded verandahs, and soaring high over the whole vast red brick pile, a bulbous domed minaret with its upper stage forming a lighthouse equipped with the latest dioptic light. The lighthouse became such a landmark that shortly after the outbreak of the First World War it received some unwelcome attentions from the German Cruiser *Emden*, which astonished Madras in an audacious attack on the city, an incident commemorated by a plaque on the building. The designs and estimates were prepared by Chisholm's successor as Consulting Architect, J. W. Brassington, but he died before work commenced and the scheme was revised by his successor Henry Irwin, and the assistant engineer J. H. Stephens. The materials – brick and terracotta – were local and all the details were executed by students from the School of Art. However, for all its unrestrained Romanticism the building remains firmly in the European tradition, an ingenious and spirited attempt to disguise a Gothic building in Indo-Saracenic clothing. It reflects the same concern with internal circulation, Romantic massing, skyline and silhouette that were the hallmark of the grandiloquent Gothic fantasies that had appeared in the competition for the London Law Courts twenty years earlier. The Law College next door was completed in the same year in a complementary style, but disregard the Moghul domes, and the building is as Gothic as the Bombay Law Courts. Internally the circulation areas, cascading external staircases and arcaded verandahs occupy an enormous part of the volume of the building, limiting the actual usable floorspace.

The Madras Marina offers a valuable lesson in civic design which has long been forgotten in England – that the unity of the whole should transcend the sum of the constituent parts. In Madras, without eschewing individuality, flair or integrity a whole series of public buildings were designed over a period of seventy years which shared several unifying attributes – the common use of available local materials, red brick and terracotta, a delight in quality craftsmanship, an intuitive awareness of the site in its context on the horizon and a controlled enthusiasm for traditional or hybrid styles which were well-adapted to the climate.

If Irwin failed to achieve a real synthesis of East and West in the planning and design of the Madras Law Courts, he was able to explore the way forward in a series of public buildings in the Museum complex in Pantheon Road. Irwin was as versatile as his predecessor Chisholm. He designed the sinister grey Viceregal Lodge in Simla in a gaunt Elizabethan style, just prior to the Law Courts, but it is evident that his real predilections lay in revivalism. Notwithstanding the Victoria Public Hall (1883–1885), a charming Romanesque affair for which probably he was responsible, his purest building is the former Victoria Memorial Hall and Technical Institute (1909), now the National Art Gallery. It is an absolute gem. Executed in the warm pink sandstone which was associated with the best Moghul architecture it is a very accomplished work with the centrepiece based on the principal gateway of Akbar's abandoned city of Fatehpur Sikri. It is compact,

Law Courts, Madras, 1888–1892: the culmination of Indo-Saracenic architecture, imbued with all the gorgeous exoticism of the East. The minaret on the right of the picture is crowned by a lighthouse.

coherent and timeless, quite as good as the Moghul prototypes on which it is based.

Some of the most sophisticated essays in native styles lay in the princely states, where sympathetic architects could work unfettered by the opposition of the local PWD. At Hyderabad, the ancient commercial cross-roads of the Deccan, Vincent Esch was active in the 1920s, adorning the city with a number of public buildings in an Indo-Saracenic style which, whilst they failed to demonstrate any real fusion of the two architectural traditions, nonetheless provided some fine new townscape entirely appropriate to such an ethnic melting-pot. In many ways these buildings and those by British architects in other native states are quite sophisticated political symbols of the Imperial presence. The external camouflage may be Indian, and an Indian workforce may have been used, but the designs, plans and overall control remain British, in the same way that in the political arena the British lay as the power behind the princely native thrones.

This symbolism was not lost on the Nizam who presided over a state in which the Muslim élite were outnumbered by Hindus and where conciliation was essential if sectarian strife was to be averted. In a similar manner to Kirkpatrick's Residency nearby, architecture was used for political ends. In his address at the opening of the Osmania University the Nizam pronounced:

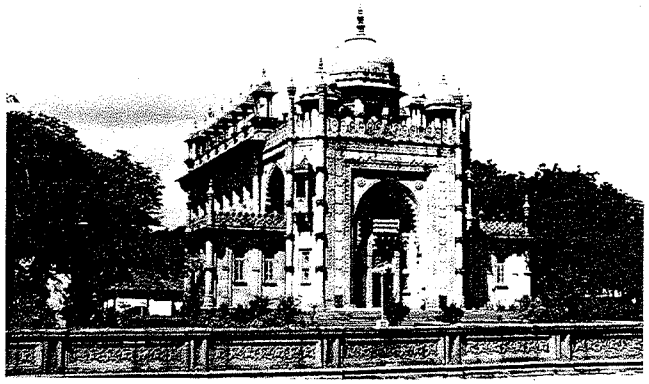
> The architecture of this building represents a blending of the Hindu and Muslim styles, and the art and culture of both these races are reflected in the pillars and traceries and carvings on the doors and walls. Thus the building symbolises the close contacts and friendly relations subsisting for centuries between the various classes of my subjects, as a result of which the people of my state have always in the past lived in harmony with each other.

The central tower and domes of the dazzling white Osmania General Hospital owe much to Churchgate Railway Terminus in Bombay, but Esch's buildings, including the High Court and Town Hall, are wonderful evocations of Eastern magnificence, albeit seen through a very Western eye.

Elsewhere in the native states British architects were active, patronised by native princes eager for the approbation accorded by the Viceroy to social improvers, particularly for the more tangible manifestation of a CSI or KCSI.

> Rustum Beg of Kolazai – slightly backward Native State –
> Lusted for a C.S.I. – so began to sanitate.
> Built a Gaol and Hospital – nearby built a City drain –
> Till his faithful subjects all thought their ruler was insane . . .
> . . . Then the Birthday Honours came. Sad to state and sad to see,
> Stood against the Rajah's name nothing more than C.I.E.

Chisholm moved to Baroda after his departure from Madras, working

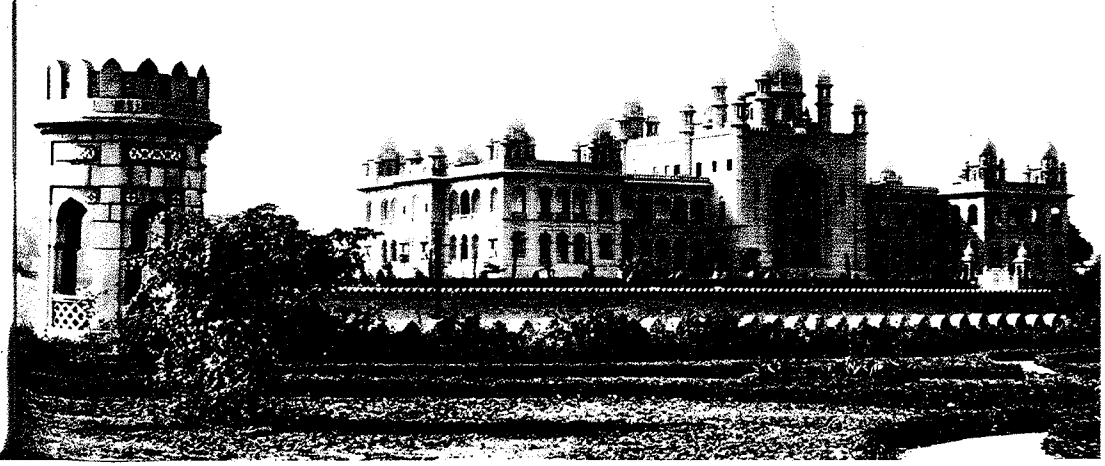


National Art Gallery, Madras, formerly the Victoria Memorial Hall and Technical Institute, designed by Henry Irwin and modelled on the principal gateway at Fatehpur Sikri.

on the completion of a new palace for the Gaekwar, which had been commenced by Major Mant (1840–1881) of the Bombay Engineers. Mant was one of the most fascinating and ingenious of all the English Sappers to work in India, yet he remains rather an enigma. He arrived in 1859, fresh from Addiscombe, and worked in the prevailing Venetian Gothic style on the High School at Surat, but soon he acquired a scholarly interest in local architecture and began 'to unite the usefulness of the scientific European designs together with the beauty, taste, grandeur and sublimity of the native'. His greatest opportunities came in 1875, a year after his promotion to Major, when he produced designs for four palaces, virtually simultaneously, at Cooch Behar, Darbhanga, Baroda and Kolhapur. The designs for Cooch Behar were still-born owing to cost, but the others were all implemented.

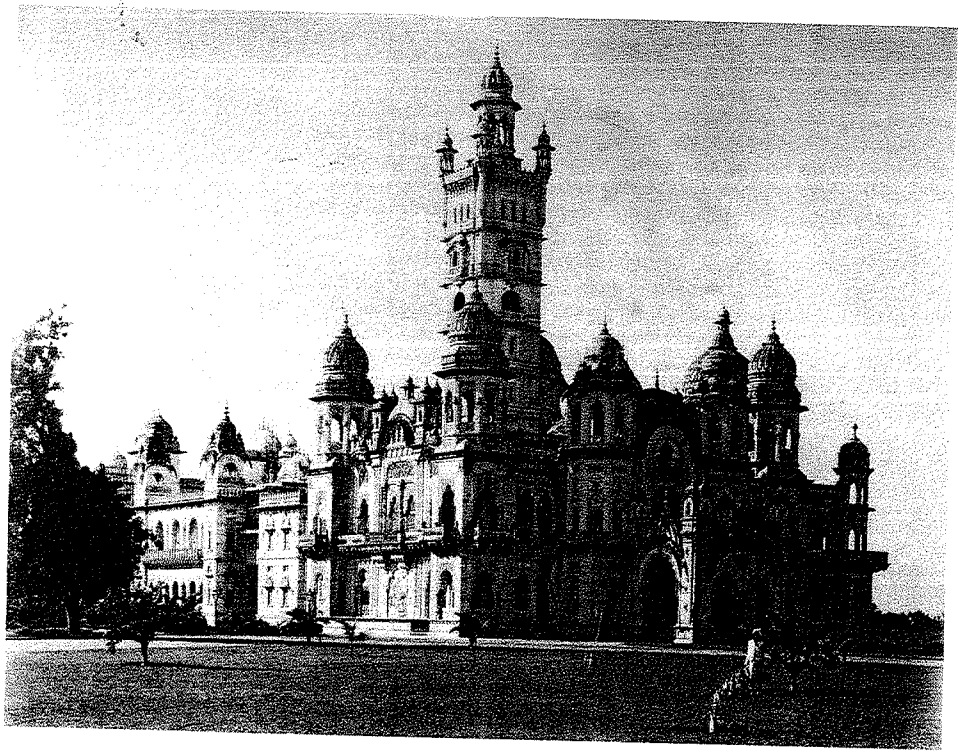
To the European purist it would be easy to dismiss these extraordinary designs as ostentatious expressions of a decadent ruling class, unrestrained by any semblance of architectural propriety, but by Indian standards they were merely the latest manifestations of a

The High Court, Hyderabad by Vincent Esch.



constant process of cultural miscegenation, whereby India acknowledges, adapts and then assimilates the cultural attributes of its latest rulers: in this case, the British. Indubitably many of these riotously eclectic buildings, such as those at Junagadh, were little more than 'orgiastic shopping sprees in the bargain basement of architecture', in the words of the Maharajah of Baroda, but Mant's designs showed an intelligent appreciation of local styles. At Kolhapur he designed a conventional Venetian Gothic town hall, and later an Indo-Saracenic memorial for Florence to commemorate the Maharajah's son who died there in 1870. However, his real *tour de force* is the palace, which has a skyline based on the multiple, clustered domes of the Jain temples at Ahmedabad, and other elements drawn from local examples at Bharatpur, Deeg and Mathura, centres of Maratha culture relatively uninfluenced by the Moghul tradition. Thus the palace is not Indo-Saracenic at all, but a more precise commingling of locally based styles with details drawn by native draughtsmen. Mant became convinced that his palaces would collapse due to his own structural inaccuracies, and he died in 1881 from insanity induced by overwork; hardly surprising, some have thought rather unkindly, given the febrile eclecticism of his later work.

Laxhmi Vilas Palace, Baroda, reputedly the most expensive building erected by a private individual in the 19th century, was designed by Major Charles Mant and completed by Robert Fellowes Chisholm, after Mant died insane.

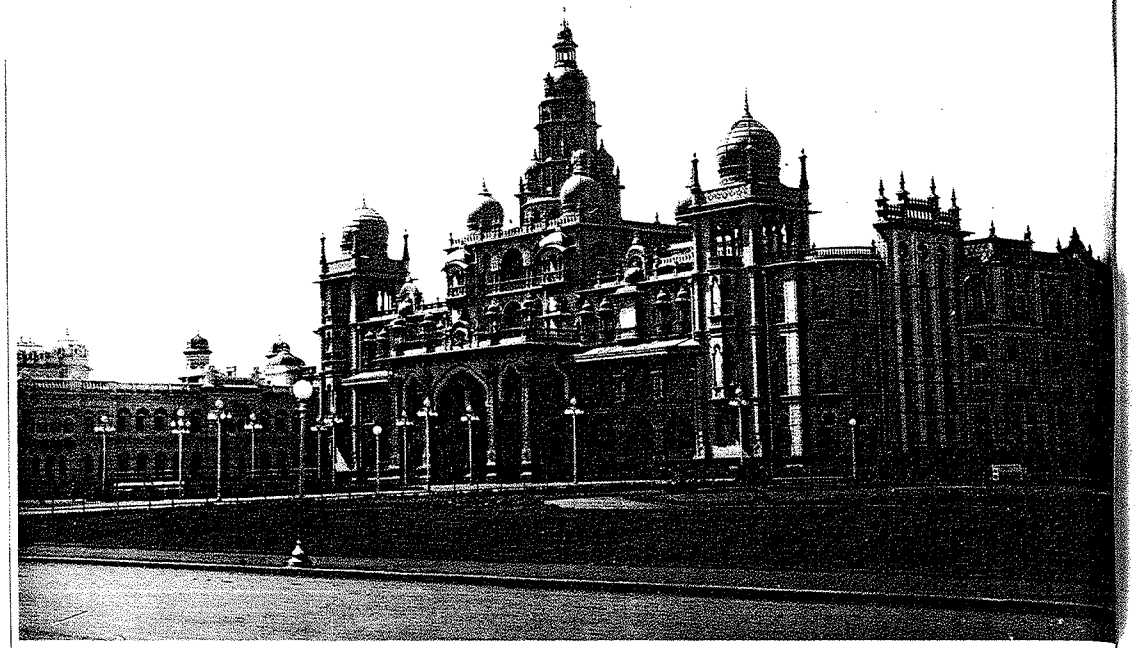


At Baroda Chisholm was brought in to finish Mant's earlier designs. The Laxhmi Vilas Palace is reputed to be the most expensive building constructed by a private individual in the 19th century. It is colossal, so large in fact that the building transmutes itself from Hindu martial architecture, through various Moghul nuances via a flurry of domes taken from Jain sources, towards Gothic and classical references. The materials, craftsmanship and accommodation represent a blending of Eastern and Western cultures appropriate to the dualistic role adopted by the Indian princes at this time, with one foot rooted firmly in the glories of the Indian past and another planted in British and European society. Chisholm remained in Baroda where he designed the new College for the Gaekwar, which has a close affinity to the Madras Senate House and other local buildings, before he retired to London where he designed and prepared a scheme for an Indian Museum and also the Church of Christ Scientist, Wilbraham Place, Sloane Street.

Another great Madras architect, Henry Irwin also moved on to design in the native states after his successful work in the city. The Amba Vilas Palace at Mysore is one of the most extravagant and lavish in the whole of India. Twenty of its rooms accommodated nothing more than the accumulated hunting trophies of generations of the family. Built in 1898 for the Maharajah of Mysore it is the most astonishing juxtaposition of Hindu, Saracenic and Hoysala elements conceivable, wilfully plundered from examples all over India and capped by a minaret and an onion dome strikingly similar to that on the High Court in Madras. As architecture it may be ill-mannered and vulgar, but it is enormous fun and beautifully transcribed by the local temple stone-masons. On certain nights the gates of the palace are thrown open to the whole city and the building is illuminated by fifty thousand individual light bulbs in a display of dazzling luminescence.

The most accomplished of all the exponents of the Indo-Saracenic style was Colonel Sir Samuel Swinton Jacob (1841–1917), close relative of Brigadier-General John Jacob, the legendary hero of Sind after whom Jacobabad is named. He was a contemporary of Mant's at Addiscombe and entered the Bombay Artillery in 1858. Initially he served in the PWD, in Rajputana and later, in 1865–66, in Aden with the Field Force, but on his return in 1867 he was appointed to Jaipur State where he spent most of his working life. As a leading exponent of hybridisation he received an enormous number of commissions from all over India. He was responsible for the Secretariat at Simla (grim Scottish baronial), as well as more lively affairs such as the Victoria Memorial Hall, Peshawar; St Stephen's College, Delhi; the State Bank of Madras; St John's College, Agra and numerous buildings in Jaipur. However, his great love was Rajput architecture and whilst in Jaipur he prepared an enormous portfolio of architectural details of the city's buildings, which became a pattern book for many architects practising in the field. His most lavish design in the princely states was at Bikaner where the Lallgarh palace was designed with exquisitely carved arcaded screens and friezes culled from Rajput examples in the old fort.

One of his most ardent disciples was Major-General Sir Sydney Crookshank, who worked as executive engineer in Lucknow between



Amba Vilas Palace, Mysore designed by Henry Irwin; ostentatious, ill-mannered, and vulgar, but enormous fun. Compare the domed minaret with that on the Madras Law Courts.

Sir Samuel Swinton Jacob as a young cadet at Addiscombe College.

1908 and 1910. Earlier he had supervised the erection of Government House, Naini Tal to the designs of F. W. Stevens, and also the Imperial Bacteriological Institute at Maktesar. At Lucknow Crookshank planned and constructed King George's Medical School and Hospital, the Canning College and Technical School, the Arabic College, School of Design, Post Office and Balrampur Hospital, after submitting the designs to Jacob for his approval. Crookshank moved to Delhi where he oversaw the erection of the Indo-Saracenic pavilions for the Durbar of 1911. After the Great War he played a crucial role on the Imperial Delhi Committee, liaising between the government engineers and Lutyens and Baker.

The wealth of the Indian maharajahs was legendary as was their reputation for extravagance and eccentricity, but under the British Raj these reached the most outrageous extremes. It was probably one of the greatest strengths of the Raj that the Indians were as dotty as the British themselves, yet each society was too polite to point it out to the other. The Maharajah of Junagadh, who commissioned some of the most decadent buildings of the period, was keen on dogs. His favourite animals were set up in their own quarters with telephones, electricity and domestic servants, and when finally they left this vale of tears their little canine souls were carried aloft to the doleful strains of Chopin's funeral march. At Kapurthala the Maharajah took his francophilia to exceptional lengths, importing M. Marcel, a French architect, and an army of French craftsmen to create a French chateau in the style of Louis XIV, before himself assuming the role of Sun King and insisting

on the use of French at his court. Once a year until 1900 the Maharajah of Patiala appeared before his subjects, in a state of full sexual arousal, wearing a brilliant breast plate studded with over one thousand diamonds, and precious little else. Standing erect, but with considerable sang-froid, he responded nonchalantly to the roars of approval from his subjects who equated his potency with that of Lord Shiva and the fertility of the land. Fortunately the family were used to public exposure and there were no linked cases of crop failure. The Maharajah of Gwalior ordered a new Palace to commemorate the visit of the Prince of Wales in 1874. He asked his chief adviser, Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Michael Filose, to design it for him in an Italianate style and, as a centrepiece for the royal visit, the Durbar Hall was embellished with two of the world's largest chandeliers, each weighing over three tons. In order to ensure the structural stability of the ceiling three of his largest elephants were hoisted on to the roof by a special crane before the two Venetian chandeliers were installed. The palace was sumptuously finished to provide a fairy-tale setting with glass fountains, glass balusters to the staircase, glass furniture and glass fringes and decorations – all it lacked was the odd glass slipper. It became even more bizarre under his successor, Madhav Rao Scindia, for he indulged his passion for trains by constructing a private narrow gauge railway in the grounds, which he himself drove, and another in the palace dining room, which circulated around the vast central dining table dispensing brandy, port and cigars. It enabled the Maharajah to bypass his more inebriated guests.

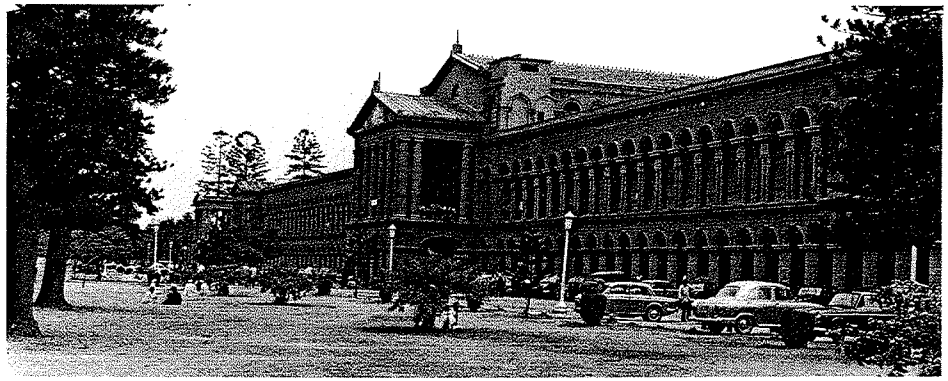
Ironically as fast as many British architects searched for an effective synthesis of styles between East and West, distilled from the diverse architectural heritage of India, many of the wealthiest Indian patrons cultivated British customs and manners and sought to emulate the finest European architecture. The Maharajah of Mysore's Bangalore

Maharajah of Mysore's Palace, Bangalore: echoes of Arthurian England.

Palace was modelled on Windsor Castle with battlemented parapets and fortified towers looming over the South Indian countryside, a bizarre vision of mediaeval England, distorted in transposition, for use by an Indian prince.

In contrast with the fanciful architectural creations of many of the native states, a number of towns remained well within the classical tradition, uninfluenced by the exotic experiments in hybridisation which occurred elsewhere. Bangalore, for instance, had grown up as the principal garrison town for Mysore state in the early 19th century following the defeat of Tipu Sultan at Seringapatam in 1799. At a level of 3,000 feet Bangalore was healthier and cooler than Seringapatam, and a large military station grew up on spacious lines with widely dispersed buildings. Under the Commissioner L. B. Bowring between 1862 and 1870 the cantonment area grew rapidly in size and importance, becoming an administrative centre for the whole region and something of a resort. Bowring was responsible for the erection of the handsome Public Offices, which now house the High Court, a vast classical range with Ionic porticos to the centre and end pavilions, linked by extensive arcaded wings, all finished in deep Pompeian red stone. The building was designed by Colonel (later Sir) Richard Sankey between 1864 and 1868 and it set a prevailing classical tone which has been perpetuated to this day, for the new Post Office building, currently under construction, is a splendid dressed-granite classical composition with beautifully carved detailing. The development of classical public buildings such as the Government Arts College, Mayo Hall and Public Library was part of a conscious policy of civic improvement, as a result of which Bangalore acquired the air of a 'garden city' and this was accentuated as peripheral areas such as Cleveland Town, Richmond Town and Benson Town were developed along 'garden city' lines. Today Bangalore seems strikingly familiar to the English visitor for it resembles Welwyn Garden City or Bournemouth with its beautifully maintained parks and open spaces at the centre of the city, its bandstand, its tree-lined vistas and its jealously guarded statues of Queen Victoria and Edward VII. When proposals were mooted to remove these anachronistic monuments to Imperial rule the citizens of Bangalore firmly resisted such a civic outrage. Quite how much the later Garden City movement in England owed to the dispersed cantonments of the military and civil stations of British India is a question which deserves greater investigation, but Ebenezer Howard and his followers must have been aware of the success of the Indian cantonments as a steady stream of retired India hands flowed home to the closest English equivalents in Cheltenham, Eastbourne and St John's Wood.

It seems apparent that once a particular style began to prevail in any one area there was little incentive to depart from it. Bombay remained dominated by its Ruskinian Gothic buildings, which were still being constructed well into the early 1900s, long after the style had gone out of fashion in England. Madras went native with exotic experiments in Indo-Saracenic architecture, Calcutta remained with its classical origins, other than one notable exception, the High Court. John Begg

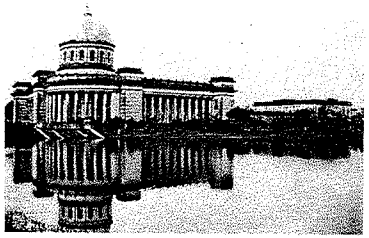


Public Offices, now the High Court, Bangalore by Colonel Richard Sankey; monumental civic classicism inspiring a spirit which continues to this day.

considered, 'Bombay is energetic, exuberant, sparkling, breezy and has building stone of many kinds and colours. Calcutta is calm, respectable, orthodox and its leading materials are brick and plaster. A massive (apparently) type of Classic renaissance, by no means to be sneered at, early asserted itself there, and has retained its hold.'

Calcutta's leading Victorian architect was Walter L. B. Granville (1819–1874), a prolific designer who was responsible for many of the best public buildings of the later 19th century in the city. It was he who designed The Memorial Church, Cawnpore. From 1858 he worked for the Eastern Bengal Railway before being appointed as consulting architect to the government of India from 1863 to 1868 for the express purpose of designing public buildings in Calcutta. One of his earliest briefs was for the construction of a large new complex of buildings to house the University between 1866 and 1872. These were a fine group, dispersed around Granville's Ionic Senate House, and their demolition in 1961 was a civic tragedy, perpetrated by an institution which ought to have known better. Perhaps it would be unreasonable to expect the University authorities in Calcutta to have behaved any more responsibly than their counterparts at the University of London, who demolished acres of Bloomsbury in the pursuit of learning. Granville's monumental Post Office in Dalhousie Square stands on the site of the Black Hole and it was raised between 1864 and 1868. It is a noble, even stately, structure of considerable sophistication dominated by a corner dome and punctuated by huge rusticated pylons which are linked by Corinthian colonnades. The main chamber rises full height through the building and provides a grand setting for the tide of humanity that ebbs and flows beneath the dome. This is Granville's best classical composition, although the Indian Museum is also worthy of note for its massive simplicity with a central quadrangle enclosed by galleries of Ionic columns.

The only significant secular Gothic building in the city is the High Court, also by Granville, but this lacks the confident mastery of style which characterises his work in the classical idiom. Nonetheless it is a handsome and impressive edifice taken straight from Gilbert Scott's

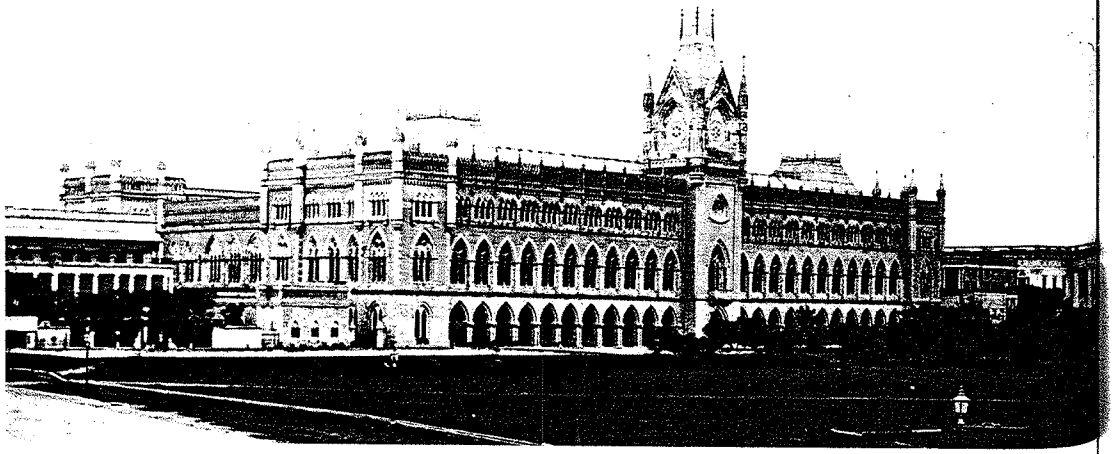


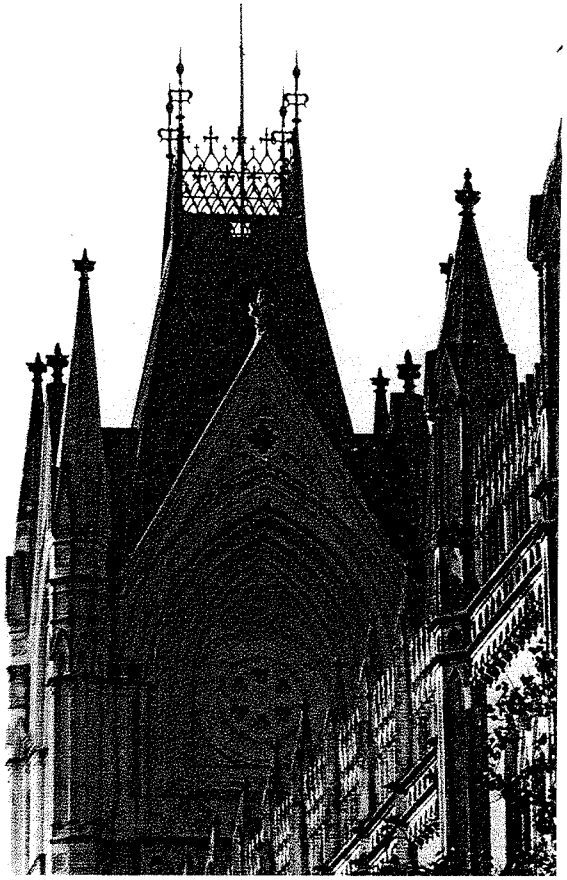
Post Office, Calcutta by Walter Granville, on the site of the Black Hole.

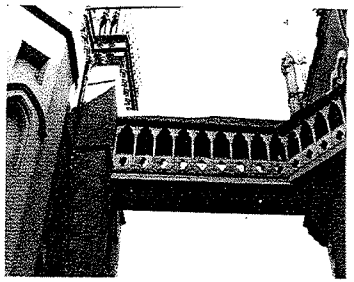
project for the Hamburg Rathaus of 1854–1856. The plan, elevations, composition and much of the detail are Scott's, who in turn used the great mediaeval prototype of the Cloth Hall at Ypres for his model. Subsequently it has been extended into a wider complex of court buildings linked at a high level by arcaded Gothic bridges. It is faced in red brick with stucco dressings. The ground floor is an elegant vaulted cloister of Barakur sandstone with capitals of Caen stone. Like Garstin's Town Hall immediately next door, Granville's High Court suffered from the semi-liquid subsoil and underwent such subsidence that the tower was never completed to its original designs, accounting for its most obvious difference from Scott's prototype in that it is far too low for such a long frontage. The high-pitched iron-plated roof was intended to act as a furnace, drawing up the heated air from the courts below through orifices made in the ceilings. The buildings are grouped around a quadrangle which is landscaped with pleasant gardens and fountains. Gowned advocates with Oxbridge accents stroll along the groin-vaulted cloisters in earnest discussion with their clients, a living monument to the durability of English law, which ironically has far firmer foundations in India than the building in which it is practised.

The Court of Small Causes stands nearby. It is a wholly classical composition designed in 1878 by William H. White, who spent thirteen months in India attached to the PWD. Unfortunately the curious Ionic capitals to the exterior are woefully inadequate attempts by Indian craftsmen to copy those on the Senate House, which had been sent out to India in Ransome's patent stone, and the copies more closely resemble intertwined serpents and dolphins. Its style is French Palladian seen through Victorian eyes, but it is a bold, imaginative and functional building of considerable merit and it is unfortunate that White left the PWD and returned to England after completing just one building.

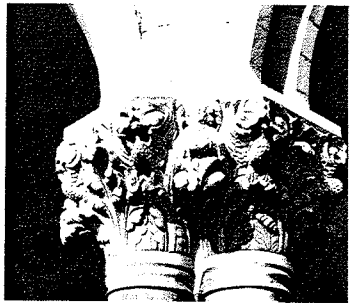
The High Court, Calcutta is closely based on Gilbert Scott's design for the Hamburg Rathaus but the tower was modified owing to subsidence.





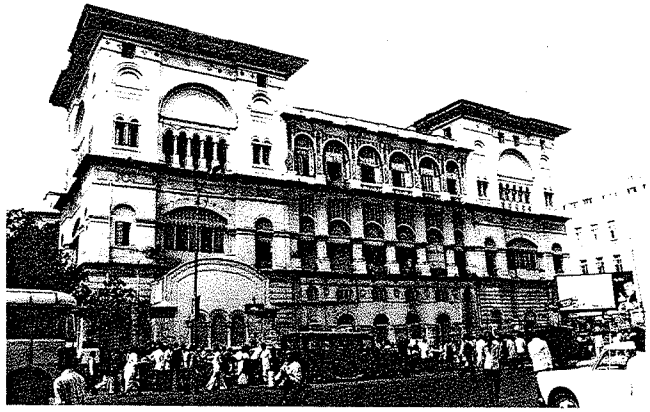


The High Court, Calcutta. (Left)*: the iron-crested tower and pierced parapet.* (Above)*: echoes of Renaissance Italy in a distant land.*



High Court: carved stone capital to the arcade.

Granville's Gothic High Court was very much an aberration in the 'city of palaces'. Other principal public buildings of the period were firmly classical or Italianate in origin. The Telegraph Office (now demolished) was an Italianate composition with a campanile commenced to original designs by Barnfather and Clark, assistant engineers, but completed in 1873 to revised designs by Mr Vivian. It was interesting not only for its Italianate conception, but for the use of terracotta made from local red Barrackpore clay for the caps, columns and strings, a material which was used later in the uninspiring refacing of Writer's Buildings (1877–1882). Perhaps the most unusual composition is the East Indian Railway Offices by Roskell Bayne, a marvellous Italian palazzo. It has wide projecting eaves for protection against the elements and the principal cornice is taken directly from the Farnese Palace in Rome. Structurally it is quite extraordinary, pioneering a combination of iron and concrete. The floor trusses and columns are made from worn-out rails, the floors from brick carried on concrete arches and the doors and windows are all pivoted on stone cills and architraves to create a structure both cheap and fireproof. The building covers an



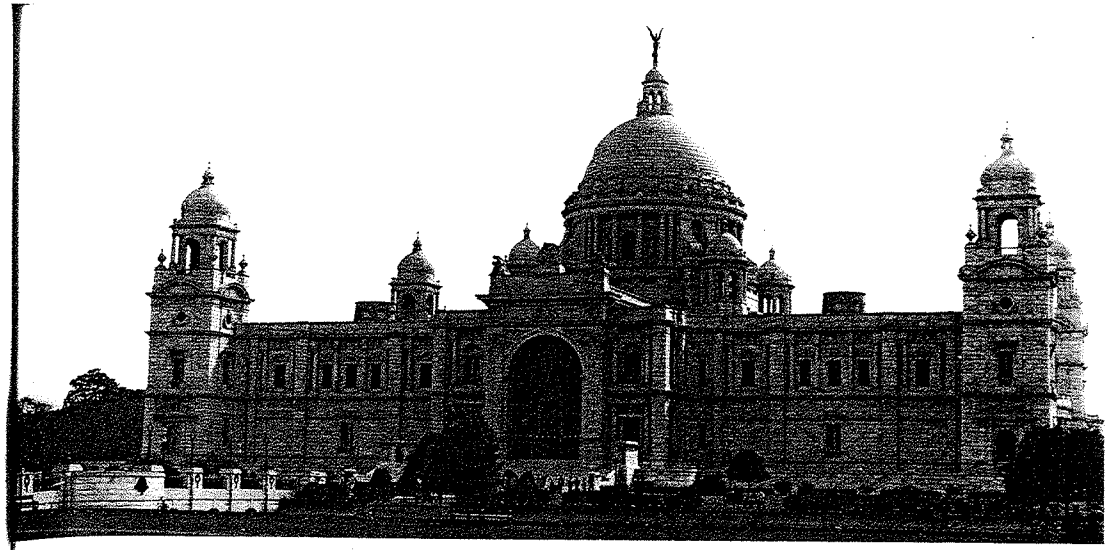
East India Railway Offices, Calcutta, by Roskell Bayne. The principal cornice is copied from the Palazzo Farnese in Rome.

entire street block, and the two principal corner pavilions are decorated in Italian *sgraffito* work. The four main panels depict Architecture, Sculpture, Music and Commerce, and the lower stages are inscribed with names of the principal stations served by the railway. To complete the Italian effect the main floors are tessellated marble pavements.

Bayne is an interesting architect, for it was he who designed the Thornhill and Mayne Memorial Library and Mayo Memorial in Allahabad, as well as the Indo-Gothic Husainabad clocktower in Lucknow, but he remains rather elusive, a Calcutta-based man who practised widely elsewhere. On Granville's death he assumed the mantle of the city's leading architect.

As late as 1916 public buildings were being erected in a classical style faced in chunam. The Royal Exchange by T. S. Gregson, once a partner of F. W. Stevens in Bombay, is remarkable for its date, for it could easily have been erected sixty or seventy years earlier. With its eloquent use of paired Corinthian columns in antis, modillioned cornice and chastely detailed attic storey it looks more like a mid-19th-century London club or bank. Not all of Calcutta's new buildings were so traditionally conceived for the great new station at Howrah, rebuilt between 1900 and 1908, was designed by the imaginative English Arts and Crafts architect, Halsey Ricardo (1854–1928). Articulated by eight square towers it is an unusual, if slightly incoherent, red brick design infused with Oriental and Romanesque references. However, by this date all civic architecture in Calcutta had been eclipsed by the most potent symbol of Empire erected anywhere in the world – the Victoria Memorial.

The Victoria Memorial, Calcutta is an enduring testimony to the Imperial connection, a connection which bound India and Britain for almost 300 years, and one which lay at the very heart of Britain's claim to be a world power. Conceived at the very climax of Empire, it is itself the architectural climax of a city which owed its existence to the



Victoria Memorial, Calcutta: the most potent symbol of Empire in the world, dominating the centre of the city.

Imperial ideal. The building dominates the whole of Calcutta and, without doubt, it is one of the most important to be erected in the 20th century, not because it is an architectural masterpiece but because it stands as an historical symbol, a monument to a Queen-Empress, completed at the very moment that the Imperial impulse was dying, its chivalric ideals lying shattered on the fields of Flanders and its self-confident vigour drained by the exertions of the Great War.

The Victoria Memorial owes its inception to Lord Curzon and it was paid for by contributions from the princes and peoples of India, a largely spontaneous outburst of generosity doubtless assisted by the fact that few wished to be seen not to contribute. It was Curzon who envisaged a repository of Anglo-Indian art and relics, a sort of Imperial valhalla, in which all the widely dispersed monuments, sculpture, paintings and documents relating to the history of British India could be concentrated and displayed. 'How little anyone seemed to care about, or even to remember, the mighty deeds that had been wrought on Indian soil, or to inculcate their lessons for the sake of posterity', he wrote. 'I felt that the lack of this historical sense – the surest spring of national self-respect – was injurious in its effect both upon English and Indian interests.'

A magnificent building was envisaged, the central feature of which was to be a marble statue of Queen Victoria beneath a central dome. Close by would be halls consecrated to personal memorials of the Queen and her reign. The remainder of the building would be given over to artefacts, prints, drawings and models illustrating the entire period since the end of Moghul rule and the start of the British connection with India. 'The test of admission was to be not artistic, or even merely historical interest; but, in the case of objects or events, exceptional importance, in the case of persons, exceptional distinction or service, irrespective of race or creed.' For the crucial choice of architect, Curzon approached Lord Esher, Secretary to the Office of Works, who recommended William Emerson, then President of the RIBA and an old

India hand. The style was specified by Curzon who expounded on the subject with conviction:

> In Calcutta – a city of European origin and construction – where all the main buildings had been erected in a quasi-classical or Palladian style, and which possessed no indigenous architectural type of its own – it was impossible to erect a building in any native style. A Moghul building, however appropriate for the mosques and tombs of the Moslem Kings, or even for the modern Palace of an Indian Prince in his own State, would have been quite unsuited for the Memorial of a British Sovereign. A Hindu fabric would have been profoundly ill-adapted for the purposes of an exhibition. It was evident that a structure in some variety of the classical or Renaissance style was essential, and that a European architect must be employed.

It was Curzon too who insisted on the use of Indian marble and in this he was inspired, for it came from the Makrana quarries, the same which had supplied material for the Taj Mahal, the spiritual antecedent of the Victoria Memorial Hall. It produces an exquisite effect, the blueish veins in the stone reducing glare and conferring a restful tone. Given the unstable nature of the Calcutta ground, the use of marble posed considerable problems, so the foundations of the entire structure were raised above ground on a low marble terrace, elevating the building above the flat Maidan and enhancing its dignity. So important was Curzon to the impetus of the whole project that when he left India, late in 1905, it ran into severe difficulties and only his continuing interest and indefatigable lobbying ensured its completion. The Great War halted building works with the cupolas to the corner towers incomplete, but finally in December 1921 the entire monument was finished and opened by the Prince of Wales.

Architecturally the Victoria Memorial Hall may lack the essential spark of genius and the discipline which creates the masterpiece, but for sheer impact and presence it has a certain sublime quality which transcends the loose amalgam of its constituent parts. Its form and massing are wholly European in conception and these are loosely based on Emerson's earlier design approach for the Takhtsingi Hospital at Bhawanagar, but at the Victoria Memorial Emerson introduced more subtle concessions to India. The corner domes are faintly Moghul in origin, the window arches are carved with Indian filigree or *mouch-arabya* work, whilst over the windows on the corner towers flow the great rivers of India, in stone – symbolising the life-giving work of the British Raj. Many of the Saracenic details were designed by Vincent Esch, who supervised the erection of the building on the strength of his work in Hyderabad. The crowning dome, the fifth largest in the world when erected, is surmounted by a huge bronze revolving angel of Victory – sixteen feet high and weighing three tons – and directly beneath the dome, in one vast central chamber, stands a solitary marble statue of Victoria as a young girl. Executed by Sir Thomas Brock RA, it is taken from Chantrey's bust of the Queen at Windsor. Surrounding

Victoria Memorial, Calcutta: Lord Curzon's statue stands beneath an arch inscribed with the royal coat of arms and ciphers. The bronze statue of Victory crowning the dome slowly revolves, proclaiming British dominion in India to all.

the statue are marble friezes and panels by Frank Salisbury depicting scenes from her reign – from the timorous, white-robed young girl on the morning of her accession to the triumphant Imperial climax of the Diamond Jubilee. The central panels are inscribed with the great Imperial attributes – Dominion, Power, Loyalty and Freedom. Yet ironically it was the fundamental conflict between the concepts of Dominion and Freedom, expressed in the continuing tension between the high Imperial mission and the English liberal tradition, that led to the end of the Raj. Empires tend to have the weaknesses of their strengths and all it needed was for the subjects of the Empire to appeal to the innate sense of freedom for which the Empire stood, and the whole edifice came tumbling down.

Pax Britannica: bronze statuary outside the Victoria Memorial.

CHAPTER 9

NEW DELHI : THE ROME OF HINDOSTAN

> An empire can nurse no finer ideal than the cohesion of its dominions in cities erected in one style of architecture recognised throughout the world as the expression of its own imperial ideals. The encouragement of such an empire-pervading style throughout colonies, dependencies, and protectorates will tend to annihilate distance and conduce to an imperial liberty, equality and fraternity.

In 1912, when this resounding Imperial polemic appeared in *The Builder*, attempts to impose an artificial unity of any sort whether political, economic or architectural were doomed to failure. The Empire was united only in its diversity. It never assumed an identifiable pattern for it was constantly changing like a global kaleidoscope. The elusive search for architectural unity was important as a way of expressing national vigour, virility, and Imperial resolve; if the British faltered others would seize pre-eminence. *The Builder* continued: 'When Great Britain is incapable of setting an example of architectural achievement to her dependencies other nations more virile will slowly but surely take advantage of her relapse – step into the breach, undermine her prestige, and bring about an imperial disaffection more effectual in its consequences than the ravages of internal feuds.' It remains the supreme irony that when at New Delhi Britain did make an architectural statement which symbolised to the world her Imperial mission and artistic genius, it was all to no avail.

The combative climate of international rivalry that characterised the New Imperialism of the 1880s is clearly discernible in the patriotic prolixity of *The Builder*. It also added impetus to the martial impulse, present from the earliest days of the old East India Company. Military power was not just a tool for commercial ends, but an instrument in the burgeoning struggle for global supremacy. In India this was the Great Game, the often illusory secret struggle with Russia at one remove away across the frozen wastes of the Hindu Kush and the barren deserts of Afghanistan. The focus for this confrontation was the North-West Frontier and the Tribal Territory on the Afghan border.

Here the architecture reflected the chronic insecurity of the whole region. At Lahore, the great crossroads of the Punjab, situated on the main railway line from Upper India to the Frontier, the railway station, like that in Delhi, was designed as a fortress by the local engineer, William Brunton, with colossal crenellated corner towers, and cavernous trainsheds which could be sealed in an emergency, crowned by a romantic bevy of bartizans and turrets. Further towards the