

MOUNT ABU

BY MISS BURKE.

(Taken from the Encyclopaedia Britannica)

Abu, a celebrated mountain of Western India, between 5,000 and 6,000 feet in height, situated in 24° 40' N. lat., and 72° 48' E. long., within the Rajputana State of Sirohi. It is celebrated as the site of the most ancient Jain temples in India, and attracts pilgrims from all parts of the country. The Jains are the modern Indian representatives of the Buddhists, and profess the ancient theistic doctrines of that sect, modified by saint worship and incarnations. The elevations and platforms of the mountain are covered with elaborately sculptured shrines, temples and tombs. On the top of the hill is a small round platform containing a cavern, with a block of granite, bearing the impression of the feet of Data-Bhrign, an incarnation of Vishnu. This is the chief great place of pilgrimage for the Jains, Shrawaks and Banians. The two principle temples are situated at Denlwara, about the middle of the mountain, and five miles south-west of Guru-Sikra, the highest summit. They are built of white marble, and are pre-eminent alike for their beauty and as typical specimens of Jain architecture in India. The following description is condensed from Mr. Ferguson's History of architecture Vol. ii, pp. 623—625:—The more modern of the two was built by two brothers, rich merchants, between the years 1197 and 1247, and for delicacy of carving and minute beauty of detail stands almost unrivalled, even in this land of patient and lavish labour. The other was built by another merchant prince, Bimāla shāh apparently about 1032 A.D., and although simpler and bolder in style, is as elaborate as good taste would allow in a purely architectural object. It is one of the oldest as well as one of the most complete examples of Jain architecture known. The principal object within the temple is a hall lighted only from the door, containing a cross-legged seated figure of the God Paresnāth. The portico is composed of 48 pillars, the whole enclosed in an oblong court-yard about 140 ft. by 90 ft., surrounded by a double colonnade of smaller pillars, forming porticos to a range of fifty-five cells, which enclose it on all sides, exactly as they do in a Buddhist monastery (vihāra). In this temple, however, each cell, instead of being the residence of a monk, is occupied by an image of Paresnāth, and over the door, or on the jambs of each, are sculptured scenes from the life of the deity. The whole interior is magnificently ornamented. The Emperor Akbar, by a farmān dated in the month of Rabi-ul-āul, in the 37th year of his reign, corresponding with 1593, made a grant of the hill and temples of Abu, as well as of the other hills and places of Jain pilgrimage in the Empire, to Harbijai Sur, a celebrated preceptor of the Setāmbari sect of the Jain religion. He also prohibited the slaughter of animals at these places. The farmān of this enlightened monarch declared that it is the rule of the worshippers of God to preserve all religions.

Mount Abu is a delightful station to spend a holiday in and these temples are well worth a visit. Many people living in Rajputana spend the summer in Abu, which is very gay just then.

To remove mildew.—One dessertspoonful salt, one tablespoonful powdered starch, two tablespoonfuls soft soap, one lemon. Squeeze lemon, mix all together and spread on both sides of the article. Put out in the air for a day and a night and wash in the usual way.