

ART. XIV.—*The Iron Pillar of Dhār.* By V. A. SMITH.

IN the article on “The Iron Pillar of Delhi” I noticed that another iron pillar exists at Dhār in Central India, but observed that no detailed description of that pillar was known to me.<sup>1</sup>

I now find that a description of this very remarkable monument has been printed—I can hardly say published—in a report by the indefatigable Dr. Führer.

“About thirty-three miles west of Indor lies Dhār, or Dhārā, the ancient capital of Mālava; but nothing remains of its former grandeur except three remarkable Musalman buildings, erected out of the wrecks of some magnificent Jaina temples of the twelfth century A.D., and an ancient iron column. . . .

“The Jāmī or Lāt Masjid, erected by Dilāwar Khān Ghori in A.H. 807, is a similar building to Kamāl-ud-din’s Dargāh, but the Jaina columns are not so handsomely carved; the *mihrabs* and *mimbar*, however, are fine specimens of Musalman workmanship.

“Close to the *masjid* is lying, in a sloping position against the terrace, a fragment of an iron column, or *lāt*, a square of 10 inches on each side, and 24 feet long, with a Persian inscription of Akbar Shāh, dated A.H. 1100, incised on its longer length; a second piece, similar and originally belonging to it, is standing opposite the Jāmī Masjid at Māndugarh, being an octagon, 2 ft. 8 in. in circumference, with 10 inches of a circular end (showing another piece is missing), and 12 feet long. A third piece, a square of 10 inches, with a bell-capital, 6 feet high, is standing in the garden of the Mahārājah’s guest-house at Dhār.

<sup>1</sup> J.R.A.S., Jan 1897, p. 11.

"The total height of this remarkable column would be 42 ft. 8 in. less than the *lāt* near the Qutb Masjid at Delhi; the latter, however, being round, and 4 ft. 10 in. in circumference.<sup>1</sup>

"It would be advisable, if local mechanical means could be found for moving these enormous masses of iron, to erect afresh this iron column in front of the Jāmi Masjid at Dhār in its original position. . . .

"About twenty-three miles south of Dhār lies the celebrated hill fort of Māndu, now deserted, and handed over to the tender-mercies of vegetation, which has covered the whole hill and enveloped the palaces and masjids."<sup>2</sup>

The above very imperfect description of the Dhār pillar does not warrant the assumption that the principal fragment, lying against the terrace of the Jāmi' Masjid at Dhār, occupies its original position. The iron pillar certainly has no connection with the Jain temples of the twelfth century, which supplied the materials for the Mosque. The bell-capital, which is vaguely described as included in a fragment 6 feet high, must consist of several members. I doubt if the bell-capital, in any of its forms, is to be found of a date later than A.D. 500. So far as can be judged from a description so deficient in details and unaccompanied by any illustration, the pillar at Dhār must, like the similar monument near Delhi, date from the Gupta period. Pillars of that period were constructed with members of circular, square, and octagonal sections in combination.<sup>3</sup>

The three existing pieces of the Dhār column are said to measure respectively 24, 12, and 6 feet long, aggregating

<sup>1</sup> These figures for the Iron Pillar at the Qutb Mosque are wildly wrong. The total height of that monument from top to bottom is 23 ft. 8 in. The lower diameter of the shaft is 16·4 inches, and the upper diameter is 12·05 inches, the diminution being 0·29 of an inch per foot. The capital, which is of the bell pattern, is 3½ feet high.

<sup>2</sup> "Annual Progress Report of the Archaeological Survey Circle, North-Western Provinces and Oudh, for the year ending 30th June, 1893"; printed at the Thomason College Press, Roorkee, No. 2,286, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> The references to Gupta Architecture in Cunningham's "Reports" are grouped together under that heading in my General Index. See especially vol. ix, plate xi; and vol. x, plates xx-xxii and xxvi-xxx.

42 feet, in addition to a missing fragment. If these figures are correct, the column was approximately double the height of the Delhi monument.

We marvel at the skill shown by the ancient artificers in forging the great mass of the Delhi pillar, and must give a still greater measure of admiration to the forgotten craftsmen who dealt successfully with the still more ponderous mass of the Dhār monument.

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