*Shahr Dar mosque
in Samarkand.*

beautiful, and where they have been preserved in large mosaic-like surfaces, they give a touch of inconceivable splendour to the enormous mosques that venture to raise their minarets and mighty cupolas so unexpectedly above the indescribable monotony of this town of grey unbaked bricks or lumps of earth. Unfortunately, however, more than half of these tiles — that testify to astonishing technical ability — have already fallen and some of the buildings are semi-ruined. Large cracks in the mosques that still remain standing and collapsed pinnacles of minarets indicate that the work of destruction begun long ago will continue without mercy at a rapid rate until these memorials of a great era with its magic glamour have vanished. For a consideration many a mullah would, no doubt, be prepared, under cover of darkness, to pull down a slab of mosaic of lovely colour with his own hands and hand it over to an irreverent tourist.

The houses in Samarkand are numbered, but with no idea of sequence, so that in the same crooked little alley you find No. 971, for instance, over the gateway next to No. 58 and often, upside down.

An elderly white-bearded teacher in a little school I visited, housed in a building provided with holes for windows, sat listening to and correcting one of the boys reading, while the other ten read aloud in unison from a book lying on the ground. The hubbub was indescribable. A slight partition of mud, about 18 inches high and of the same breadth, ran parallel to the walls at a distance of about 7 feet. The boys sat cross-legged, leaning against this partition, using it as a book-rest. Inside the partition the floor was empty. The pupils could have a dip in a small pond in the yard in the heat of the summer. The children of the Sarts make a good impression; they are clean, merry and good-humoured. You see large numbers of them in the streets, where they knock about and play or help their parents by leading or driving an animal, carrying a pot, selling something and so on.

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