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TALMAGE'S SERMON.

THE PREACHER SPENDS TWO WEEKS AT BOMBAY.

His Talks with Noted Fire Worshipers
—Investigation of Parsee Catechism
—A Visit to a Tower of Silence—
Heathen Matrimonial Rites.

Among the Parsees.
Rev. Dr. Talmage, continuing his series of round the world sermons through the prism, has chosen this week for his subject "The Fire Worshipers," the text selected being Matthew 11, 1, "There came wise men from the east to Jerusalem." These wise men were the Parsees, or the so-called fire worshipers, and I found their descendants in India last October. Their heathenism is more tolerant than any of the other false religions and has more alleviations, and while in this round the world series I have already shown you the worst forms of heathenism to-day I show you the least offensive.

The prophet of the Parsees was Zoroaster of Persia. He was poet and philosopher and reformer as well as religionist. His disciples thrived at first in Persia, but under Mohammedan persecution they retreated to India, where I met them, and in addition to what I saw of them at their headquarters in Bombay, India, I had two weeks of association with one of the most learned and genial of their people on shipboard from Bombay to Britain. The Bible of the Parsees, or fire worshipers, as they are inaccurately called, is the Zend Avesta, a collection of the strangest books that ever came into my hands. There were originally twenty-one volumes, but Alexander the Great in a drunken fit set fire to a palace which contained some of them, and they went into ashes and forgetfulness. But there are more of their sacred volumes left than most people would have patience to read. There are many things in the religion of the Parsees that suggests Christianity, and some of its doctrines are in accord with our own religion. Zoroaster, who lived about 1,400 years before Christ, was a good man, suffered persecution for his faith and was assassinated while worshipping at an altar. He announced the theory, "He is best who is pure of heart" and that there are two great spirits in the world—Ormuzd, the good spirit, and Ahriman, the bad spirit—and that all who do right are under the influence of Ormuzd, and all who do wrong are under Ahriman; that the Parsee must be born on the ground floor of the house and must be buried from the ground floor; that the dying man must have prayers said over him and a sacred juice given him to drink; that the good at their decease go into eternal light and the bad into eternal darkness; that having passed out of this life the soul lingers near the corpse three days in a paradisiac state, enjoying more than all the nations of earth put together could enjoy, or in a penitentiary state, suffering more than all the nations put together could possibly suffer, but at the end of three days departing for its final destiny, and that there will be a resurrection of the body. They are more careful than any other people about their ablutions, and they wash and wash and wash. They pay great attention to physical health, and it is a rare thing to see a sick Parsee. They do not smoke tobacco, for they consider that a salute of fire. At the close of mortal life the soul appears at the Bridge Chinivat, where the angels presides, and questions the soul about the thoughts and words and deeds of its earthly state. Nothing, however, is more intense in the Parsee faith than the theory that the dead body is impure. A devil is supposed to take possession of the dead body. All who touch it are unclean, and hence the strange style of obsequies.

Where the Dead Lie.
We started for Malabar Hill, on which the wealthy classes have their embowered homes and the Parsees their strange temples of the dead. We passed on up through gates into the garden that surrounds the place where the Parsees dispose of their dead. This garden was given by Jamshidji Jijibhai and is beautiful with flowers of all hues and foliage of all styles of vein and notch and stature. There is on all sides great opulence of fern and cypress. The garden is 100 feet above the level of the sea. Not far from the entrance is a building where the mourners of the funeral procession go in to pray. A light is here kept burning year in and year out. We ascend the garden by some eight stone steps. The body of a deceased aged woman was being carried in toward the chief "tower of silence." There are five of these towers. Several of them have not been used for a long while. Four persons, whose business is to do this, carry in the corpse. They are followed by two men with long beards. The tower of silence to which they come cost \$150,000 and is 25 feet high and 278 feet around and without a roof. The four carriers of the dead and the two bearded men come to the door of the tower, enter and leave the dead. There are three rows of places for the dead—the outer row for the men, the middle row for the women, the inside row for the children. The lifeless bodies are exposed as far down as the waist. As soon as the employes retire from the tower of silence the vultures, now one, now two, now many, swoop upon the lifeless form. These vultures fill the air with their discordant voices. We saw them in long rows on top of the whitewashed wall of the tower of silence. In a few minutes they have taken the last particle of flesh from the bones. There had evidently been other opportunities for them that day, and some few away as though surfeited. They sometimes carry away with them parts of a body, and it is no unusual thing for the gentlemen in their country seats to have dropped into their dooryards a bone from the tower of silence.

In the center of this tower is a well, into which the bones are thrown after they are bleached. The hot sun and the rainy season and charcoal do their work of disintegration and disinfection, and then there are sluices that carry into the sea what remains of the dead. The wealthy people of Malabar hill have made strenuous efforts to have these strange towers removed as a nuisance, but they remain and will no doubt for ages remain. Reverence for the Elements of Nature? I have talked with a learned Parsee about these mortuary customs. He said: "I suppose you consider them very peculiar, but the fact is we Parsees reverence the elements of nature and cannot consent to defile them. We reverence the fire, and therefore will not ask it to burn our dead. We reverence the water and do not ask it to submerge our dead. We reverence the earth and will not ask it to bury our dead, and so we let the vultures take them away." He confirmed me in the theory that the Parsees set on the principle that the dead are unclean. No one must touch such a body. The carriers of this "tower of silence" must not put their hands on the form of the departed. They wear gloves lest somehow they should be contaminated. When the bones are to be removed from the sides of the tower and put in the well at the center, they are touched carefully by tong. Then these people besides have very decided theories about the democracy of the tomb. No such thing as caste among the dead. Philosopher and boor, the affluent and the destitute must go through the same "tower of silence," lie down side by side with other occupants, have their bodies dropped into the same abyss and be carried out through the same canal and float away on the same sea. No splendor of Necropolis, no sculpturing of mausoleum, no pomp of dome or obelisk. Zoroaster's teachings resulted in these "towers of silence." He wrote, "Naked you came into the world and naked you must go out." As I stood at the close of day in this garden on Malabar hill and heard the flap of the vultures' wings coming from their roost, the funeral custom of the Parsee seemed horrible beyond compare, and yet the dissolution of the human body by any mode is awful, and the best of these fowl are probably no more repulsive than the worms of the body devouring the sacred human form in cemeteries. Nothing but their resurrection day can undo the awful work of death, whether it now be put out of sight by cutting spade or flying wing.

At a Wedding.
Starting homeward, we soon were in the heart of the city and saw a building all a-flash with lights and resounding with merry voices. It was a Parsee wedding, in a building erected especially for the marriage ceremony. We came to the door and proposed to go in, but at first were not permitted. They saw we were not Parsees, and that we were not even natives. So very politely they halted us on the doormat. This temple of nuptials was chiefly occupied by women, their ears and necks and hands a-flame with jewels or imitations of jewels. By pantomime and gestures, as we had no use of their vocabulary, we told them we were strangers and were curious to see by what process Parsees were married.

Gradually we worked our way inside the door. The building and the surroundings were illuminated by hundreds of candles in glasses and lanterns, in unique and grotesque holdings. Conversation ran high, and laughter bubbled over, and all was gay. Then there was a sound of an advancing band of music, but the instruments for the most part were strange to our ears and eyes. Louder and louder were the outside voices, and the wind and stringed instruments, until the procession halted at the door of the temple and the bridegroom mounted the steps. Then the music ceased, and all the voices were still.

The mother of the bridegroom, with a platter loaded with aromatics and articles of food, confronted her son and began to address him. Then she took from the platter a bottle of perfume and sprinkled his face with the redolence. All the while speaking in a droning tone, she took from the platter a handful of rice, throwing some of it on his head, spilling some of it on his shoulder, pouring some of it on his hands. She took from her platter a coconut and waved it about his head. She lifted a garland of flowers and threw it over his neck and a bouquet of flowers and put it in his hand. Her part of the ceremony completed, the band resumed its music, and through another door the bridegroom was conducted into the center of the building. The bride was in the room, but there was nothing to designate her. "Where is the bride?" I said. "Where is the bride?" After a while she was made evident. The bride and groom were seated on chairs opposite each other. A white curtain was dropped between them so that they could not see each other. Then the attendants put their arms under this curtain, took a long rope of linen and wound it around the neck of the bride and the groom in token that they were to be bound together for life. Then some silk strings were wound around the couple, now around this one and now around that. Then the groom threw a handful of rice across the curtain on the head of the bride, and the bride responded by throwing a handful of rice across the curtain on the head of the groom. Thereupon the curtain dropped, and the bride's chair was removed and put beside that of the groom. Then a priest of the Parsee religion arose and faced the couple. Before the priest was placed a platter of rice. He began to address the young man and woman. We could not hear a word, but understood just as well as if we had heard. Ever and anon he punctuated his ceremony by a handful of rice, which he picked up from the platter and flung now toward the groom and now toward the bride.

The ceremony went on interminably. We wanted to hear the conclusion, but were told that the ceremony would go on for a long while—indeed that it would not conclude until 2 o'clock in the morning, and this was only between 7 and 8 o'clock in the evening. There would be a recess after while in the ceremony, but it would be taken up again in earnest at half past 12. We enjoyed what we had seen, but felt incapacitated for six more hours of wedding ceremony. Silently wishing the couple a happy life in each other's companionship, we pressed our way through the throng of congratulatory Parsees. All of them seemed bright and appreciative of the occasion. The streets outside joyously sympathized with the transaction inside.

Women in India.
We rode on toward our hotel wishing that marriage in all India might be as much honored as in the ceremony we had that evening witnessed at the Parsee wedding. The Hindoo women are not so married. They are simply cursed into the conjugal relation. Many of the girls are married at 7 and 10 years of age, and some of them are grandmothers at 80. They can never go forth into the sunlight with their faces uncovered. They must stay at home. All styles of maltreatment are theirs. If they become Christians they become outcasts. A missionary told me in India of a Hindoo woman who became a Christian. She had nine children. Her husband was over 70 years of age, and yet at her Christian baptism he told her to go, and she went out homeless. As long as woman is down India will be down. No nation was ever elevated except through the elevation of woman. Parsee marriage is an improvement on Hindoo marriage, but Christian marriage is an improvement on Parsee marriage.

A fellow traveler in India told me he had been writing to his home in England trying to get a law passed that no white woman could be legally married in India until she had been there six months. Admirable law would that be! If a white woman saw that married life with a Hindoo in, she would never undertake it. Off with the thick and ugly veil from woman's face! Off with the crushing burdens from her shoulder! Nothing but the gospel of Jesus Christ will ever make life in India what it ought to be.

But what an afternoon of contrast in Bombay we experienced! From the temple of silence to the temple of hilarity! From the vultures to the doves! From mourning to laughter! From gathering shadows to gleaming lights! From obscenity to weddings! But how much of all our lives is made up of such opposites! I have carried in the same pocket and read from them in the same hour the liturgy of the dead and the ceremony of spouses. And so the tear meets the smile, and the dove meets the vulture.

The Glorious Gospel of Christ.
Thus I have set before you the best of all the religions of the heathen world, and I have done so in order that you might come to higher appreciation of the glorious religion which has put its benediction over us and over Christendom. Compare the absurdities and numberless of heathen marriage with the plain "I will" of Christian marriage, the hands joined in pledge "till death do you part." Compare the doctrine that the dead may not be touched with as sacred and tender and loving a kiss as is ever given, the last kiss of lips that will never again speak to us. Compare the narrow bridge Chinivat, over which the departing Parsee soul must tremblingly cross, to the wide open gate of heaven, through which the departing Christian soul may triumphantly enter. Compare the 21 books of the Zend Avesta of the Parsee, which even the scholars of the earth despair of understanding, with our Bible, so much of it as is necessary for our salvation in language so plain that "a wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein." Compare the "tower of silence," with its vultures, at Bombay with the Greenwood of Brooklyn, with its sculptured angels of resurrection, and bow yourselves in thanksgiving and prayer as you realize that if at the battles of Marathon and Salamis Persia had triumphed over Greece instead of Greece triumphing over Persia, Parseesism, which was the national religion of Persia, might have covered the earth, and you and I instead of sitting in the noonday light of our glorious Christianity might have been groping in the depressing shadows of Parseesism, a religion as inferior to that which is our inspiration in life and our hope in death as Zoroaster of Persia was inferior to our radiant and superhuman Christ, to whom be honor and glory and dominion and victory and song, world without end. Amen!

An Oddity.
Joubert, the French moralist, whose "Thoughts" had great success, was so odd and original that a witty woman declared he gave her the idea of a soul which had met by chance with a body that it had to put up with and do with as well as it could.

His friend and editor, Chateaubriand, described him as an egotist who was always thinking of others. His ambition was to be perfectly calm, yet no one betrayed so much agitation as he.

In eating and in taking exercise he was as inconstant as a coquette. For several days he would live on milk; then for a week he would eat nothing but hash. On one day he would be jolted in a carriage at full trot over the roughest roads; on the next he would be drawn slowly through the smoothest alleys.

He had a library of mutilated books; for when he read he used to tear out of a book the pages that displeased him.

Oyster Force Meat.
To prepare oyster force meat use one generous pint of stale bread crumbs, one dozen large oysters, three tablespoonsful of butter, one tablespoonful of salt, one-eighth of a teaspoonful of cayenne, one teaspoonful of minced parsley, a slight grating of nutmeg, one tablespoonful of lemon juice, three tablespoonfuls of oyster juice, and the yolks of two uncooked eggs, says the New York World. Chop the oysters very fine, add the other ingredients, pound to a smooth paste, and rub through a puree sieve. Taste to see if the preparation is salt enough; if not, add more salt. This force meat may be used for timbales or for stuffing any kind of fish or poultry. It may also be shaped into balls, which may be covered with the yolks of eggs and bread crumbs and then fried, or the balls may be made very small, then rolled in egg yolks and browned in a hot oven. When treated in this manner they are a garnish for soup.

Something About Its Method of Manufacture and Its Origin.
An enterprising enemy of chewing gum tells the gum-chewers of his acquaintance that all sorts of horrible things were used by the manufacturers in making the gum, such as refuse from the slaughter houses—blood, bones, hoofs and fat—and other uncleanly and disagreeable things. This anti-chewing gum man adds that no one is permitted to go through a chewing-gum factory, and that the process is kept a dense, inviolate secret because the manufacturers do not want the truth to get out.

So far as the process of making chewing gum is concerned the anti-gum man was right in saying that makers try to keep it a secret, but his enthusiasm led him astray when he charged the manufacturers with putting in other than clean, harmless materials in making the gum. As a matter of fact, the greater part of the different varieties of gum is made of clean vegetable products mixed and put together in a clean factory, where the floor and machinery are as free from dirt as the kitchen of a Dutch housewife. For reasons best known to themselves chewing-gum makers are given to the habit of making their gums behind closed doors and giving out that the process as well as the materials for making the compound are known to only a select few.

Nine-tenths of the gum chewed in this country is made of chicle, the gum of the sapodilla tree of Mexico and South America, granulated sugar and flavoring extracts. The other tenth is spruce gum and white or paraffin gum, the latter a product of petroleum, mixed with sugar and favoring essence. The only real secret in the making of the gum is that part of the process which refines, cleans and prepares the crude chicle gum for the sugar and flavors. This sapodilla tree is a member of the caoutchouc family and a distant relative of the rubber tree. The gum was brought to this country, not for the purpose of making chewing gum, but to adulterate rubber. Nearly twenty-five years ago Thomas Adams, of New York, imported ten tons of chicle gum and began a series of experiments for the purpose of making it with rubber and producing a cheap, hard rubber. The chicle could not be vulcanized, and the experiments proved failures. Then Mr. Adams tried to sell his useless gum, but no one wanted it, and he was about to dump it all into the North River when he received the idea which resulted in chewing gum. He was in a candy store and heard a little girl ask for "mythic chewing gum." It occurred to Mr. Adams that his chicle gum might make chewing gum, and he tried some of it. The result was the rubber gum of two decades ago. It was without flavor, for it was but refined chicle gum. At that time the chewing gums were the white, or paraffin gum and spruce gum, but chewing gum was confined to school children, and did not become a craze until favoring compounds and the free use of printers' ink made it popular.

When the chicle gum is received at the factories from Mexico it is covered with dirt, leaves and splinters of bark and wood. It is nearly of the consistency of putty, and looks like it. The chicle gum is first cleaned of its impurities and then worked down in a kneading machine until it has the right texture. Heat and chemicals play an important part in this refining process, and when it is ready for the next step it is taken to the mixing machine, where pure granulated sugar and the essential oils which flavor it are mixed with the chicle gum. These flavoring extracts are peppermint, wintergreen, vanilla, licorice, pineapple, strawberry, tolu, sarsaparilla, blood-orange, and half a hundred other sweet and spicy things. Sometimes two or three flavors are blended, and a new gum is sent out with a catchy name. Pepsin is placed in some gums and barley malt is another medicinal gum. When the gum is sweetened and flavored it is rolled out into thin sheets, cut up into pieces and wrapped in tin-foil, tissue paper or lace by girls.

In spite of the dainty preparations sent out in attractive papers by the makers, the old-fashioned, non-flavored rubber gum still has an immense sale. It is made up into sticks which are notched so as to break off into small "chews." When first put into the mouth the pure, untreated chicle, or rubber gum, crumbles between the teeth, but in a short time it becomes plastic, and by athletes it is considered better than the favoring compounds. This is what a reputable physician of Chicago has to say of chewing gums: "In many cases dyspepsia and indigestion can be cured—really and absolutely cured—by the intelligent use of non-flavored gum. The best gum to use is pure spruce gum. Chew it for ten minutes before eating and half an hour after eating, swallowing the saliva. Next to spruce gum comes the old-fashioned rubber gum. The action of the gum releases the saliva, and at the same time by sympathetic action aids the process of digestion in the stomach. The continuous use of gum wastes the saliva and lays the foundations of nervous and stomach ailments. There is nothing in the composition of chewing gums which is at all hurtful unless the gum itself is swallowed; then trouble may follow, for it is injurious to the digestion of a girl."