

## THE COLOSSAL STATUES OF BAMIAN.

The existence of the great statues of Bamian has been long known to Indian archaeologists, but correct drawings of them, or reliable measurements, have never been brought home till now. At last they have been drawn and measured in a manner that can be depended upon; this is one of the many important results of the Afghan Boundary Commission. Officers of the Survey Department accompanied the Commission, and they have been busy at work all the time; the outcome of this will be reliable maps of the region. To carry out this, the survey officers have gone off on excursions in various directions; last November, Captain the Hon. M. G. Talbot, R.E., started, along with Captain Maitland, of the Political Department, on a survey route through the Koh-i-baba, or Paropamisus range. They went eastward along the Heri-Rud valley, from near Obek, till they reached Bamian, a line of travel over which almost no European had before passed. Ferrier may perhaps have gone over a small portion of it at the western end. It is to Captain Maitland that we are indebted for the sketches of these great statues, as well as the remains of paintings on the walls of the niches and caves.

Bamian is on the road between Cabul and Balkh, where it crosses the Paropamisus range. The situation is high, being somewhere about 8,500 ft. above the sea. The rock is conglomerate, or pudding stone, of which there is a high cliff in the valley. In this, at an early period, probably during the first centuries of the Christian era, Buddhist monks excavated caves. These are in large numbers at Bamian—"extending for miles"—but there are numerous groups of caves besides, extending northward, along the road as far as Haibak. Judging by the remains in the Jelalabad valley, these caves would not be the only viharas or monasteries; there would be built structures as well. When Hwen-Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim, visited Bamian, about 630 A.D., he states that there were 1,000 monks at it, and ten convents. He describes Bamian as a kingdom; but now we only know the spot from its caves and the great statues, which are remains of Buddhism, and not, so far as is known, the remains of anything like a capital city of a kingdom. There stand near to this spot the ruins of an old city, known as Ghulghula, which was utterly destroyed by Genghis Khan, in the thirteenth century. He gave the order that not a soul was to be spared—man, woman, or child—all were to be slaughtered; the order was fulfilled, and the place has been a ruin ever since. Ghulghula may have been the principal city, of which Bamian was only a sort of suburb. This is confirmed by the Chinese pilgrim, who states that the statues were on "the northeast of the royal city." Alexander, in passing from Bactria to India, crossed the Paropamisus range either at Bamian or near to it; but the historians who describe his doings give no mention of the statues. This is, so far, evidence as to their non-existence at the time. It is also understood, as confirmation of this, that Buddhism could not have spread so far northward at that early date.

Hwen-Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim, is the earliest writer to mention the statues. In later times, they have been described by travelers, who had given them little more than a passing notice. Among these may be mentioned Burnes, Mohun Lal, who accompanied Burnes, Masson, and Sir Vincent Eyre—who was one of the prisoners in the first Afghan war. The latest notice is that of Dr. Yavorski, who accompanied Stoletieff's mission to Cabul in 1878, and has published an account of the mission in

Russian. These writers have generally done little more than repeat the local traditions respecting the place, which are chiefly of a Mohammedan kind. The statues are known in the present day as Sal Sal and Shah Mameh, and the Bacheh, or child. The Hindoos, of which there are a few scattered about in Afghanistan, have also their own legends regarding them. All wonderful things in art or nature in India they attribute



COMPARATIVE HEIGHT OF FAMOUS STATUES.

to the work of *Panch Pandu Ke Bhai*, or the Five Pandu Brothers; and, of course, according to their ideas, the great figures at Bamian could only be produced by these heroes of the Mahabharata.

There are five statues at Bamian; three of them are in niches, which have been cut out, the figures being formed of the rock within the niche. The largest statue has been produced in this way. Its size has been variously estimated by travelers, some putting it at 100 ft., and others as high as 150 ft. Captain Talbot used a theodolite, and found that all previous estimates had been short of the truth. The figure is 173 ft. high,

which is only 29 ft. lower than the London monument, the exact measurement of it being 202 ft. The Nelson column in Trafalgar Square is 176 ft., just three feet higher than the Bamian figure, and thus giving almost an exact counterpart of its height. If a general meeting of all the colossal statues of the world could be brought about—if the Memnon figures from the banks of the Nile could come (they are 51 ft. high, and would be taller if they could stand up out of their seats); the four Great Guardians in front of the Temple of Ipsambul (these are also sitting figures, about 50 ft. high); the bronze Dai Bootz of Japan; if we can imagine to be reproduced for the occasion the statue of Athene, made by Phidias for the Parthenon, which was 39 ft. in height; or the Olympian Jupiter of the same artist, 60 ft. high, a statue celebrated for its great size as well as for its perfect workmanship; or even the still greater Colossus of Rhodes, the records of its height varying from 100 ft. to 120 ft.; if all these—and they are all well known to fame—were to meet at one place, and the almost unknown Bamian statue were to appear among them, what pygmies most of them would then seem! The colossal Apollo of Rhodes, one of the Seven Wonders of the World, would lose all pretense of superiority in height as he had to look up 53 ft.—at the lowest estimate—to the gigantic strangers from Bamian. The new "Liberty" statue at New York is 111 ft. high, but the distance to top of torch is 151½ ft.

The Chinese pilgrim estimated the height of the largest statue as 140 or 150 ft. In all probability it was originally gilt, for, in his short description of it, he says: "Its golden hues sparkle on every side, and its precious ornaments dazzle the eyes by their brightness" (Professor Beal's translation). Captain Talbot says that the folds of the drapery have been laid on with stucco. Local tradition asserts that when the soldiers of Timur, who were Mohammedans, passed on their way to the invasion of India, they shot arrows at the idols; and that the troops of Nadir Shah fired artillery at them. This is to account for the dilapidated condition of the lower limbs of the figure. It will be noticed that there are small holes in the broken parts; these are supposed to have been made for wooden pegs to support mortar or stucco, which had been used in repairing the defects. As the Mohammedans would most willingly destroy such objects of idolatry, we must suppose that the efforts to restore the figure must have taken place as early as the time of the Buddhists. At the feet of the statue there are entrances, which communicate with stairs and galleries, so that the top of the figure can be reached.

Hwen-Tsang distinctly states that it is a figure of Buddha. This is of some importance, because it has been suggested that the figures belonged to the pre-Buddhist period. Captain Maitland's drawings are quite sufficient to determine this point, and the Buddhist character of the figure need no longer be a question of doubt. There is the well known knob on the top of the head, the long ears, and the drapery arranged in folds, which all know who are familiar with Buddhist art. The influence left by the Greeks of Bactria, and which is so manifest in all the Buddhist remains in the Peshawur district, as well as in the Jelalabad valley, seems to be wanting at Bamian, or at least is so slight that it scarcely attracts notice. This is strange, as it might be expected that the farther north from India, the greater would have been the Greek influence.—*Illustrated London News*.

MANY farmers trust too much to luck and the moon, and do too little close figuring, thinks the *Empire State Agriculturist*.



STATUE OF BAMIAN—LARGEST IN THE WORLD—HEIGHT, 173 FEET.