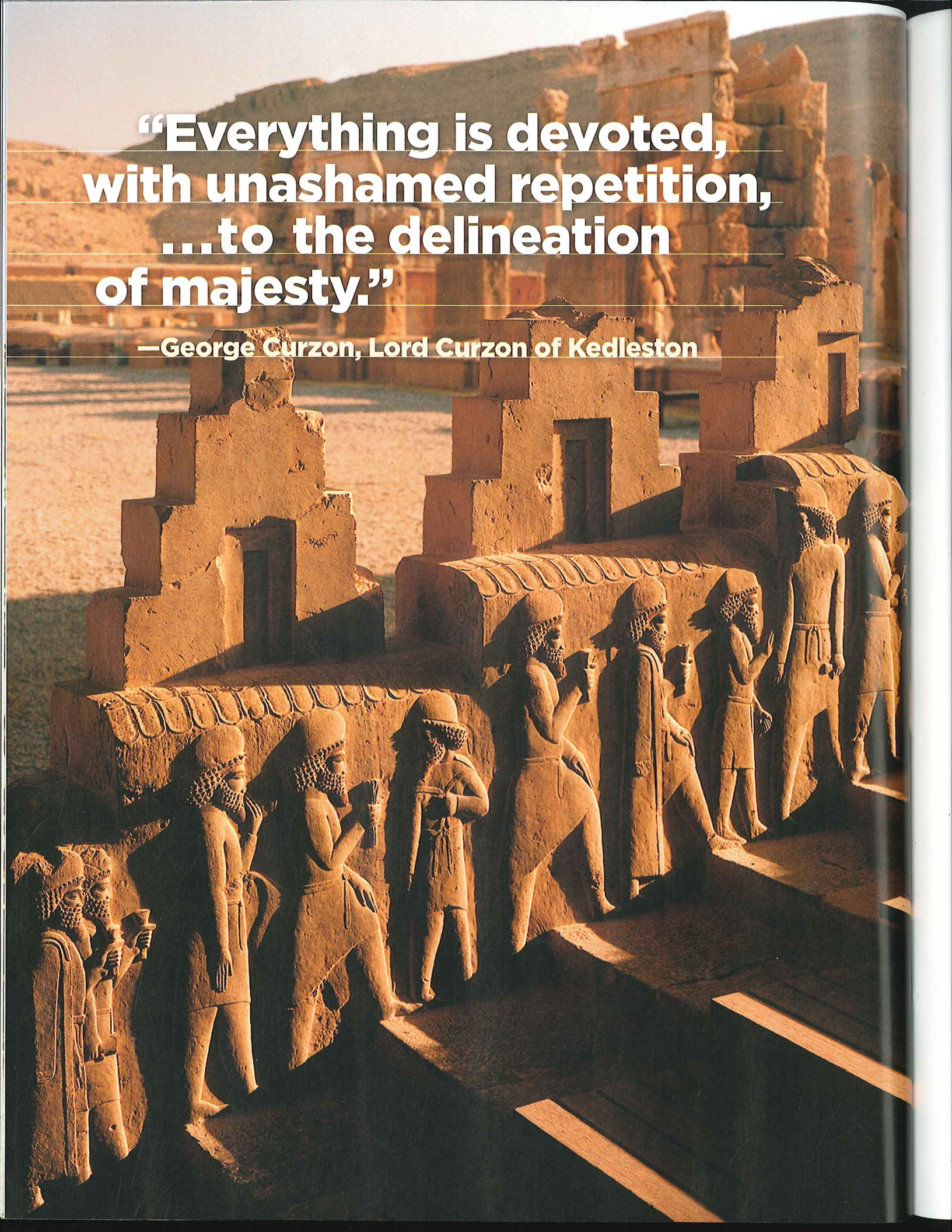


**“Everything is devoted,
with unashamed repetition,
...to the delineation
of majesty.”**

—George Curzon, Lord Curzon of Kedleston



The greatest palace at Persepolis was the Apadana, which was also one of the city's earliest. It consists of a 200-foot (61 m) grand hall and 72 columns, each standing 66 feet (20 m) tall, holding up a heavy ceiling. With one enormous room around 361 square feet (33.5 sq m), it only would have been used for the grandest occasions—perhaps for an annual ceremony where people traveled from across the empire to pay tribute to their king. Records show that Darius brought artisans in from far and wide to build his city, including Egyptians, Carians, and Ionian Greeks. Darius's son Xerxes, who became known as Xerxes the Great, completed Persepolis.

Two grand stairways led to elevated terraces, all decorated with human figures in low relief. There are more than 3,000 figures here: officials, people bringing tribute, and soldiers who may



represent members of the 10,000-strong “Immortals” who made up the royal guard. These figures are impressive not only for their number but also for their degree of sameness. Though they were carved over a number of years, it's hard to pick out any differences among them, which speaks to the sense of permanence that the city strove to embody.

Alexander the Great defeated the Persians and captured Persepolis in 330 B.C. One night, an Athenian suggested they burn the city down as retribution for the Persians' burning of Athens years earlier, so the king tossed a torch into one of the palaces and carried off its treasures.

REMAINS OF A MIGHTY EMPIRE

(Above) Reliefs hold spears at Persepolis; (below) pillars that once held a roof remain; (opposite) reliefs march up the stairs.

