

AKBAR'S TOMB AT SIKANDRA.

Ill should I discharge the duties of my station were I to withhold my indulgence from any of those committed to my charge." But he invited the opinions of others on religious points, and hence these discussions arose. Akbar caused a building to be erected in the royal garden of Fathpúr Sikri for the learned men, consisting of four halls, called *aiwán*, where he passed one night in the week in their company. The western hall was set apart for Seyyids, the south for Ulamas, the north for Shaikhs, and the east for nobles and others whose tastes were in unison with those of the Emperor. The building was called *Ibadat-Khana*, and here discussions were carried on, upon all kinds of instructive and useful topics.

Besides Faizi and Abú-l Fazl, there were many learned men in constant attendance on the Emperor. Their father, Shaikh Mubarak, was a poet and a profound scholar. Mulla Abdul Kadir, called El Badauni, was born at Badaun, in 1540, and studied music, astronomy, and history. He was employed to translate Arabic and Sanscrit works into Persian; but he was a fanatical Muhammadan, and in his "Tarikh-i Badauni," a history brought down to 1595, he always speaks of Faizi and Abú-l Fazl as heretics, and all references to the speculations of Akbar and his friends are couched in bitter and sarcastic terms. He, however, temporized, and did not allow his religion to interfere with his worldly interests. His history contains much original matter. He also translated the great Hindu epic "Mahabharata"* in 1582, and the "Ramayana" between 1583 and 1591. Of the former poem he says, "At its puerile absurdities the eighteen thousand creations may well be amazed. But such is my fate, to be employed on such works! Nevertheless, I console myself with the reflection that what is predestined must come to pass." The Khwaja Nizamu-d din Ahmad was another historian of Akbar's court. He also was a good, but not a bitter Musalman. His "Tabakat-i Akbari" is a history of the Muhammadan Kings of Hindustan from Mahmud of Ghazni to the year 1594, which was that of his own death. Other historians of the reign were Shaikh Illahdad Faizi Sirhindi, whose "Akbar-nama" comes down to 1602; Maulana Ahmad, of Tatta, who compiled the "Tarikh-i Alfi," under the Emperor's own superintendence, and Asad Beg, who related the murder of Abú-l Fazl and the death of Akbar, bringing his narrative down to 1608. The greatest settlement officer and financier of Akbar's court was Todar Mall. There were also poets, musicians, and authors of commentaries who were encouraged by the liberality of the Emperor.

Professors of all creeds were invited to the court of this enlightened sovereign, and cordially welcomed. Among these were Maulana Muhammad, of Yazd, a learned Shiah; Nuruddin Tarkhan, of Jam, in Khurasan, a mathematician and astronomer; Sufi philosophers, fire-worshippers from Gujrat, Brahmans, and the Christian missionaries Aquaviva, Monserrato, and Henriquez.

The Thursday evening meetings at the *Ibadat Khana*, near the tank called *Anúptalao*, in the gardens of Fathpúr Sikri, were commenced in 1574. Akbar was at first annoyed by the intolerance of the Muhammadan Ulamas, and encouraged the telling of stories against them. Quarrels were the consequence. On one occasion Akbar said to Badauni, "In future report to me any one of the assembly whom you find speaking improperly, and I will have him turned out." Badauni said quietly to his neighbour, Asaf Khan, "According to this a good many would be expelled." His Majesty asked what had been said, and when Badauni told him, he was much amused, and repeated it to those who were near him. Decorum was, however, enforced after this, and the more bigoted Muhammadans had to curb their violence. But their feelings were very bitter when they saw their sovereign gradually adopting opinions which they looked upon as more and more heretical, and at last embracing a new religion.

El Badauni says that Akbar, encouraged by his friends Faizi and Abú-l Fazl, gradually lost faith, and that in a few years not a trace of Muhammadan feeling was left in his heart. He was led into free thinking by the large number of learned men of all denominations and sects that came from various countries to his court. Night and day people did nothing but inquire and investigate. Profound points of science, the subtleties of revelation, the curiosities of history, the wonders of nature, were incessantly discussed. His Majesty collected the opinions of every one, retaining whatever he approved, and rejecting what was against his disposition, or ran counter to his wishes. Thus a faith, based on some elementary principles, fixed itself in his heart; and, as the result of all the influences that were brought to bear on him, the conviction gradually established itself in his mind that there were truths in all religions. If some true knowledge was everywhere to be found, why, he thought, should truth be confined to one religion? Thus his speculations became bolder. "Not a day passed," exclaims El Badauni, "but a new fruit of this loathsome tree ripened into existence."

At length Akbar established a new religion, which combined the principal features of Hinduism with the sun-worship of the Parsís. He was also much interested in the gospels as explained to him by Christian missionaries; and, as Colonel Yule says, he never lost a certain hankering after Christianity, or ceased to display an affectionate reverence for the Christian emblems which he had received from his Jesuit teachers.

* See Surgeon-Major T. H. Hendley's "Razm Namah" and "Mahabharata," 1883.