

UDAIPUR AND CHITTOR, RAJPUTANA.

UDAIPUR.

When Udaipur was founded by the Rana Udai Singh in A.D. 1558, he conceived the idea of creating an artificial lake, on the margin of which to build a palace. The Arwali mountains, the great feature of Mewar, surround the locality, and by raising a dyke, or bund, across the beautiful valley, streams were dammed up to form the Pachola Sagar. The city, which can be now reached from the Rajputana-Malwa Railway at Nimbahera, a distance of 64 miles, is situated on an elevated strip of ground parallel to the shore of the lake, and crowning the ridge stands the palace, over 100 feet in height. The pile of stone and marble grown by the various additions of successive Ranas presents a most picturesque and imposing appearance. In the midst of the lake which the palace overlooks are two island residences, the Jagmandir and Jagnavas, and but for their domes, kiosques, and palms the view reminds one rather of the English lakes than of an eastern valley.

The Udaipur Palace consists of a group of buildings dating from 1594 to the present day. The first gateway leading from the city was built by Partab Singh in 1594 A.D.—a plain, unpretending-looking Hindu structure, surrounded by crenelated walls; beyond this is the Tirpolia, or triple doorway, of graceful Hindu-Saracenic architecture, built by Sangram Singh in 1711 A.D.; to the left, or west, of the intervening courtyard are a set of 8 Torans, or triumphal arches, erected by successive Maharanas. Passing under the Tirpolia one comes in view of the picturesque western façade of the palace. The Bari Mahal, or great court, is nearest on the right, or east. It was completed in A.D. 1597 by Amara Singh I. It consists of five storeys, and has a handsome superstructure of marble, fancifully wrought into corbelled windows and trellis screens. The superstructure, or upper storey, rests on a marble string-course, carved with bas-reliefs of elephants. The palace is confronted by a long terrace and colonnade, where the Rana's elephants are kept. Leaving this, one passes a plain and lofty building, surmounted by domes and cupolas, used by the zenana. Further on to the south is a picturesque palace of Karn Singh's time, A.D. 1616, and beyond this again the Maharana's modern residence.

The upper storey of the Bari Mahal contains an open garden called the Amar Belas, completed by Amara Singh II. in A.D. 1711. It is surrounded by marble trellis, kiosques, and pavilions with handsome doors, ornamented with ivory (see Plates 36 and 37). In the centre of the court is a tank encased with huge slabs of marble. The Bari Mahal possesses a number of courts, galleries, and halls built in excellent native styles, but it is curious here and there to see evidences of European influence. One room, dating A.D. 1716, is lined with Dutch tiles, representing windmills and skating scenes of Holland, Biblical subjects, &c.; another, dating A.D. 1857, has glazed niches in the walls filled with English China figures and Bohemian glass. Another room is faced entirely with Chinese plates of the old Willow pattern!

The Jalnavas, or "fountain palace," (see Plate 34) was built in A.D. 1828 by Jawan Singh close to the margin of the lake, and forms a ghat for landing or embarkation. The columns are square and of a plain Hindu design, the wall at the back being decorated with coloured glass mosaic, representing figures of women and the Rajput peacock. Water channels and fountains edge the wall and render the pavilion cool and pleasant.

Glass mosaics are in great favour at Udaipur (see Plate 35) and occur in the island palaces of Jagmandir and Jagnavas, both of which were commenced about A.D. 1623. A court of the latter has recently been decorated in a very tasteful manner with this work. Shah Jahan built a Shish Mahal in the Agra Fort (*circa* 1637 A.D.), and very beautiful examples of mirror mosaics exist in the palace of the Jaipur Rajas at Amber, dating probably from 1630 A.D. The work became popular with the Sikhs at Lahore and Amritsar, but lost some of its earlier refinement. The best glass mosaics known are probably at Udaipur and Amber. The designs at the former place are of great delicacy, and besides floral patterns include representations of figures in brilliant colouring. The mirror throne in the place is very rich and sparkling. Situated in the centre of the western front of the palace it overlooks a court to the east, the walls of which are adorned with peacocks in niches rendered in glass mosaic.

The upper storey of the Bari Mahal, which, as previously stated, is an open court containing a garden, has several handsome wooden doors, two of which are here represented (see Plates 36 and 37). An apartment in another part of the palace, called the Chandre Mahal, has also some well-designed doors, one of which is the subject of Plate 38. In describing the doors of the Darshani gate at Amritsar we have endeavoured to show how Indian marquetry developed from the famous Somnath gates of the early part of the 11th century A.D. down to the work of to-day. The old Punjab cities possess a variety of beautiful mediæval doors carved in wood, and at Conjeveram in the south the Brahmin quarters are full of wooden portals of excellent execution and design. It is by the study of such examples throughout India from north to south that the art of the wood-carver and inlayer can be regenerated.