Inside the Gateway of India, Bombay, which was built in 1927 to commemorate a visit, sixteen years before, of the then King-Emperor, George V. A Mr G. Wittet designed this fanciful mixture of Arc de Triomphe and Moorish palace in yellow basalt. It was the last monument to Empire built in India, and, appropriately, it was the site from which the last soldiers of the Raj left India after Independence in 1947.

STONES OF EMPIRE

The Buildings of the Raj

TEXT BY

JAN MORRIS

WITH PHOTOGRAPHS, CAPTIONS,
AND A NEW FOREWORD BY

SIMON WINCHESTER

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FOREWORD

So much has changed, and all so very fast. It has been sixty years since India won her Independence, and twenty years since this book was written. The subsequent attitudes—political, social, architectural—have altered like the weather, and with all the drama of the coming of the monsoon.

At first, back in the Forties and Fifties, when the Raj had just packed its tents and left, there was apprehensive relief all across India, and much blimpish outrage in the British shires. So the architectural legacy left behind in India was seen—maybe more by the builders than by the beneficiaries—as offering to India some kind of symbolic guarantee, a series of assurances carved in stone that matters for the newly reclaimed sovereign nations of the subcontinent would somehow henceforward be all right. The buildings themselves, enshrining institutions that made for civilized governance, would themselves ensure that.

And so the great government palaces that Lutyens purposely bequeathed in New Delhi provided for India an assurance hewn in red sandstone that constitutional rule and democracy would long flourish. The splendidly ornate Victorian High Courts in Lahore, likewise, promised Pakistan the eternal primacy of good law. The railway stations and post offices and granaries that were built from Peshawar to Chittagong, from Srinagar to Trivandrum, all of them designed by dewey-faced and bespectacled men sent briefly out from the Home Counties, held in their simple brickwork an unspoken promise too. That, even with the omnipotence of Viceregal rule finally over, India's trains would all still leave on time, her letters would still thud daily down onto a million Indian doormats, and the roadside chai-stalls would always have steaming bowls of dal for sale, the jute sacks of chickpeas for their making all readily to hand, no matter what.

But then as India and Pakistan got to their respective feet, screeching and squabbling with arguments both secular and godly, so most of these promises (which were probably offered more to let those who left feel themselves indispensable, rather than to give real comfort to those for whom they were said to be designed) seemed to become steadily more and more hollow, their implied guarantees ever more frequently unmet. It was

in the Sixties and Seventies: the trains slowed down, the posts went uncollected, the courts became ossified, governments became, on occasion, rigid and inflexible and corrupt.

And many of the buildings themselves seemed to match this new mood of disillusion. Walls in Calcutta became stained with betel-juice and fly-poster glue, plaster fell from monsoon-damp ceilings in Bombay, old cottages of deodar-wood up in Simla burned in minutes, Calcuttan lawns went uncut, tendrils of jungle green started to crawl through the floorboards of clubs in Madras. And in a very few years or so the magnificent confections of marble and wrought iron and London Brick became transmuted into a scattering of tilted memorials to unrealized dreams. All that remained was the most tenuous hope held by some faraway Britons (and most condescendingly, of course) that perhaps one day the institutions that these structures had housed, and the ambitions that their presence had nurtured, might well return to full flower—and that, once properly matured, the post-colonial states of India, Pakistan, and now Bangladesh might, in time, become truly deserving of such stones of empire as these. Not least because by then they surely would have become properly *civilized* states, able to behave in a manner precisely like their former masters.

And then, almost out of nowhere, there came a period of revival. By the middle and late Seventies one could hear a sudden growing drumbeat of what seemed, in theory, an utter heresy: an unstated new mood of tolerance, one that was even touched with some real, if muted affection for the departed Raj. It was a drumbeat that seemed to grow and reach its climax during the years that were marked by horrible happenings at home. It grew during Mrs. Gandhi's short and vicious period of emergency rule from Delhi. It swelled at the time (approximately coincident) when new regimes were rudely installed both in Dacca and in Islamabad, the one racked by murderous series of coups d'etat, the other by cruel excesses of religious zeal. All of these new home-grown rulers, wherever in the remains of old India they were, seemed briefly so alien to the generally amiable disposition of the subcontinent's peoples.

It was coincident with all of this that the long-departed British Raj, for all of its iniquities and shortcomings, appeared by contrast to be a thing of reason and fairness—two qualities that were so evidently lacking in the region at the time. Hence the affection and the nostalgia that at the time was widely expressed in India. Hence the puffed-up chests and I-told-you-sos of a few knowing and sunburned old men in retirement in the Cotswolds. Hence some local buffings-up of brass and some hurried white-washings of a few British-made mansions which lay decaying in the heat and dust. And hence, as it happens, this book. *Stones of Empire*, which

was written and illustrated in the early 1980s, had a tone of kindly admiration about it, and unashamedly so. It was a book that managed to capture, or to parallel, that brief period in post-Imperial India when the British, and their legacy, seemed more palatable than was usual or expected. It wasn't just a British-made book dutifully expressing a faint pang of regret that the Raj had vanished; it happened to reflect India's briefly-held mood of regret as well.

That was twenty years ago, and it is all very much behind us. Now, in the Indian subcontinent, the attitude has changed once more. At first the buildings stood for some kind of optimistic symbolism; then they became targets of rank disapprobation, which in turn became hostility. There followed the short period of mild affection that we captured; and this has been replaced more recently by a much more complicated mixture, in which an unknowing disdain and a studied insouciance are most probably the two primary components.

For does the harried commuter in Mumbai—and it must be noted in the context of this book that all the city names have changed now, and that not one single city in today's India memorializes the Raj any more, even though when the book was written almost all of the major centres, Madras to Trichinopoly, still did sport their British-given names—does he feel anything at all when his train draws up at Victoria Terminus, that most ornate and ridiculously grandiose of all the structures which the Raj had left behind?

His mood would have altered with the temper of the times. Fifty years ago there would be some awe, perhaps, in his awareness of the station's incredible size and spectacle. Thirty years ago, caught up in the mood of the moment, he might well have wished, along with his disillusioned peers, that the city would tear down its oppressive, brooding bulk. Twenty years ago, with matters made so hard by his own government, he might have liked to see it cleaned and returned to its once gleaming state, a reminder of better times before. And now, these days, he simply does not care. Victoria Terminus, 'VT', now simply exists—not any longer the symbol of something either good or bad, not something invested either with promise or with menace. It is simply there, part of the Mumbai scenery, accepted, acknowledged, ignored.

Next door to India, China has taken a very different approach. The authorities there, stung by the irritating presence of the *lao-wei* legacies, have tried gamely over the last few decades actually to destroy a great many of the great buildings that were put up by the foreigner exploiters. Bulldozers have clanked relentlessly through the mock-Tudor suburbs of Shanghai, the old legations of Peking are no more, the German mansions of

Shantung have been burned, and one can barely discern anything French that once stood in the purlieus of Hainan. Where the buildings of the foreign commercial Raj that once occupied China were built in ineradicably magnificent style and bulk (the banks and clubs along the Bund of the Whangpoo in Shanghai most notably) the Chinese solution has been most cunning: to build even more spectacular skyscrapers right alongside them, so that the efforts of the non-Chinese interlopers seem puny by comparison, a laughable set of markers to which Chinese schoolchildren can be directed: *see, this is the best that they could do, and then they went away!*

But India never had either the money, the wherewithal, or the required amount of tyranny to dispose of the problems of architectural symbolism with such dispatch. Municipal budgets have been so strapped that aside from a subway system here or a ring-road there, the sixty years since Independence have largely kept the shape and content of India's cities much as they once were—all broadly still recognisable to the elderly gents from the Cotswolds, were they ever to come back. All India could do, all it can do, is to take a very Indian approach: to keep the buildings intact and in place, to accept them as part of urban karma for what they are, to forget or to overlook their history, and to ignore such symbolism as others might attach to them.

Perhaps the only ones now for whom these buildings have real and settled meaning are the descendants of those who built them. For those who now live among them, they have become well nigh invisible. And that, perhaps, is how it should be. For as long as the buildings stand, even if they are built well enough (and most of them were, for the makers of the monuments of the Raj were master builders indeed) to endure through a thousand monsoons to come.

S. W.
February 2005

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Country Life, pp. 100, 170 (bottom).
Denis Thorpe, p. 12.

A NOTE ABOUT THE TEXT

When this book speaks of 'India', it means India before the partition of 1947.

When it speaks of 'Anglo-Indian', it uses the phrase in its original sense – appertaining, that is, to the British in India.

The structures it describes were all built in Indian territories under direct British sovereignty, except for a few built by the British for their own use within the territories of independent Indian rulers.

1 · *Introductory*

A brutal virtue

Like it or not, there was virtue in the Greek sense to the idea of empire, the assumption that one tribe, race, or nation might, by the brutal privilege of *force majeure*, legitimately lord it over another. The idea is disguised nowadays in economic device or political euphemism, but in its days of climax it was creatively explicit. If it was born out of petty squabbles around cave or cromlech, it developed into majestic movements of men and beliefs, so that the whole world is still shaped by its progressions and layered with its deposits. Every empire wanes in the end – 'one with Nineveh and Tyre' – but all our lives have been affected, sometimes directed, by the long march of imperialism.

The most potent legacies of empires are immaterial things: religions, languages, frames of mind, systems of law, manners and pastimes, conventions, traditions, so that to this day (for instance) the Christianity of Spain blazes on in Mexico or Peru, the language of France finds speakers of exquisite cadence in Chad or Guadeloupe, they are still playing cricket in Papua New Guinea (fifty-nine players a side), and the legacy of Roman order survives sporadically over most of western Europe, ending recognizably even now at the point where the Roman Empire ended, on the shores of the Irish Sea.

Grand animate effects also testify to the godlike presumptions of imperialism. American potatoes sprout in Nepal. English rabbits multiply in Queensland. Spanish horses roam the pampas of Argentina. The human race itself was physically mutated by the imperial experience. On the one hand new kinds of person were created – mulattos and mestizos, Eurasians, Coloureds, Creoles. On the other old kinds were altered by unaccustomed climes and landscapes. If empire was a sterilization in some respects, it was a fertilization in others. It was like an unreliable gene, productive alike of cretins, thugs, saints and geniuses.

But more than most political abstractions, imperialism expressed itself directly in material objects too. Every conqueror dreamed up his own monuments, every empire liked to emblemize itself in marble. Architects were always ready to oblige, from the Pharoah's Imhotep to the Führer's Albert Speer, and they have

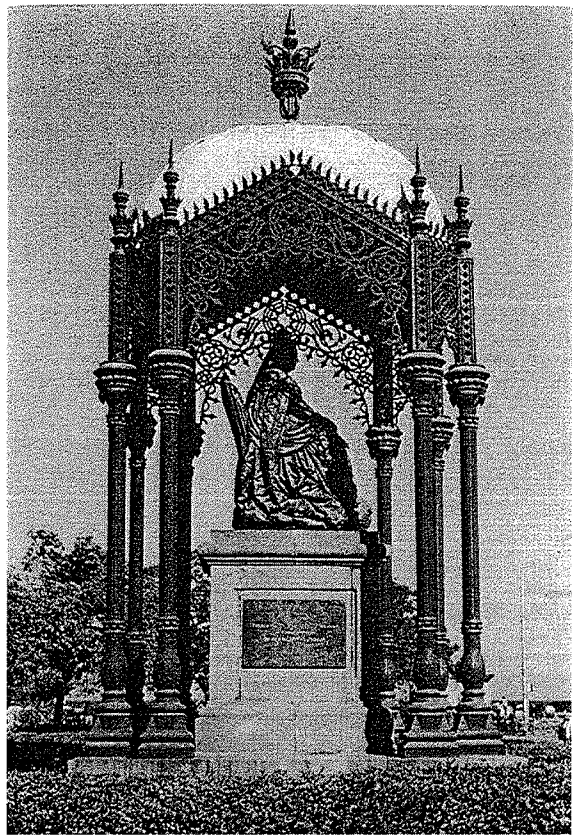
left their tributes everywhere: mile upon mile of ceremonial highway, labyrinths of imperial offices, mountains of obelisk and triumphal arch – heroic catafalques and lapidary texts – effigies of emperors, generals, law-makers – sun-lions of Persia, winged lions of Venice, eagle-heads of Russia or Austria, serpents of Egypt, cocks of France, wolves of Italy – 'Look on these works, ye mighty, and despair!'

The British way of empire

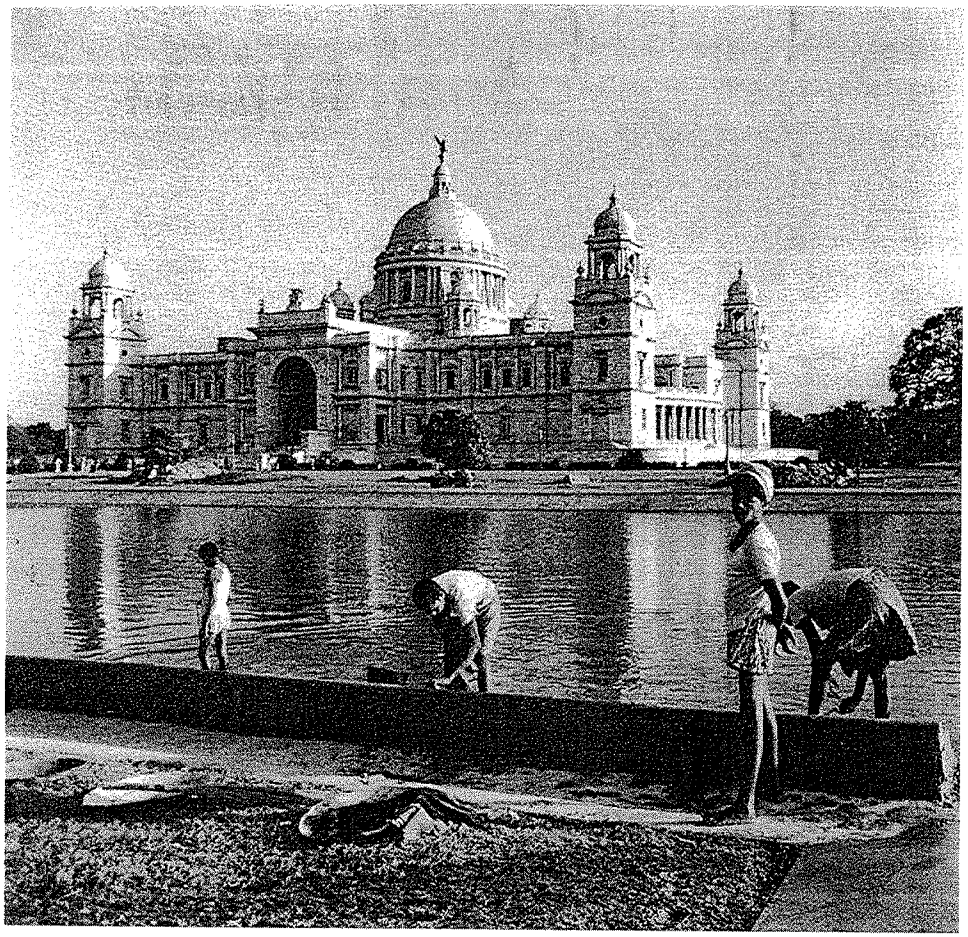
It says something for the British Empire, the greatest of the conventional empires and possibly the last, that it built relatively few of these self-glorifying prodigies. Though at its apogee it ruled a quarter of the earth's land surface and nearly a quarter of its people, though the sun then really did never set upon all its scattered possessions at the same time, still hubris was not its habitual style. This was hardly a matter of modesty, but was perhaps because this particular empire never really possessed an ideology – was temperamentally opposed, indeed, to political rules, theories and generalizations. It was the most powerful political organism of its time, yet it was seldom altogether sure of itself or its cause. Except in brief periods of special activity, or among specific groups of activists, it lacked the fanatic fire.

For one thing its ruling people, the British themselves, were traditionally dedicated to the liberty of subjects, which made the practice of British imperialism an anomaly from the start, and meant that its purposes were never unanimous. A united ruling class, it used to be said, was necessary to inspire a nation into imperial causes, but the members of the English land-owning hierarchy, far from being united in the excitement of empire-building, were more often than not profoundly bored by it, being perfectly content with their own lovely houses and magnificent countryside. As Lord Melbourne once asked, how could a gentleman possibly be interested in a country like Canada, where a salmon would not even rise to a fly? Or as an Indian Maharajah observed when visiting a country house in Derbyshire, how could an Englishman bring himself to go out to the discomforts of the East, when he could stay at home in such a place playing the flute and watching the rabbits?

Then again, the fundamental purpose of British imperialism was commercial, the pursuit of profit by a nation of merchants and manufacturers. Its political, strategic and improving activities were ancillary to the making of money, the securing of raw materials and markets, the manipulation of prices. The Flag went forth so that Trade could follow, and very often, in point of fact, the order was reversed. Of course the empire-builders often liked to claim loftier intentions, and by the nature of things the British Empire, having seized responsibility for the lives of such multitudes across the world, developed into something far greater than a mere economic agency: but still the establishment of law and order, the



Victoria, Queen-Empress: in canopied magnificence outside Chisholm's Indo-Saracenic University of Madras; and dusty and forgotten in a back corridor of the Memorial Hall, Udaipur.



The Victoria Memorial, Calcutta – Britain's answer to the Taj Mahal. The Prince of Wales laid the foundation stone of Sir William Emerson's white marble monument in 1906. It took fifteen years to finish, with the ornamental statuary fashioned in Italy. It is guarded by the police of Independent India with considerable zeal, so frequently has it been a target for Calcutta's enthusiastic demonstrators.

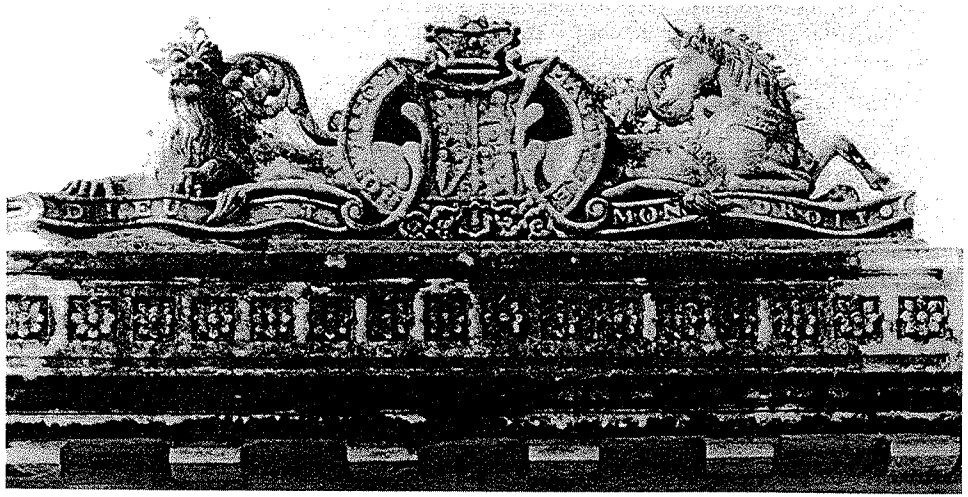
alleged enlightenment of the heathen, the reform of stagnant systems, the policing of the world, the glory and the sacrifice – all these were subject *au fond* to the exigencies of trade.

Except among a minority of zealots or visionaries, British imperialism was never its own cause. Parliament, always the supreme arbiter of the Empire, was seldom altogether seduced by the imperial idea, so that public money was begrudgingly spent, and every excess was questioned. No flamboyant satraps were let loose upon the far frontiers to commemorate themselves in pillars or temples: when in the 1850s the Governor of Bombay was rash enough to build himself a new house, it was criticized in the House of Commons as 'a typical instance of extravagance and insubordination'. Workaday railroads, not triumphal highways, were the mark of this *imperium*. Even the effigies of Queen Victoria which, in the heyday of the British Empire, arose like so many idols wherever the British ruled or settled – even these were subject to votes in municipal councils, reluctantly allowed for in departmental estimates, or paid for by church fêtes.

The Raj

There were really two British Empires. The first was a settlement empire, a western extension of Britain itself, and was lost to the Crown when, in 1778, the settlers of the Thirteen Colonies obeyed their manifest destiny and threw off the authority of London. The second was empire in the classic kind, empire by guile or conquest: though it too contained several great settler colonies – in Canada, Australasia, South Africa and the West Indies – it chiefly consisted of vast undeveloped tracts of tropical territory from which the British could extract the substances they needed for their industries, and into which, in highly profitable converse, they could pour their manufactured goods. This was essentially the Victorian Empire, Kipling's Empire, the Empire of the White Man's Burden, of the Zulus and the Fuzzy-Wuzzies, of the memsahib, the sundowner, General Gordon, Kitchener, Rorke's Drift, the Great Game – the empire which was to go into myth, like the American West, engendering its own images down the generations, and firing its own fancies.

Its centre-piece was always India. In the climactic years of British imperialism, the last decades of the nineteenth century, five-sixths of the Empire's subjects lived there. It was the possession of India that made Britian a great world power. The material resources of the place seemed illimitable, its markets were insatiable, its reserves of manpower were enormous, the prestige of its possession was incalculable, and around this colossal source of strength, wealth and authority much of the rest of the Empire was assembled. In many British minds indeed India *was* the Empire. It was only of India that, in 1877, Victoria was proclaimed



Uncompromising reminders of British dominion. New Writers' Buildings, Calcutta, where a thousand 'baboos' clerked to keep the rickety machine of the Bengal Civil Service in something approaching working order. The gateway gives entrance to the British Residency in Hyderabad – its Resident was charged with Viceregal powers, and his mansion was accordingly splendid, the better to treat with the fiefdom's rulers.

Queen-Empress, and all the wildest hyperboles of imperialist propaganda were reserved for the Jewel of the East, the Gem of the Imperial Diadem. Such art as came out of the British imperial experience came chiefly out of India: most of the nostalgia which, into our own times, has attached itself to the imperial idea is concerned with what has become known sentimentally to the British as the Raj (though the Hindi word simply means 'sovereignty' – *any* sovereignty).

India became part of the British national consciousness like no other possession. Whole families devoted themselves to the Indian connection, their members going out decade after decade as soldiers, governors or merchants. There were never more than a thousand British members of the covenanted Indian Civil Service, the administrative corps which ran the country, but many thousands of businessmen and their families lived in India, and thousands of planters, missionaries, foresters, railwaymen, river pilots, physicians or newspapermen. The powerful Indian Army was officered by Britons, and regiments of the British Army, too, regularly served in the country. In the 1830s there were some 41,000 Britons in India; in the 1860s about 126,000; in the 1930s about 165,000, half of them soldiers. So constant was the flow of traffic between the two countries, the ships of the Peninsular and Oriental or the British India lines, the lumbering biplanes and flying-boats of Imperial Airways, that the association came to seem, in British eyes, virtually indestructible. India was part of the British way of things. Without India, people used to say, Britain herself (or England, as they generally preferred it) would never be the same again.

First to last

The British had first established themselves in India, as speculative traders, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, when the paramount force in the country was the Muslim Empire of the Moguls, based in the north. The Portuguese had possessed colonies at Goa and Bombay for a century already, and Dutch, French, Swedish and Danish merchants were also active, so that at first the traders of the British East India Company were scarcely more than rival beachcombers upon the shore. In 1639, though, the Company acquired governmental rights in Madras, on the eastern coast, and thirty years later it came into possession of Bombay, in the west, which had been passed to Charles II as part of his dowry from the Portuguese Catharine of Braganza. Thereafter the Company became more than just a trading organization, but a Power. As the authority of the Moguls weakened, and India fell apart in war and rivalry, so the Company developed the appurtenances of a State, armies, fleets, administrators, tax-collectors, minting its own money, imposing its own laws. By the end of the century it was in effect the sovereign authority in the three principal ports of India – Bombay, Calcutta

and Madras – all virtually established by the British themselves, and henceforth known as the Presidency towns.

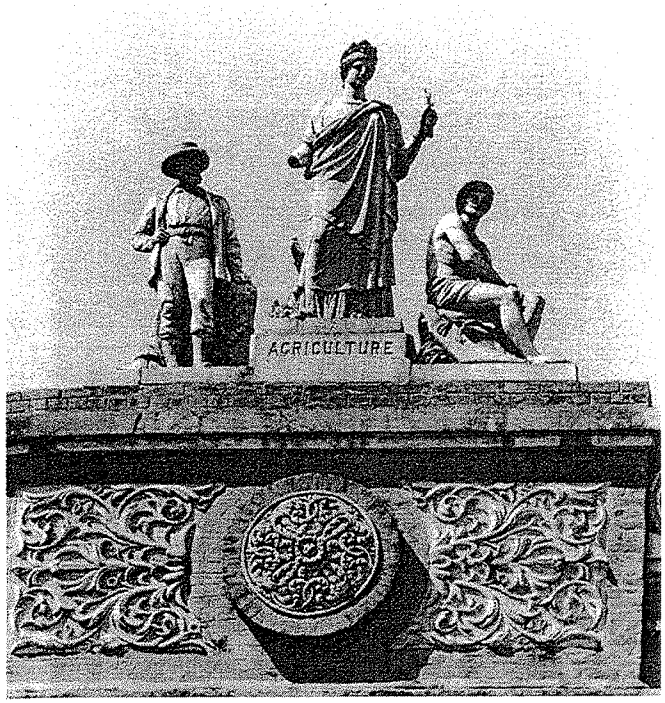
Gradually, by diplomacy, skulduggery, and force of arms, the Company's power then spread across India, defeating foreign rivals and recalcitrant indigenes alike; by the 1850s almost the whole subcontinent was, in one way or another, under its control. A British Governor-General ruled the roost, with his headquarters in Calcutta. The Mogul Emperor was a mere puppet, the lesser Indian princelings were all vassals, the Portuguese, French, Danes, Dutchmen, and Swedes had either been expelled, or were confined to infinitesimal holdings that posed no threat. The Indian Mutiny, which broke out in 1857 in a savage explosion of native resentment and foreboding, only strengthened the British hold on India in the end, while the astonishing hurling of railways across the land, in the most formidable of all the technical achievements of the British, gave their command a new strategic, commercial and even cultural cohesion.

In 1858 the Company formally handed over power to the British Crown, and India became an empire in itself, with a Queen-Empress in London, and a Viceroy to represent her in Calcutta. The splendour of it all was terrific, the assurance supreme, but even so within half a century it began to fade. Wars, nationalist protests, lagging vitality, economic falter at home, criticism abroad, moral doubts and intellectual arguments, all weakened the state of British India. The hold was relaxed, the confidence evaporated, until in the middle of the twentieth century the British more or less voluntarily abandoned their vast and ancient estates in India, and the last of the conquering soldiers sailed away to mingled tears, hurrahs and catcalls.

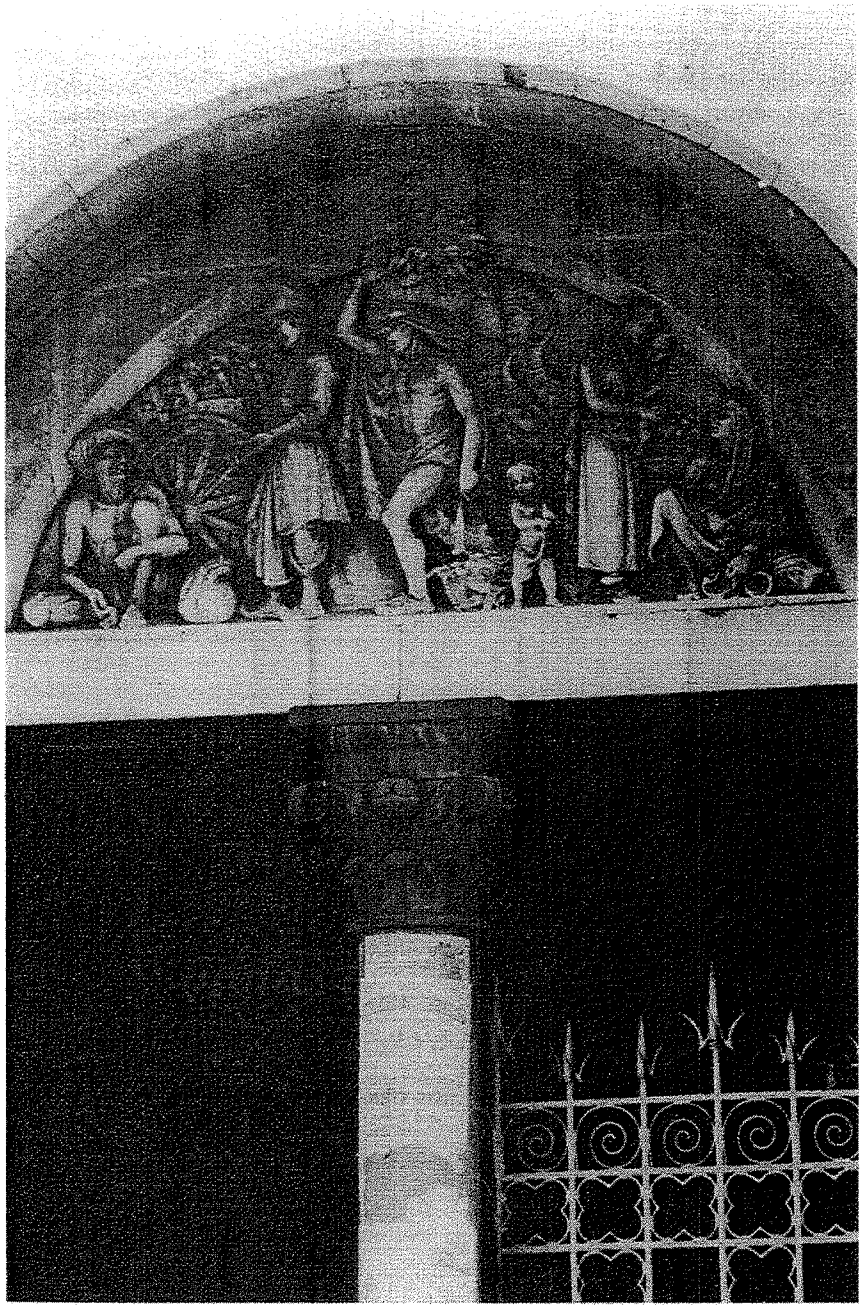
Imperial masonries

It had lasted, from the first landfall to the last embarkation, more than 300 years, but it had never really succeeded in reducing India. The British were proud that they had given the entire subcontinent, perhaps for the first time, political cohesion, binding it all together under their efficient aegis, and ensuring in the end almost a century of unbroken peace. But they never homogenized it, or subdued it to a single style or loyalty.

It was much too unwieldy for that. It spanned twenty-five degrees of latitude, from the Himalayan frontiers of China, Russia and Tibet in the north to Cape Cormorin in the south, and thirty degrees of longitude, marching in the west with Iran and Afghanistan, in the east with Burma (itself part of the Indian Empire until 1937, when it was made a separate British Dominion). Within these borders it displayed most of the earth's geographical kinds – tremendous mountains, wide and barren plains, lush pasture-lands, rain forests, marshlands, palmy beaches, bogs, grassy uplands like English downs, paddy-fields like China, orchards like



The whimsical side of the Raj. The somewhat weathered statues adorn the skyline of New Writers' Buildings, Calcutta – Science, Commerce, Justice and Agriculture preside a hundred feet above the bustle of Dalhousie Square. Three miles away the cherub, his cheek brushed bright by a million hopeful visitors, floats in a marble cloud at the Victoria Memorial.



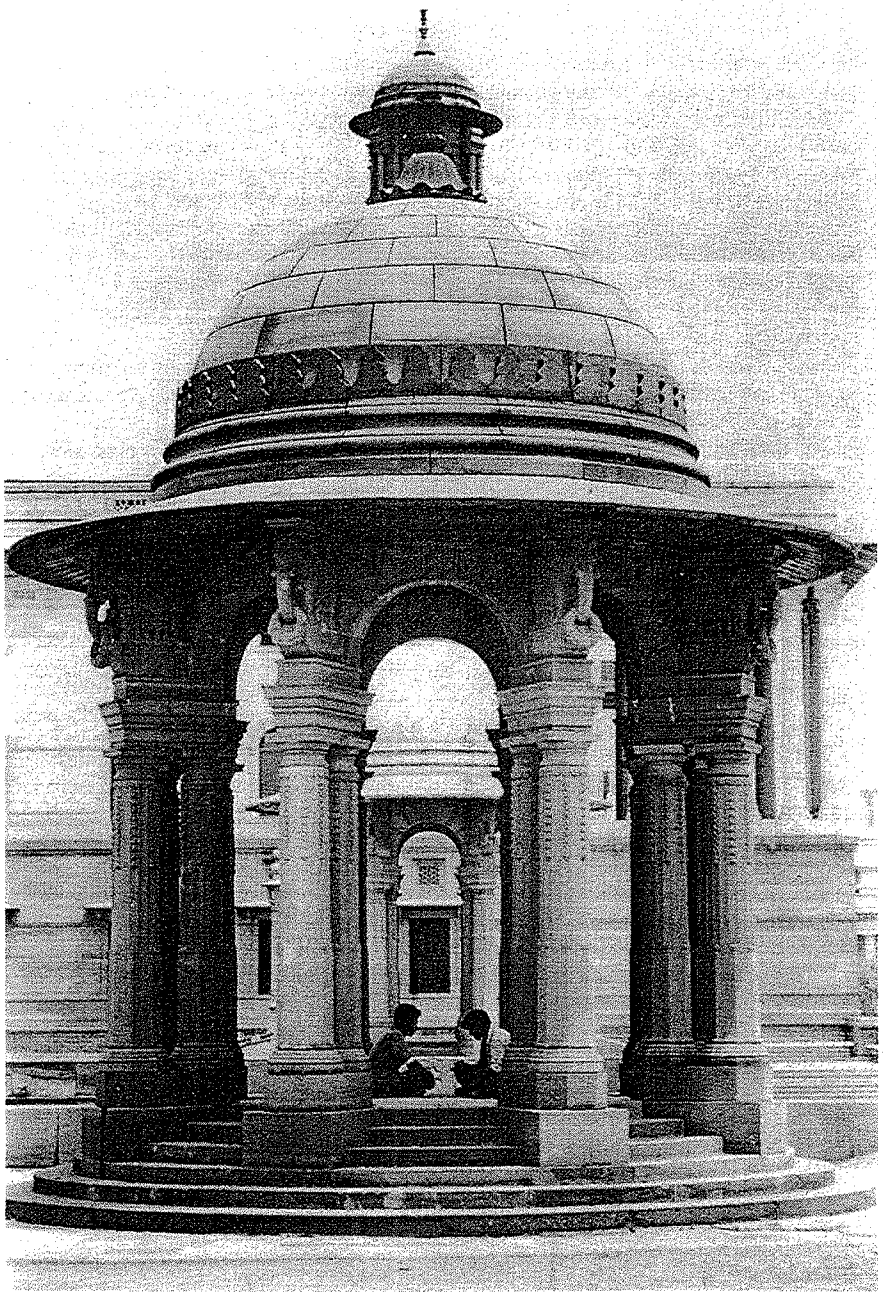
Italy. It contained, by the end of British rule, more than 400 million people, speaking 800 languages, multiplying at a dizzy rate and exerting the energies of many religions and uncountable traditions. What was more, even in the most grandiose days of Empire, some 600 Indian princes retained the sovereignty of their own Native States under British protection and supervision, ranging from potentates like the Nizam of Hyderabad or the Maharajah of Mysore to country squires or even village notables, and powerfully contributing to the variety and unpredictability of everything. In books of statistics or imperial publicity India might seem a manageable entity, brought to order by British method: on the ground, first to last, it was a pungent, virile and gigantic muddle, kept in hand by British bluff.

Such was the unimaginable prize which the British had grasped for themselves in the East by their greed, courage and originality, and it dictated the nature of their imperialism at large. In India the British Empire found all its truest expressions, in its mixture of the opportunist and the self-righteous, the admirable and the inexcusable, the benevolent and the insufferable, the charming and the arrogant, the imaginative and the insensitive. The British were deeply and permanently influenced by their long stay in India, and the effects were felt not merely among the imperialists on the spot, but more diffusely among people at home too; so that like heliographs, across three centuries, India and England flashed their messages one to another, each simultaneously instructing and obeying.

All this the British transmuted, often unintentionally, into the buildings they erected in India. There was more stylish architecture to be found elsewhere in their Empire. The colonial structures of North America and the Caribbean, the exquisite Georgian streets of Dublin, the fine stone country houses of Tasmania were better than almost anything they built in India. But the range of their Indian construction was unrivalled. Not since the Romans, it is probably safe to sáy, had an imperial people erected such a grand range of structures in a subject land. They expressed the will of a people not simply to rule, evangelize, or exploit another, but to adapt itself to utterly alien circumstances, landscapes altogether unlike its own, a climate unfamiliar and demanding, against which it must compete both for imperial effect and for its own survival, and for which it evolved specific new vernaculars – tropical adaptations of the Georgian terrace, orientalized railway stations, or seaside villas, whisked from Paignton or Weymouth, that were inventively adjusted to Himalayan conditions.

Built into their masonries we may detect the mingled emotions of British imperialism, at once so arrogant and so homesick, and they provide an index to its techniques and aspirations: how it worked, what it wanted, what it thought itself to be. If the British anywhere left stones of empire in a generic sense, then India is the place to find them.

Figures representing the dignity of rural life, carved above one of the entrances to the Crawford Market, Bombay. The bas-reliefs were carved by Rudyard Kipling's father.



2 · Theoretical

Modes and origins

It is said that, even when British rule ended in 1947, millions of Indians had never set eyes upon a Briton. Nevertheless there were few villages in India where the empire-builders did not leave some physical sign of their passing. It might only be a water-pump, or a post-box, or a level crossing gate, or just the long line of telegraph-poles stretching away to the dun horizon, but still it was unmistakably theirs. These were technical imperialists. Gasworks or water-towers were at least as characteristic of their dominion as courts of justice or gubernatorial mansions.

It was because of their mastery of technique that the British had an empire in India at all. They were the first harnessers of steam, and the first to take the radical new systems of the machine age into the simpler places of the earth. The great period of their ascendancy in India coincided almost exactly with their industrial pre-eminence in the world at large, and the buildings they constructed in India were the direct reflection of their achievements at home. But there was a time-lag – not just the gap that always separates architecture from political and social events, but also the gap that separated happenings in Britain from reactions in India.

On one level there was the sheer physical delay. It was 11,000 miles from London to Bombay, until the cutting of the Suez Canal, and in the days before steamships and cables it took six months to get a letter home, and another six months to receive a reply. Fashions were always out of date in India – Paris modes from the season before last, archaic cuts of shoes or saddlery, instalments of *Pickwick* or *Vanity Fair* long since absorbed at home, or bound up definitively into volumes. As late as the 1930s visitors found life among the Anglo-Indians curiously echo-like: 'Oxford bags!' they used irritatingly to exclaim, 'Good God, haven't seen them for years', or, 'My dear, you're not *still* reading *If Winter Comes* . . .?' Anachronism was part of the ambience: only the arrival of American troops during the Second World War convinced imperial officialdom that the unremitting wearing of topis was not after all absolutely essential to survival in the Indian climate.

Lutyens in New Delhi. A red sandstone cupola provides relief from the new capital's summer sun.

On a deeper level there were delays in taste and attitude because of imperialism's innate conservatism. Boldly innovative in its first stages, imperialism generally became almost immobile in the end, and in the later British Empire, as in most others, new ideas were prima facie suspect. They wanted no new-fangled nonsense from Europe. Not only did they know best what suited themselves in their own colonial environment, but they had always at the backs of their minds what was modern in England when they left it – ten, twenty, fifty years before. The Viceroys of India, who were political appointees from home and normally served a five-year term of office, were often regarded by the Anglo-Indian Establishment as meddling radicals, until the old machinery tamed and slowed them – 'like the diurnal revolution of the earth', wrote the exasperated Lord Curzon, 'went the files, steady, solemn, sure and slow'. British India, so swift off the mark in its youth, was terribly lumbering in its maturity.

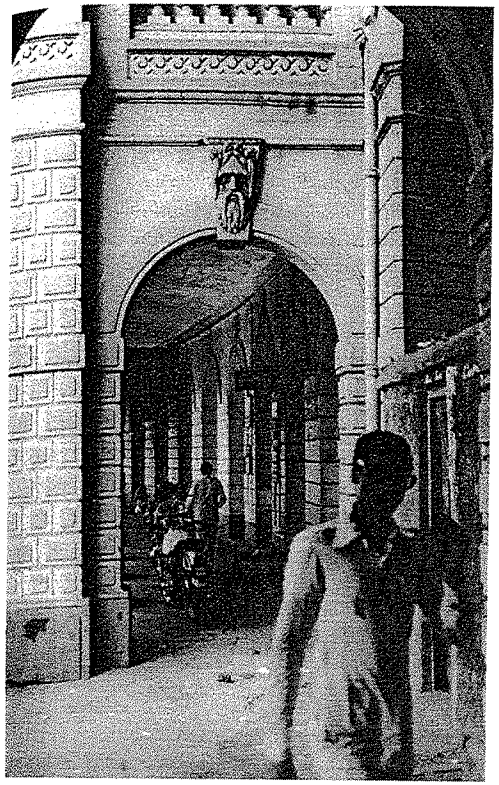
So the architectural modes of England, too, all reached India, but rather late. The age of the Raj spanned several architectural periods. When the British first became a Power in India, the Palladian and the Baroque were the dominant styles in England – the British established themselves in Bombay during the construction of St. Paul's Cathedral in London. Georgian neo-classicism was all the fashion in the years when they were developing the Presidency towns, and by the time they had made themselves paramount throughout India the Gothic Revival was in full flair. The eclectic flamboyance of High Victorian coincided with the imperial apogee; during the decades that followed, when the British gradually lost their convictions of grand destiny in India, English architecture degenerated into a mishmash of compromise and half measure, generally lacking either swank or tenderness, and toying only timidly with the new modernism coming out of Germany and America.

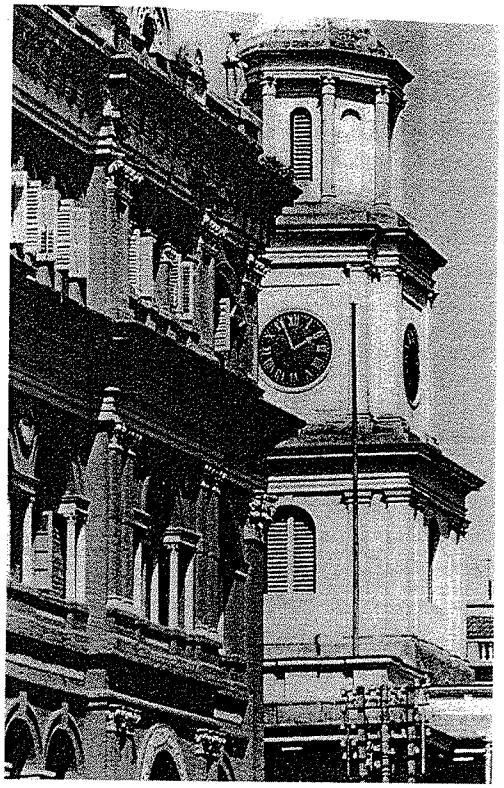
Sooner or later, as we shall see, all these styles found their mirror images in India. The connection was constant from Wren to Lutyens.

Mutations

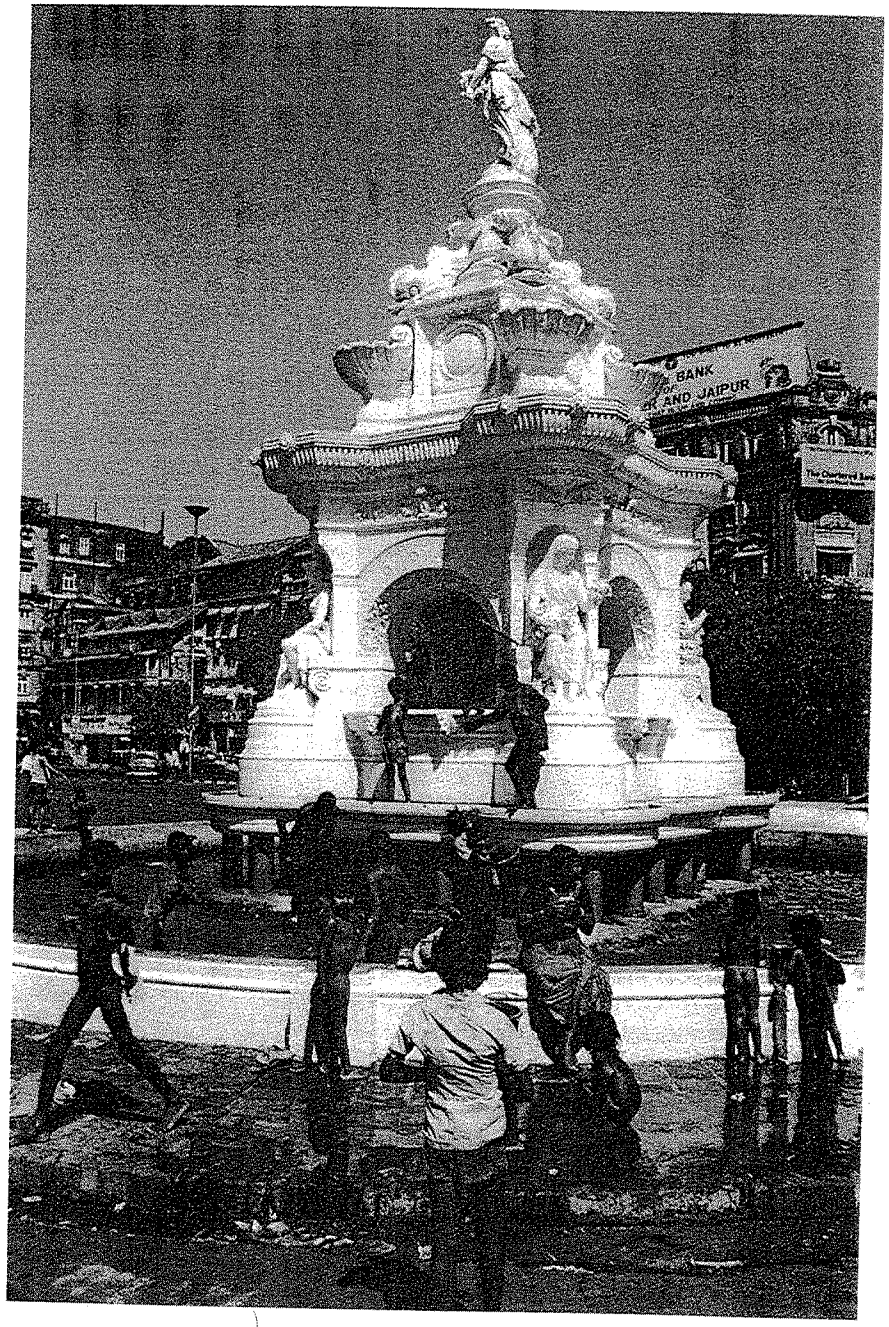
But they were all, like the empire-builders themselves, slightly mutated *en voyage*. The men and women got browner, louder, thinner, or sometimes thicker. The architectural styles got cruder, looser, wider and very often larger. They were making the sea change from a highly advanced Western country, whose art stood in the direct line of descent from Greece, Rome, the Gothic master-masons and the Renaissance, to a country whose educated architecture sprang from different roots altogether, and whose vernacular styles were evolved to meet the demands of extreme poverty and simplicity of material.

Throughout the long building period of British India the constructions were, so to speak, roughened by their setting. It was inevitable. The profligacy of the





Comfortable Bombay, classical Calcutta. The High Victorian splendour of Elphinstone Circle, Bombay (*left*), built in the 1860s after the style of Tunbridge Wells, or Leamington Spa. It is currently named Horniman Circle, after an anti-Raj editor who once lived there. India's former British capital, though, is more severely classical, as in the Doric columns of St. Andrew's Church, seen against the Gothic redbrick pile of New Writers' Buildings (*right*).



country, the inexorable pressure of population, hardly made for daintiness, and few buildings could remain altogether immune to the environment. The poor jostled about the garden gates, the supplicants spat their betel juice up the office stairs, the thousands upon thousands of clerks sat awash in paper in departments of State, the indomitable millions of India deposited themselves like nomads, surrounded by bundles and bedding, crowded about by numberless children, in the proudest alcoves of railway stations.

And if it was not people, it was birds, beasts, or insects. We must imagine early Anglo-Indian buildings aswarm with animal life, dogs, horses, flying-foxes, goats, bats, snakes, camels sometimes, even elephants or buffaloes, not to speak of flapping crows and mynas, circling kites, lizards, rats, flies and multitudinous termites. The patter of monkeys' paws on roofs was one of the essential sounds of Simla, the summer capital of the British Empire in India. The adjutant cranes which habitually sat about the parapet of the Viceroy's Palace in Calcutta were so much a part of the place that in old prints they look like artificial ornaments. Jackals and peacocks competitively yelled and squawked around Government House, Allahabad, and Lady Canning, the first Vicereine, reported that during the monsoon her dinner-table in Calcutta was 'covered with creatures as thickly as a drawer of them in a museum'. When in 1916 a funeral service was held for Sir Alexander Pinhey, British Resident in Hyderabad, the swarm of bees which nested beneath the roof of the Residency portico were so angry to be awoken by the strains of the harmonium that they sent the gun-carriage horses bolting down the drive.

Imperial social arrangements further elided the lines of architecture. Nothing was simple in Anglo-India. The most modest British household employed half a dozen servants, the grandest, the Viceroy's, employed in 1939 some 6,000, fifty being engaged solely in scaring the birds off the palace gardens. Each grade of domestic was separated from the others not just by seniority or importance, but probably by caste too, so that elaborate expedients must be devised to prevent mutual defilements; the kitchen quarters of an Anglo-Indian household often looked like a fairly shambled hamlet of its own, and needed stern supervision by the memsahib. As *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook* observed severely in 1892, 'an Indian household can no more be governed peacefully, without dignity and prestige, than an Indian Empire'.

The climate was an architectural complication, too. Most kinds of climate were represented somewhere in India, but the mean was extremely trying, being terribly hot and dry at one time of the year, horribly wet and humid at others. Even the Grecian styles of building, though they looked fine in the brilliant light of India, could not cope with the climate unadapted – it was one thing to stand high in the limpid purity of scented Attic hills, quite another to resist temperatures of up to 120 degrees Fahrenheit, together with fearful dust-storms, violent

Bombay's Trafalgar Square – the wonderfully ornate Flora Fountain, built in honour of Sir Bartle Frere, Governor of Bombay Presidency. All distances to and from Bombay are measured from the Fountain, and many riots begin beside it.

monsoon rains, the ravages of insects and scavenging birds, months of unbroken winter snow in the north, unremitting tropical damp in the south, all conspiring to rot and fret a building, warp its pillars and flake its mouldings.

Anglo-Indian architecture of all styles was accordingly cluttered with devices against the weather. Rattan screens blocked its porticoes and verandahs. Shutters, hoods, lattice-work or venetian blinds shaded its windows. Proportions had to be adjusted, layouts adapted, in response to the heat and the blazing light: the more subtle Anglo-Indian designers learnt, like the Moguls before them, to make vivid use of shade and shadow, but the less skilled merely shoved on an extra verandah here, projecting eaves there, giving their work, all too often, an air of slightly hangdog makeshift.

'Cutcha'

Makeshift too, in the early years, were the materials they used. At first they followed common Indian practices, and built their houses of bamboo, or reeds plastered with earth and cowdung, or mud bricks. The bricks were generally sun-dried and called *cutcha*, a word which consequentially went into Anglo-Indian jargon as a synonym for the second-rate or the half-baked – we learn for example from *Hobson-Jobson*, the nineteenth-century dictionary of the dialect compiled by Henry Yule and A. C. Burnell, that a *cutcha* scoundrel was 'a limp and fatuous knave'.

Pitched roofs were thatched at first, or tiled in rough clay; flat roofs were often made of wood covered with tightly compacted layers of dried leaves and earth. Ceilings were of whitewashed hessian, giving rooms a limp and temporary air, balustrades were frequently of terracotta, and in the absence of glass, oyster shells in wooden frames were sometimes used as windows.

All these compromises the builders did their best to disguise. The façade was everything! They covered their shoddy brick and woodwork with lime plaster, to make it look like stone: in particular the Madras variety of stucco, made of burnt sea shells and known as *chunam*, they learnt to polish with marvellous effect, giving it a convincing look of marble. They dressed up their buildings with sham domes, fake pillars, and misleading substances. The early nineteenth-century Government House at Calcutta was modelled upon Kedleston House in Derbyshire, but as was rhymingly quipped by Lord Curzon, incumbent of both houses at one time or another, the pillars of one were alabaster, the pillars of the other lath and plaster.

Often enough bad materials led to precarious construction, and the annals of early Anglo-Indian construction are full of collapses. The brick pillars of Calcutta houses, a resident complained in 1798, were apt to crumble away before the rest of the house was even finished, and after a few days' rain, he said, their roofs 'drop

and leak all over'. Even Calcutta Town Hall fell down during its construction in 1809, while six years later its ballroom floor began to jump disconcertingly about; though its architect rebuilt it at his own expense, for years people were chary of waltzing on it, and Sir Charles D'Oyley, an eminent local humorist, went into verse about it:

> When pillars bulged, and their foundations gave,
> And the great builder (not to be disgraced)
> Commenced anew, folks still were heard to rave,
> And shunned its tottering walls, as one would shun the grave . . .

No wonder good building materials were much in demand. If sun-dried bricks stood for the mediocre, properly kiln-fired bricks came to represent the Real Thing (*pukka* bricks they were called, and so we have the pukka sahib, the pukka appointment, or – *Hobson-Jobson* again – the pukka scoundrel, 'one whose motto is "Thorough" '). Sometimes the imperial builders had to import their materials – marble from China, teak from Burma, gravel from Bayswater for Calcutta in the 1800s, flagstones from Caithness for Bombay in the 1860s. Sometimes they looted it: wood from the palace of Tipu, Sultan of Mysore, defeated in battle in 1799, went into many a British building. So rare was the use of stone, in the early days of the Empire, that the church of St. John's in Calcutta was simply called The Stone Church, and the first house at Ootacamund was called Stone House. The granite used for the mausoleum of Job Charnock, the seventeenth-century founder of Calcutta, actually went into the geological language as 'charnockite', while the thirty-two black granite columns that stood in ceremonial display outside the British fort at Madras were thought so precious that they became an objective of war during the eighteenth-century conflicts with the French – the French raided Madras and shipped them away to their own colony of Pondicherry, the British raided Pondicherry and shipped them back again.

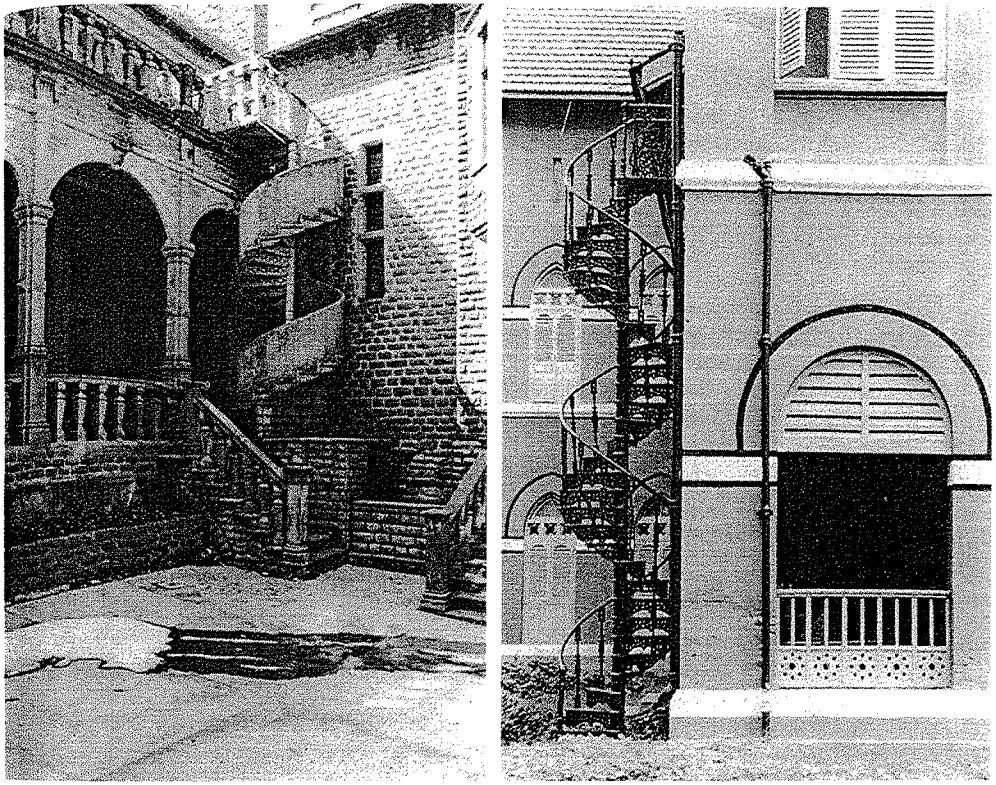
Later stone replaced brick as the prime material of British buildings in India; slate, machine-made tiles, and steel girders came in, galvanized iron revolutionized the Anglo-Indian roof, and gave the Simla monkeys something more sonorous to drum their feet upon. Even as late as 1911, though, when they were planning a new Viceroy's palace at Delhi, it was urged that for economy's sake the building ought to be plaster-fronted, and somehow the British in India generally failed to achieve that sense of rootedness which is a hallmark of most good architecture. Perhaps it was the debilitating climate, which gave so many of their buildings a tentative feel; perhaps it was the nature of empire itself; whatever the reason, one often senses of their villas, palaces and temples, however ambitious of scale or ostentatious of design, that their foundations are shallow and their walls flimsy – rather like those little prairie towns of western America which look, with their false fronts and rickety brickwork, as though the next strong wind will blow them, along with the tumble-weed, helter-skelter down the street.

The amateurs

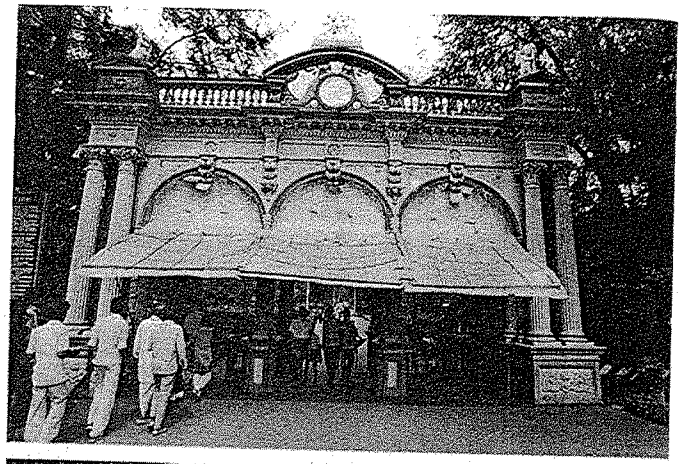
Most of the constructions of British India were anonymous. Though English bricklayers made an early appearance in the Presidency towns, and the Company had its own resident architects, from first to last only a handful of eminent practitioners ever designed a building for the Raj. The stones of this empire were mostly put together by amateurs, by soldiers who had learnt the building trade perfunctorily during their military education in England, or in later years by employees of the Public Works Department, established in 1854.

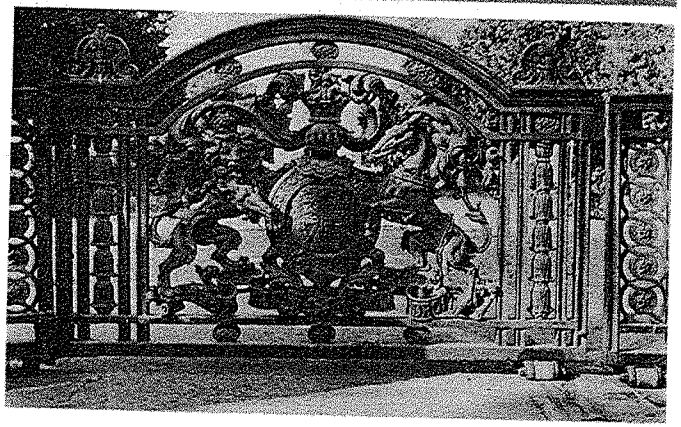
A carpenter was the probable designer of the first Writers' Buildings, the East India Company's residential quarters in Calcutta, and Britons of many other callings boldly undertook architectural work around the place. Administrators who were responsible for the safety, welfare and discipline of millions of people were undaunted by the challenge of building a house or office; as late as the 1860s Mr H. Rohde of the Madras Civil Service not only designed his own house, The Cedars, but made all its doors and woodwork with his own hands. Their work was not invariably admired, though. 'It is the misfortune of Calcutta', wrote the architectural historian James Fergusson in 1862, 'that her Architecture is done by amateurs – generally military engineers – who have never thought of the subject till called upon to act, and who fancy that a few hours' thought and a couple of days' drawing is sufficient . . .'. 'If one was told the monkeys had built it all', said the architect Edwin Lutyens upon first seeing the British buildings of Simla in 1912, 'one could only say, "What wonderful monkeys – they must be shot in case they do it again!" '

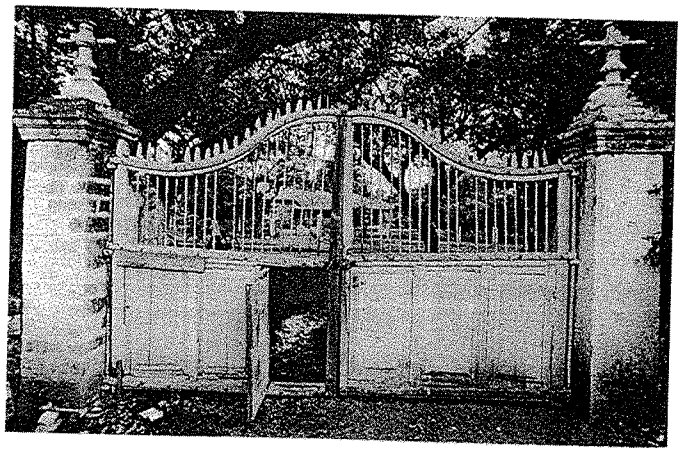
Often they relied upon handbooks of architecture, very popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There was Colin Campbell's *Vitruvius Britannicus* (1725) which translated into English idioms the precepts both of the Roman Vitruvius and of Palladio his interpreter: many of the grander early buildings of the Presidency towns owe their genesis to this useful text. There was James Gibbs's *Book of Architecture*, published in 1728 by the architect of St. Martin-in-the-Fields in London; the chief result of this publication was a positive rash of emulative St. Martins throughout the British possessions, North America to Oceana. James Paine, one of the architects of Kedleston, facilitated the construction of Calcutta's Government House by publishing his designs for the original in *Plans, Elevations and Sections of Noblemen's and Gentlemen's Houses*. John Wood the Younger, one of the presiding geniuses of Georgian Bath, published his *Plans for Cottages* in 1781. John Soane, architect of the Bank of England, brought out his *Plans for Buildings* in 1788, and in the 1830s appeared the invaluable works of John Loudon, whose several encyclopaedic textbooks offered models for almost every kind of building, and probably had a greater influence than any others on the architecture of British India.



Stairways: (*left*) at the Viceregal Summer Lodge in Simla, designed in English High Renaissance style by Henry Irwin and Captain H. H. Cole of the Royal Engineers; and (*right*) at the Victorian Gujerat Government College in Ahmedabad.







The gateway to Victoria Gardens, Bombay (*top*), designed in Corinthian style, has a turnstile from a foundry in Bear Lane, Southwark, and terracotta ornamental panels from Blashfield's factory in Lancashire. The heavy iron gateway to the Victoria Memorial, Calcutta (*middle*), runs on rollers, still lovingly oiled. Even the gate of a private bungalow in Poona (*bottom*) has a stolid quality about it, as though its owner knew it would become a memorial in time.

The London magazine called *The Builder* was always handy source material for amateur architects far away. *The Ecclesiologist* laid down guide-lines for proper Anglican design, such as a Christian Empire needed. All the successive sages of the architectural art in England, the Pugins, the Ruskins, the Morrises, the Geddes, had their eager disciples in India, and occasionally plans by well-known practitioners were sent out for implementation east of Suez: John Rennie was the designer of the prefabricated iron bridge over the River Gumti at Lucknow; Isambard Brunel, as adviser in England to the Great East Indian Railway, told them how to build Calcutta's Sealdah Station; J. D. Sedding and G. F. Bodley restored and enlarged buildings from afar; ideas about the interior of the Afghan Memorial Church, Bombay, were provided at a comfortable distance by William Butterfield, architect of Keble College, Oxford; Sir Gilbert Scott, the great Gothicist, planned Bombay University from his London offices.

Alternatively actual buildings could be more or less reproduced – St. Martin-in-the-Fields, of course, and Kedleston Hall, but also Ypres Cloth Hall and the Parthenon – and all over British India architectural enthusiasts would be visited by blurred sensations of *déjà vu*. Wasn't that Hereford Cathedral, incongruous among the Ambala bazaars? Could that be Bell Harry from Canterbury, rising above the *maidan* at Calcutta? The New Louvre in Paris, built by L. T. J. Visconti at the time of the Indian Mutiny, had a visible effect on Anglo-Indian institutional designers; so did Queen Victoria's country house at Osborne in the Isle of Wight, completed in 1851, if only because one of its architects was the Prince Consort himself; Hampstead Garden Suburb was clearly related, architecturally if not socially, to the new imperial capital laid out at Delhi in the twentieth century; the tiered patterns of the hill-stations, disposed along their Himalayan ridges, comfortably suggested the archetypal pleasure-terraces of Georgian England – dimly remembered, perhaps, by their subaltern planners from boyhood visits to Uncle Alfred in Hove, or tea and scones in Cheltenham.

We know a little about some of the early engineer-designers. Lieutenant James Agg, for instance, who designed St. John's, Calcutta, is immortalized in the diaries of William Hickey, for the two had sailed to India together in 1779: he was a modest and ingenious fellow, Hickey says, and though he rose no higher than Captain in the Company's service, he prospered so handsomely on the side that he went home rich, and was able to decline the Company's subsequent invitation to become Lieutenant-Governor of St. Helena. Charles Wyatt, Bengal Engineers, who designed Government House, Calcutta, at the end of the eighteenth century, was a member of a famous English architectural family who went on to become a Member of Parliament. His contemporary, Samuel Russell, who built the British Residency in Hyderabad, the one with all the bees, was the son of a well-known painter, John Russell, RA. Lieutenant Sankey, Madras Engineers, who designed Nagpur Cathedral in 1851, ended life as Sir R. H. Sankey, KCB. Two of the

engineer-colonels who built Victorian Bombay, H. St. Clair Wilkins and J. A. Fuller, went on to become generals.

Mostly, though, even their names are forgotten. Not necessarily lost, all the same, for they loved to commemorate themselves on their own buildings. Never-to-be-promoted captains, majors otherwise obscure, are remembered on tablets in musty churches and dingy offices of their conception, and often, we may feel, frustrated artists found their only true fulfilment in these distant constructions under the sun.

The professionals

Later the amateurism left the Empire, and the soldier-designers and engineers gave way to professional architects. In 1902 the Government of India appointed its first Consulting Architect, James Ransome; in 1919 Robert Tor Russell was appointed the first Chief Architect to the Government of India. Some British architects set up private practices in India, and the names of the engineers and the Indian contractors, to be found engraved on most big Anglo-Indian buildings, were supplemented now by those of Associates of the Royal Institute of British Architects, or even occasionally Fellows. This development was not universally welcomed: some people thought that India, under British guidance, should be moving back to the tradition of the indigenous master-builder, rather than importing expensive talent from abroad.

But in any case few very distinguished British architects were tempted out to these uncomfortable fields of profit. Sir William Emerson, President of the RIBA, spent some years in India, his *chefs-d'oeuvre* being the cathedral at Allahabad, begun in 1871, and the Victoria Memorial Museum in Calcutta, begun in 1906. Vincent Esch, a Calcutta-based architect, helped him with that museum and built many ambitious buildings of his own in the Native State of Hyderabad. H. V. Lanchester, who died in 1953, was an eminent architectural planner with a flourishing Indian connection. Sir Swinton Jacob of the Public Works Department, who died in 1917, was a virtuoso of the hybrid styles. In the nineteenth century Walter Granville, F. W. Stevens and Robert Chisholm, in the twentieth century George Wittet, John Begg and H. A. N. Medd were all Anglo-Indian architects of distinguished talent. And when it came to the supreme commission of all, the design of the new capital of New Delhi in the first decades of the twentieth century, the job was entrusted to the two most famous British practitioners of the day, Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker. It was an irony, but not perhaps a surprise, that they presently quarrelled over the task, and left the great work, the noblest attempted in the architectural history of the British Empire, sadly indecisive in the end.

Classical devices

The first recognizable styles of British India were, in one sort or another, classical: this was the chosen mode of the East India Company until its dissolution, and it was altogether deliberate. The British in India were evolving from traders to rulers, and they welcomed a style that would so graphically express their cool superiority and their historical antecedents.

The eighteenth-century victories in the field that led to British supremacy in India powerfully boosted this lofty self-image. As the artist Thomas Daniell wrote in 1810, 'the splendour of the British Arms produced a sudden change . . . the bamboo roof suddenly vanished; the marble column took the place of brick walls . . .'. Visitors to Madras or Calcutta around the turn of the nineteenth century found themselves, like travellers to St. Petersburg at the same period, entering brand new cities of white classical silhouette. Against those blazing blue skies, those ominous monsoon clouds, the buildings of Empire seemed to stand majestically untroubled, reincarnations of the antique – an appearance, suggested the painter William Hodges, approaching Madras in 1781, 'similar to what we may conceive of a Grecian city in the age of Alexander'. This was the triumph of reason over barbarism, and the elegant order of the classical styles was used in pointed antithesis to the riotous tangle of Hindu architecture, with its delight in excess and grotesquerie. The British buildings of Calcutta and Madras seemed to speak of a civilization self-sufficient and unshakeable, whose inhabitants must surely be as contemptuous of corruption as of climate, sipping their heavy claret there in handsome shuttered dining-rooms, or puffing contentedly at their hookahs. 'I thought I was no longer in the world I had left in the east', remarked an awestruck Malay visiting Calcutta at this time, and that was just the impression he was supposed to get.

The imperial architecture was meant to emphasize a lesson. For most of their time in India the British were profoundly contemptuous of the indigenous cultures – 'astronomy which would move laughter in the girls at an English boarding-school', Thomas Macaulay sneered, 'history abounding with kings thirty feet high and reigns thirty thousand years long'. The British were determined to demonstrate the superiority of their own ways, both for their own security and for the attention of the natives, and they did so brazenly. Just as they heedlessly appropriated Indian sacred buildings for their own secular use – they once thought of demolishing the Taj Mahal for the sake of its materials – so they built into their own structures implications of timeless infallibility and strength. When they took Delhi in 1803 they commandeered a fine local palace, built in the Mogul style, to be their Residency in the city: hardly had the smoke of battle died away before they had affixed to its façade a grand colonnade of Ionic columns, setting their style and stamp upon it for all to see.

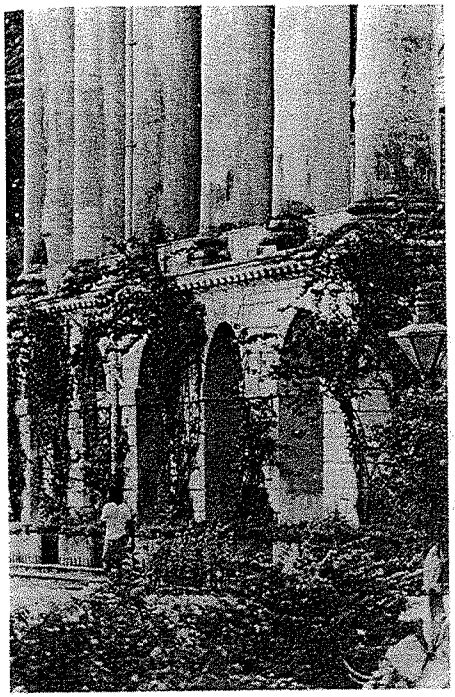
Many a classical device contributed to these ends – triumphal arches, toga'd statues, trophy halls, and Pantheons – and the traditional orders, Corinthian, Ionic, Tuscan and Doric, provided the early British architects with useful allegories. Their grammar, to be sure, was sometimes less than impeccable. Bishop Heber, in 1823, declared St. John's Church, Calcutta, to be 'full of architectural blunders, but . . . in other respects handsome'. Mrs Martha Graham, visiting Calcutta fourteen years before, thought the lavish use of the orders gave the place a general appearance of grandeur all right, but complained that they were seldom used 'according to the strict rules of art', while James Fergusson wrote that many of the buildings had been arranged 'in such a manner as to be as unlike a truly Grecian design as was possible with such correct details'. But the symbolism was the thing, and anyway few of those who saw these buildings, whether indigenes or imperialists, really knew a pilaster from an architrave.

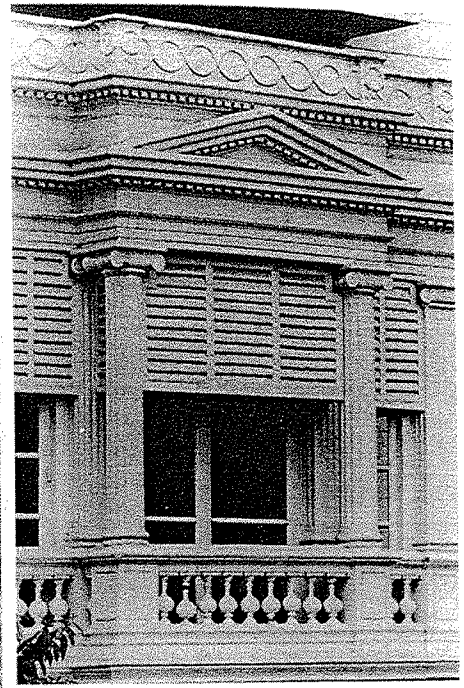
Besides, there was an inner meaning to this architecture which was impervious to pedantry. Early British India was a community of tradesmen, but it aspired to grander things. Empire itself, the sudden acquisition of new wealth and grandeur, was a species of *nouvelle richesse*, and every Briton automatically went up in the world, when he sailed out to the lands of serfs and subjects. Nothing represented this sensation better, at the end of the eighteenth century, than the neo-classical mansions British businessmen built for themselves, in the more congenial suburbs of the Presidency towns, where they stood encouched in wide gardens as to the manner born – distant reflections of the country houses of the English aristocracy at home (into whose ranks many of the astuter nabobs were, in their rich old age, eventually to be admitted).

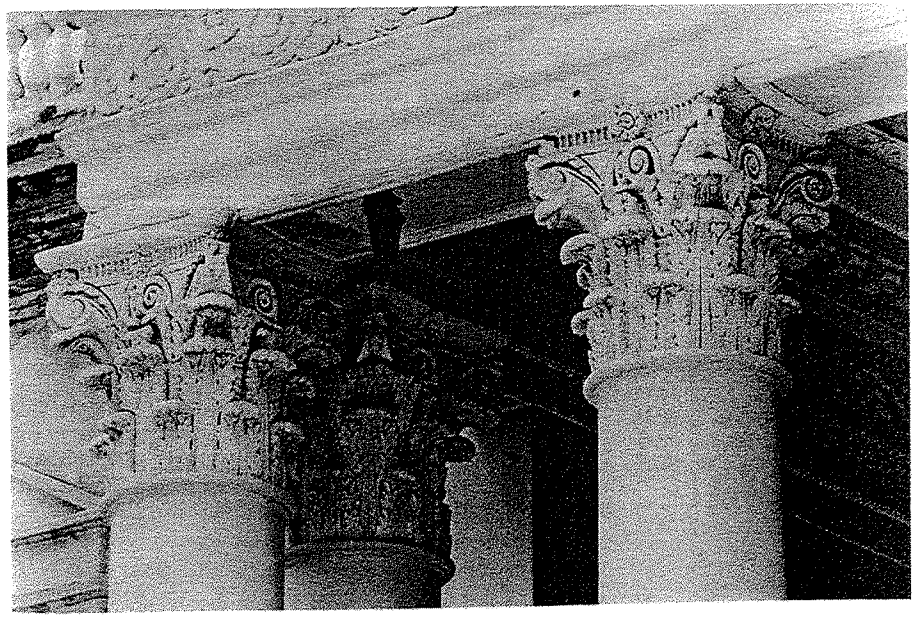
Gothic trends

Presently the Gothic crept in. Ruskin was heeded, and in Anglo-India the forms of neo-classicism went out of fashion. The first signs of Gothic indeed, stemming from the romantic Strawberry Hill kind, were to be seen in Madras and Calcutta at the end of the eighteenth century - a Gothic chapel, with pepper-pot turrets and flying buttresses, was surprisingly provided for Calcutta's Fort William in 1784; but the approach of true Victorian Gothic was most clearly announced by the design of Calcutta Cathedral, the metropolitan church of British India, which was completed in 1847 in a significant mixture of the medieval and the antique specified by its Bishop as being 'the Gothic or rather Christian style of architecture'.

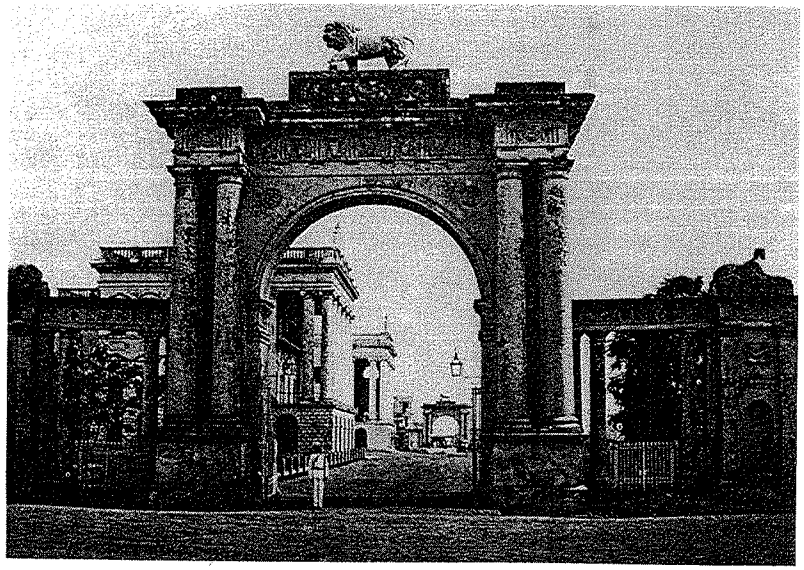
For by then evangelical religion had added a fervent new impulse to the energies of Empire. The early merchant-adventurers, though generally practising Christians, had certainly not been Christian militants. Their relations with







Classical relics. (*Top left.*) Lieutenant Charles Wyatt's Government House, Calcutta, built in 1799, after the design of Kedleston Hall, Derbyshire. The metope, architrave and capitals of Russell's Corinthian-style Residency in Hyderabad (*bottom*), showing the acanthus leaves carved by patient Indian workmen in 1803, and the bees' nest created nearly two centuries later. And a detail from the old Residency in Bangalore (*top right*).



The Imperial masters liked grand entrances: the British Residency in Hyderabad is approached via Doric columns, goats' heads and the Royal Arms; Government House, Calcutta, shows a lion, its fore-paw resting, appropriately, on the globe which he largely controlled.

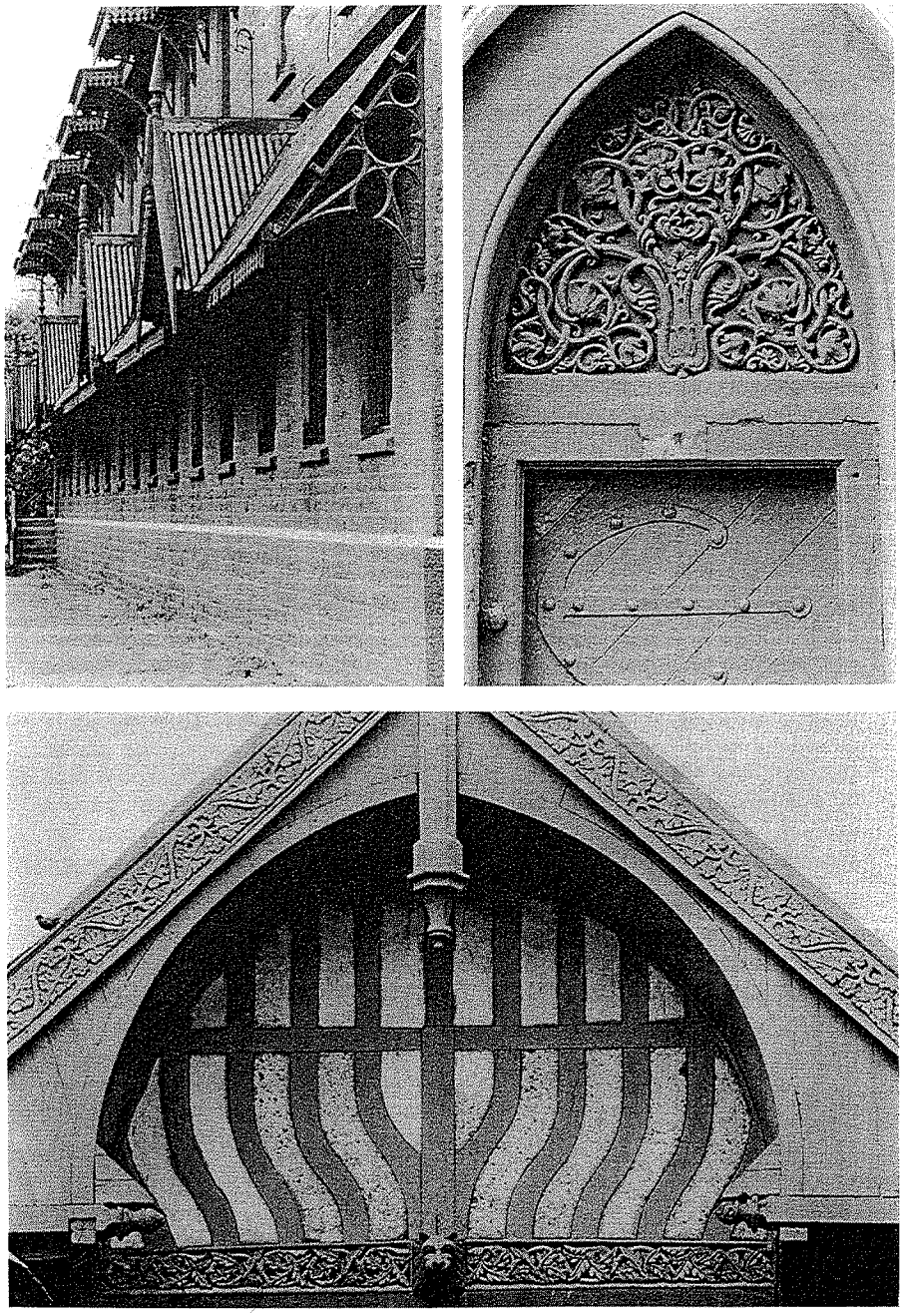
Indians were generally easy-going and often lascivious, when they were not murderous, and even when they developed convictions of cultural supremacy, religiosity was not part of it. The Victorian empire-builders, though, had different ideas. They believed passionately in Christian duty and divine providence, and soon many of the Empire's fiercest activists were Christians of fundamentalist zeal.

Gothic became their idiom above all others. For one thing it was cheaper to build than classical, so that you could have two evangelistic churches for the price of one; for another it possessed none of the heathen implications of classical forms; and for a third it had the imprimatur of all the best authorities at home, the Church Commissioners, the Camden Society, *The Ecclesiologist*, Ruskin and Pugin. The Anglo-Indian church designers quickly got the point. Not another St. Martin-in-the-Fields was built, and when in 1865 they wanted to extend the eighteenth-century classical cathedral at Bombay, without a second thought they tacked an Early English chancel on the end of it. Before long Indian Christians had learnt to call the Gothic pointed arch 'the praying arch', because it was supposed to possess the physical appearance of hands joined in prayer.

Secular architecture soon followed suit. Actually Gothic was far less suitable to the environment than the classical styles: the Greeks and Romans had designed for sunny climates too, but the medieval architects of northern Europe had built for winds, fogs and glowering skies, and when Gothic was translated to the East there was something close and restless to the very look of it. Still, Ruskin had demonstrated from the Venetian example that it did very well as an imperial idiom, and the Anglo-Indian architects applied it to all purposes. So ubiquitously indeed did Royal Engineers' Gothic, Public Works Department Gothic, spread across the face of India, in secretariat and public hall, market and museum, that by a natural association of ideas the whole of Anglo-India began to have a distinctly diocesan look, and the white pillared buildings left over from earlier generations seemed more elegantly pagan than ever.

The grand hybrids

Another change of mode was signalled, after the Mutiny, by the end of the East India Company. The Crown now established its own administration for India, embodied in the Indian Civil Service. The Company's Governor-General became the Queen's Viceroy, Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India, and for the first time a few Indians were admitted to the higher echelons of their own Government. Flamboyant new elements entered the imperial ethos, not easily to be embodied either in the austerity of the orders or the piety of conventional Gothic. The fact that Indians were now fellow-subjects of the Queen seemed to



demand some architectural concession to the indigenous, some manner less unbending than the classical, less utterly alien than the Gothic. Without *in any way* conceding that Indian culture was the equal of British, or abandoning *one jot* of the conviction that they had been called by divine providence to the redemption of India, the British began to introduce Indian features and motifs into their imperial architecture.

This was something startling. In 1772, when the military architect Patrick Ross had tried to adopt Indian patterns for an arsenal he was building at Madras, he had been severely rebuked by the Company, and as late as 1861, when St. Stephen's College went up in Delhi in a vaguely Mogul style, it was violently attacked as being unsuitable for Christian purposes. Times and tastes were changing, though. Nobody now suggested pulling down the Taj Mahal: it had become, for the British as for the Indians, a supreme symbol of romance – had become, indeed, part of their own inheritance. While at home William Morris and his friends were seizing upon the English heritage of craftsmanship, in India a British-fostered arts and crafts movement encouraged the employment of native skills in imperial projects, providing Maratha motifs for railway station waiting-rooms, or ancient Rajasthani patterns for the embellishment of vegetable markets. When in 1903 Lord Curzon presided over the durbar held at Delhi to celebrate the coronation of Edward VII, he saw to it that the great tented encampment was decorated entirely in Indian styles and Indian materials.

The British were trying to imply that they were, though still an imperial people, organically a part of the Indian scene, and weird hybrid styles were evolved to express the synthesis. William Emerson thought that particular buildings erected 'for any purpose connected with the natives' should show 'a distinctive British character, at the same time adopting the details and feeling of the native architecture'. Eclecticism was rampant enough, Heaven knows, at home in England – one design for a new Liverpool Cathedral, presented in 1886, incorporated a Byzantine dome, a Baroque cupola, Gothic spires and classical porticoes. It was nothing, though, beside its Anglo-Indian kind, which Lutyens once likened to 'the mad riot of the tom tom'.

Fortunately for the architects the Gothic style, with its natural profusion of ornament, its pointed arches and vaulted roofs, lent itself fairly easily to orientalization; all manner of Eastern fancies invaded the orthodox architectural vocabulary, and the forms of the Northern masons found themselves transmogrified with domes, kiosks, and harem windows. 'Indo-Saracenic' was inexplicably the favourite generic name for these combinations, but the Hindu-Gothic, the Renaissance-Mogul, the Saracenic-Gothic, even the Swiss-Saracenic, were all identified at some time or another as architectural types. Sometimes the British erected buildings in a purely Indian way, and in late-Victorian times there arose a lively 'back-to-India' movement among more imaginative Anglo-Indians. Hybrid

The railway Gothic style of roof fretwork, at the Deccan College in Poona (*top left*). Roof detail from Gujerat Government College, Ahmedabad (*bottom*). Carvings above a window of St. Stephen's Church, Ootacamund, South India (*top right*).

buildings remained predominant, however, into the twentieth century, and though purists and connoisseurs scoffed at them, and though they were indeed sometimes preposterous, perhaps we may see them now as proper to their time, and in their blend of the conciliatory, the dedicated and the exhibitionist, not without nobility.

The instinct fades

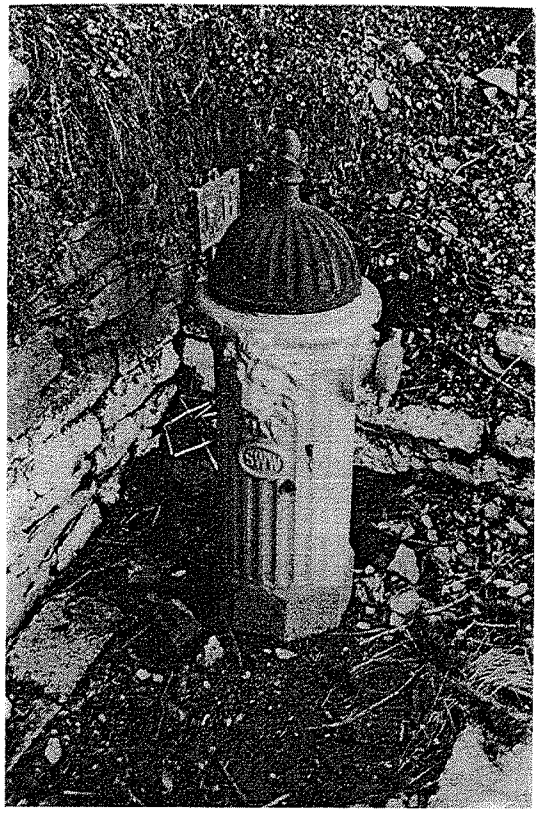
In Anglo-India as in England, there was a return to simpler modes in the early twentieth century, the flush of imperial certainty, as of Victorian complacency, fading away in wars and disillusionments. British architecture in India was anything but avant-garde, and never really had time to absorb art nouveau, let alone Bauhaus and the new international functionalism. The genre, like the empire that gave it birth, went out gently, even apologetically in the end.

Eclectism was given a last fillip by the establishment of New Delhi, the new capital of India, between 1911 and 1932, but it was eclectism of a more muted kind. Styles and symbol, Muslim, Buddhist, Christian and pagan, were somewhat tentatively blended in this last and greatest creative enterprise, together with emanations of Isfahan and English country life, and tacit suggestions of Versailles. Gardens in the Mogul sort flourished beside Gertrude Jekyll rose-gardens. There was a circular Parliament building on Roman lines, a shopping centre evidently inspired by Bath or Regent Street, and a presiding dome evolved from a Buddhist *stupa*.

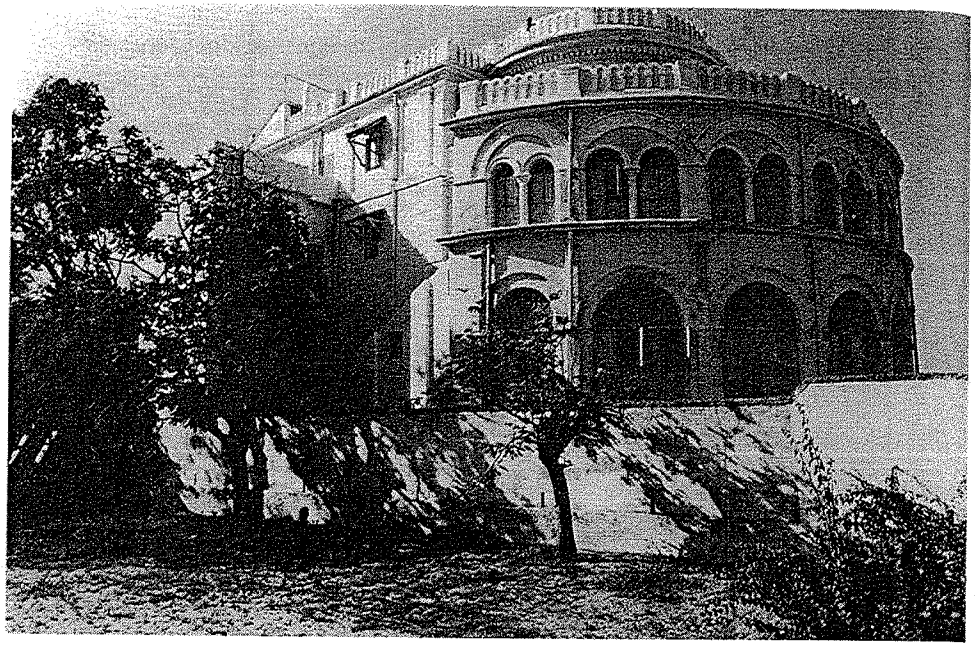
Mild reflections of this vision drifted across the subcontinent, to be solidified here and there in Lutyens's favourite upturned domes, or Baker's Persian-like pavilions. In general, though, British India bowed itself out in an unmemorable blandness of the neo-classical. The sort of architecture made popular by the Wembley Exhibition of 1923 well suited the needs and preferences of officials and businessmen alike, and could easily be touched up with ornamental elephants, or even corner kiosks, to show willing to the indigenes. It was hardly architecture at all really. It might almost have been devised as an allegorical backdrop to the end of Empire – so soon to disappear not in any fires of Valhalla, but almost sheepishly into history.

'Shut-upness'

Of all the constructions of the British in India, few are more telling than a pretty white building which stands to this day upon the waterfront at Madras, a little tumbledown and patched about nowadays, but still full of character. Built in two storeys, it has a gracefully rounded front on the seaside, rather like an apse, an



The manhole-cover industry remains one of India's world monopolies: most of those found in America today were made by firms like Nortons of Calcutta, Delhi and Simla. The leonine fire-hydrant on a Simla street is of almost wholly decorative use – water pressure in the overcrowded town is nearly nil.



elegant verandah, classical details, and a small shady garden all around. It looks like some tasteful little palace of ease, like an orangery perhaps, or a private theatre, or even a seraglio, but it is really an ice-house, built by the British in the eighteenth century solely for the storage of ice-blocks shipped in to cool them from Massachusetts.

Nothing could be more conclusively *separate*, among the palm trees of that humid shore, and it was separateness, far more than overbearingness, that characterized the stance of the British in India. They ruled in enclave, and their buildings almost always, even when ostentatiously Indianified, spoke of an alien and exclusive presence. Kipling called it 'shut-upness'. Even the smallest bungalows tried, with grand gates, wide compounds and ramparts of potted plants, to shut themselves up against the kaleidoscopic life of India all around: and at the other end of the scale, whole cities were arranged so that British communities could shut themselves away from the Indians. If this tendency began *faute de mieux*, the early European traders being obliged by the Indians themselves to live in waterfront ghettos, it grew to represent a maxim of the imperial system – Stay Apart and Rule.

It was not mere racialism, though bigotry was doubtless satisfied by the practice. It was a technique of dominance, and it worked. The more carefully the British stayed their distance, insulated within their clubs, barracks, offices, bungalows and ice-houses, the easier it was to impose their will upon the Indians at large. A touch of mystery, or at least of unapproachability, potently fortified their authority. Most of them were ordinary enough people really, and decidedly thin on the ground, so perhaps the less they revealed of themselves the better. Those Corinthian columns beside the Hooghly River, those Gothic parish churches of the plains, those towered and vaulted railway stations – all were instruments of the system. They were the buildings of another, different, separate people, and however old they were, even when the tropic creepers covered them, bright bougainvillaea softened their outlines and apes trampled nonchalant across their roofs, still they always showed it.

They were seldom simply grand for grandeur's sake. The British were generally convinced, it is true, that Indians were particularly susceptible to pomp and display, and they put great store on pageantry. But even the imperial palaces of British India, the ultimate structures of the Raj, were not generally overwhelming in their manner, let alone bullying. These were not the palaces of tyrants. They were the residences of English gentlefolk, a strange and special breed, come from afar to bestow their gifts upon India. They did not bristle with guns, like the forts of Rajahs. They were seldom stupendously extravagant, like Mogul palaces. A calm domestic air informed them. LINDY LOO, 1938–1943, mourned a gravestone in the garden of Government House, Bombay: HER TAIL STILL WAGS IN OUR HEARTS.

Sleeping worker, St. Thomas's Cathedral, Bombay. The repointing goes on, if in a somewhat leisurely way.

Yet their corporate personality was formidable, for they represented a ruling caste altogether sure of itself, secure within its own peculiar enclave of convention, tradition, prejudice and duty. To most Indians, I do not doubt, one viceroy or governor was very much like the next, every pukka memsahib was treated with the same deferential courtesy, each little Alice with her dolls, George on his pony, blurred into one fairly sentimental image of English childhood. It was the buildings themselves, their white serenity so startlingly emphasized by the surrounding flummery of flags and sentries, that were the real images of the Raj.

On assurance

And it was the assurance that counted. It did not matter that the elevation was awkward, if the house sat serene behind its trellises. The fiddly detail hardly showed, if the Secretariat was bold and grand enough. Lutyens and Baker, the most distinguished architects ever to work in British India, faltered in New Delhi because the real meaning of the project was uncertain; but Sam Russell, who was only a sapper subaltern, never put a foot wrong when he designed the Hyderabad Residency, all self-righteous decision, and the mostly unknown architects of the Indian railway depots endued them with the unanswerable fervour of cultists.

Assurance! When a district commissioner made a house for himself out of mud-brick and country tiling, when a captain of engineers blithely took on a cathedral, whatever their professional failings their buildings had the merits of gusto, courage, and sometimes brashness. The Empire itself, in its dynamic years, possessed just those qualities, bolstered too by delusions of divine favour. It had a stern beauty to it in its prime, when bearded patriarchs direct from the Old Testament commanded its armies with missionary fury, when proconsuls of terrific conceit directed its affairs with such authority that more than one of them was locally deified. It was like a huge work of architecture itself then, resting upon massive arcades of Christian faith, mercantile principle and self-esteem – castellated against all comers, turreted for effect, audaciously buttressed, and crowned at the top, as other edifices might be completed with saint or angel, by the portly figure of Victoria the Queen-Empress, holding an orb and a sceptre, and already bathed in the refulgent light of legend.

When it lost its assurance, it lost its virtue: and so did its constructions.