

## DECORATIVE PAINTINGS FROM THE TOMB OF ITMAD-UD-DAULAH AT AGRA.\*

Plates 12—30 are from the tomb of Itmad-ud-daulah, which stands on the banks of the Jumna, and was erected to the memory of her father by Nûr Jahân, wife of the emperor Jahângîr, and the sister of Asaf Khân, whose daughter Mumtâz Mahall, the wife of Shâh Jahân, lies buried in the Taj. Professor Blochmann, in his translation of the *Ain-i-Akbari*, tells us that the name of Nûr Jahân's father was Ghiâs-ud-dîn Muhammad, styled Ghiâs Beg, and that after the death of his father he fled from Tahrân in Persia, with his family, to seek his fortune in India; and after having been introduced to the Court of Akbar at Fathpûr Sîkrî, rose by his ability and industry to a small command of three hundred horse, and afterwards to that of a thousand, and eventually was promoted to the position of *Itmad-ud-daulah*, or High Treasurer, and on the marriage of his daughter with Jahângîr he became *Vakil-i-Kul*, or Prime Minister. Professor Blochmann also tells us that "Ghiâs-ud-dîn was a poet, and imitated the old classics. He was generally liked, had no enemies, and was never seen angry; chains, the whip, and abuse were not found in his house. He protected the wretched, especially such as had been sentenced to death. He was never idle, but wrote a good deal, his official accounts were always in the greatest order. But (observe) he liked bribes, and showed much boldness in demanding them!" His daughter Mihrunnisa, the future Nûr Jahân, was celebrated for her great beauty, and as the wife of 'Alî Qulî styled Khân, Shêr Afkhan, *tuyûldar* of Bardwân, was courted by Prince Salîm, afterwards Jahângîr. This ultimately led to his ruin, and he was treacherously slain, and his lovely wife captured and sent to Court as a prisoner. For some years she remained under restraint, but eventually listened to the importunities of Jahângîr, acquiesced to his wishes, and became queen under the title of Nûr Jahân. She was a highly gifted and talented woman, and possessed immense power during her husband's life-time; but her influence ceased with his death, and on the accession of Shâh Jahân she retired from the cares and worries of state affairs, and was allotted a liberal pension of two lakhs per annum. Her father, Itmad-ud-daulah, died in 1622, and his daughter set about building his mausoleum, which was completed about 1628 A.D. It stands in a spacious garden, and is square in plan, with an octagonal tower at each angle surmounted by a marble kiosque. It is built upon a stylobate veneered with marble inlaid with mosaic work.

It consists of nine rooms: a large central chamber, four oblong ones, and four square apartments at the corners. The walls are massive and pierced by openings filled in with stone *jali* or screen work. They are lined with marble inlaid with costly arabesques in mosaic, but the upper portions of the interior walls are finished off in stucco and painted. Ghiâs-ud-dîn and his wife are buried beneath two plain red marble tombs in the central apartment, and in a room over are two white marble cenotaphs similar, but not quite so plain in conception as those below. The ceilings of the smaller rooms are flat at the top and alcoved at the sides, whilst the central chamber is vaulted over and elaborately coffer-panelled in stucco, and richly ornamented with paintings, selections from which are given.

The upper room containing the cenotaph is constructed chiefly of marble, including the roof. In the walls are openings filled in with exquisite screens of the same material, the tops of which are arched and the spandrils ornamented with mosaics. The floors are of marble, and are worked in most elaborate patterns; whilst the walls and ceilings of the minor chambers are, like the central apartments which they surround, enriched by paintings, specimens of which are given.

The plates represent some of the paintings, and afford a clear insight into the style of decoration in vogue at this period of Moghul architecture. Without a careful examination, it is somewhat difficult to say how they were executed, whether in fresco or tempera, but probably both systems were employed. The art of mural painting has been practised in India from the very earliest times, and to what an extent, any one who has visited the Ajanta or Bagh caves will know.

Of all the various forms of wall decoration, fresco painting is the earliest and the most prevalent. It has been defined as "the art of mural painting upon freshly-laid plaster lime whilst it remains damp, with colours capable of resisting the caustic action of the lime with which they are mixed and brought into contact." In genuine fresco

\* From Monograph by Edmund W. Smith, Archaeological Surveyor N.W. Provinces.