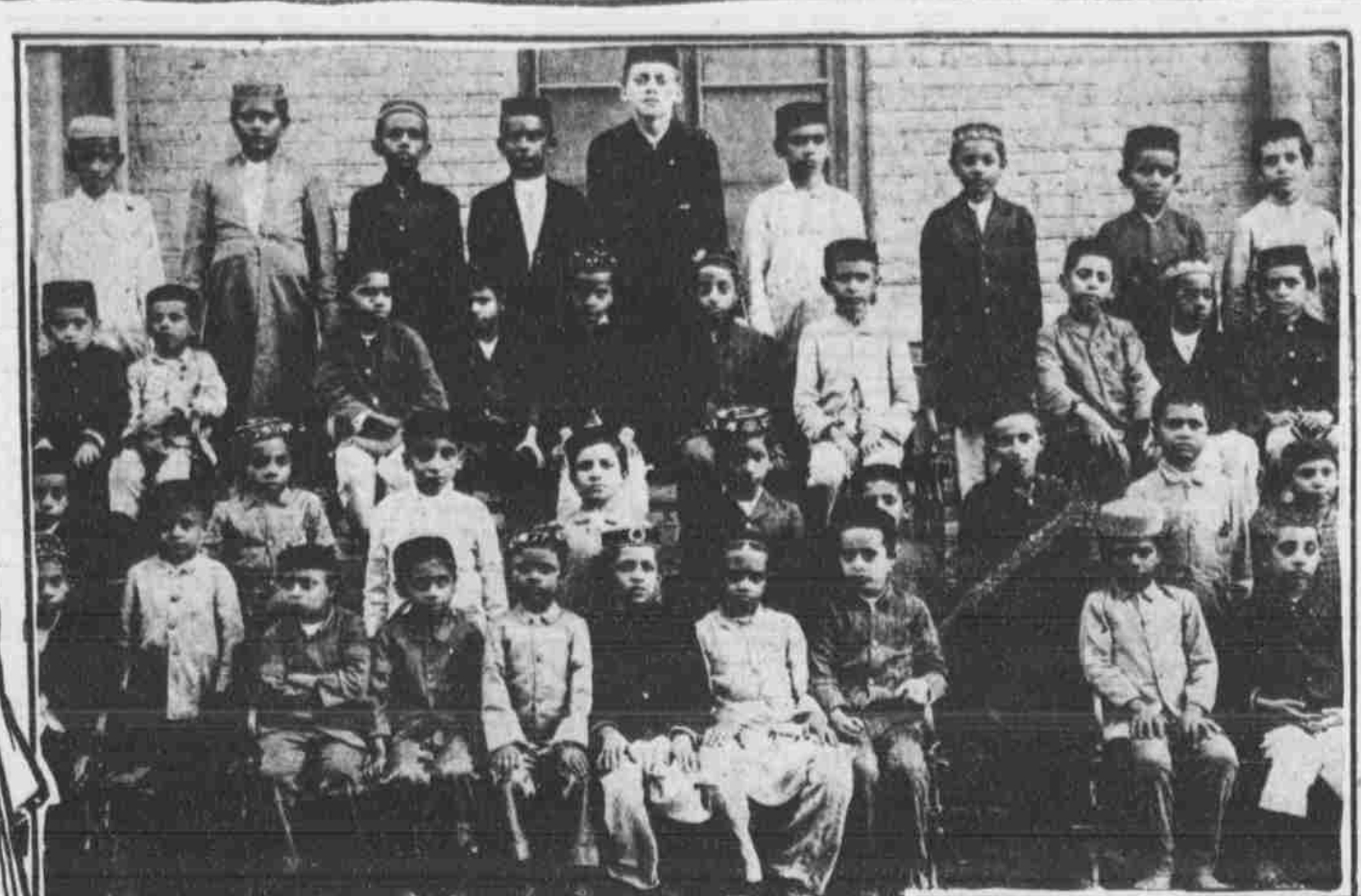


# Strange Church of Millionaires Which Does Not Welcome Converts



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**B**OMBAY.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee).—The richest, the most powerful, the most intelligent and most charitable of all religions in the Parsee, which has its headquarters here at Bombay. I use these terms in comparing it with the other great religions as to the number of its members.

There are less than 100,000 Parsees in the world, but their banks and other financial institutions are scattered throughout the far east, and their possessions are untold millions. They have to be considered in every business movement that goes on in India, for they are the financial kings of the country. They are noted for their integrity and progressiveness, and just now, when India is torn up by the popular Hindu riots, the fact that they stand in favor of the government is of value to Great Britain. One of their biggest capitalists recently said at a Parsee mass meeting that his people denounced the violence and anarchy advocated by the revolutionists of other sects, and referred to the British rule as an unmitigated blessing to India.

The Hindus are illiterate. Not one in ten can read or write. The Parsees are universally educated. Many of them are graduates of colleges and universities, and they have large boys' schools and girls' schools at Bombay, and in the province of Hindustan for the training of their children.

**Millions for Charity.**  
There are no more charitable believers in the world than the Parsees. They are always giving to public enterprises, and their institutions, founded for their own people, have cost many millions of dollars. During the last year the bequests of the late Lord Cromwell M. Wadia have been largely distributed, and in addition there have been other gifts from Parsees here at Bombay aggregating \$200,000. The Wadia bequests amount to more than \$5,000,000. All this was for the amelioration of the condition of the poor and the promotion of education among the Parsees.

I drove past the Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy Institute, which was founded sixty years ago by a Parsee of that name. He began life a poor boy and died worth \$10,000,000. A great part of his wealth went to charity. He gave \$5,000,000 to hospitals, colleges and rest houses and about \$100,000 to this school. The government of India took charge of the gift and agreed to pay 6 per cent upon it as a loan. Since then the other Parsees have added to the endowment and the capital of this institute is fourfold as large as when started. The Parsees are also building sanitary houses for the poor of their communities. Their scheme is about the same as that of the George Peabody trust fund and they expect to make only 4 per cent on their money.

**Charities of Parsee Women.**  
Such charities are not confined to the men. They are pushed and aided by the women as well. They have fish widows who compare in their gifts with Mrs. Russell Sage and girls who might stand side by side with Helen Gould. Of the latter character is Miss Hamballa Framji Petit, who has just given her jewelry valued at 1,200,000 rupees, for founding a Parsee girls' orphanage where it is proposed to teach the various arts and industries so that the graduates, upon leaving, may earn their own living. Miss Petit has given this money over to trustees and a committee of influential Parsee gentlemen are now laying out the plans for the institution.

One of the Parsee givers of the past whom we might compare with certain of our millionaire widows was Mrs. Bai Motilal Wadia, of the same family as the man who has just left the \$2,000,000 gold dollars. She was the wife of a millionaire Parsee of this city, whom she outlived more than thirty years. During that time she gave away one million and a half dollars in public charities, and about two millions in private alms. She gave Bombay its first hospital for native women at a cost of over \$2,000,000, and notwithstanding all this, left a big fortune to her descendants.

**Parsee Millionaires.**  
These gifts suggest the wealth of the Parsees. The Pettis might be called the Rothschilds of the country, save that they are by far more generous. One of the men of the Pettis family, to which belonged the girl who has just donated her jewelry for a girls' orphanage, founded a boys' orphanage to perpetuate the memory of his son, who was cut off in his prime. These Pettis have made their millions in cotton. One of them erected the first spinning mill for India. This was over

## An Orphanage at Bombay

forty years ago. It was a great success, and its founder added others, so that it became the cotton king of the country. A large part of the Wadia fortune was made in cotton, as were also those of the Tatas and the Jeejeebhoy. Other rich families control the Parsee banks in the various cities of India and in other parts of the far east, and a big steel industry has just started by the Tatas. But of this I shall write in the future.

**A Religious Trust.**  
Before mentioning some tenets of the Parsee faith I want to tell you about the Panchayat or religious trust which manages it. This controls more property than Trinity church in New York. It has charge of all the church funds, amounting to more than \$2,000,000, and other holdings in real estate which are of great value. The Panchayat has recently figured in some trials here at Bombay, which have created great excitement throughout the Parsee world. The Parsee church is a close corporation. Its members are liberal to a fault, and give more to their faith than any sect I know. At the same time they are conservative and want to control what they give by keeping out of the fold converts who are not of pure Parsee blood.

Not long ago one of the Tatas, a millionaire member of the community, took unto himself a French wife. She became converted to her husband's religion, professed the faith of Zoroaster and was taken into the church. The women of the faith objected, and the trustees of the Panchayat decided that they could not allow any interest in the church money to go to outside converts to warm their souls at the holy fires or upon death to have their flesh torn from their bodies by the vultures on the towers of silence. The French lady insisted upon her rights, and she has now brought suit to enforce them before the courts at Bombay. The judges have decided in her favor, and converts are now to have the right to come into the church under certain restrictions. However, there was a minority decision. One of the judges decided that the aliens might have separate temples and burial towers, and another has protested that the verdict might open up the church to undesirable

## The Faith of the Parsees.

And this brings me to the faith of the Parsees. You have often heard them called worshippers of fire. In a sense they are so. They have fire always burning in their temples, but their worship is not one of them told me, only as an emblem of the sun and as the highest visible type of the Creator. It is so with all religions supposed to be purely idolatrous. Upon investigation one finds that the idols are worshipped only as the representative of a deity who creates and rules, and not as sticks and stones endowed with supernatural powers. There is no religion upon earth that does not contain beautiful traits. Otherwise it could not be believed by reasoning man nor have its followers from generation to generation.

The Parsees believe in one God and in the resurrection and equality of all beings before God. They believe that this God created two spirits; one of evil and the other of good; one of light and the other of darkness. These spirits are always fighting for man's soul, and according as he favors one or the other he ascends to heaven or descends to hell. His conduct on earth determines his life after death.

**The Sacred Fire.**  
The Parsees look upon fire and water and the sun, moon and stars as the creation of the spirit of light. They especially revere fire, and that used in the temples here at Bombay is said to have been burning for hundreds of years. It came from Persia, where it was first lighted many centuries ago, before the Mohammedans conquered the country and drove these people out. It was carried by them to the town of Ormuz on the Persian gulf, and brought with them to Sanjan in India when the first of their sect came to Hindustan. Later when they brought it with them to Bombay, and it is always kept blazing in the temples here.

The Parsees do not permit strangers to see this fire. They regard their worship to be held in view by their others, and they make no display of their religion by gorgeous churches and elaborate religious ceremonies. I am told that they look upon fire as the purest thing upon earth. In some of their new temples they have started the fires by coals from a tree or building struck by lightning, and have fed them with chips and dust of sandalwood. I understand that they will not spit in the fire nor blow out a light. For a time many of them would not smoke tobacco, and some of them have refused to serve in the fire department here at Bombay, not wishing to spit in putting fire out.

**Zoroaster the Prophet.**  
The Parsees are often called disciples of Zoroaster. This man belonged to the Aryan; he held the same faith as the wise men who followed the star to the stable when Christ was born at Bethlehem. It is one of the oldest of religions and was worshiped by Cyrus the Great. Zoroaster was a boy of twelve at the time Jerusalem was taken by Nebuchadnezzar. He lived in

## Women Who Believe in Zoroaster

northern Persia and the old Persian writings chronicle many miracles as to his birth and life. He went through a period of religious preparation and at thirty received a revelation and came forth to reform the old creed of the Magi. He had many visions. He saw the one God, and was tempted again and again by the spirit of darkness, but always came off triumphant. During his life he converted Vahstapa, one of the great kings of that time, and his religion spread all over Persia. It was the chief religion there for many years, but is now believed alone by the Parsees.

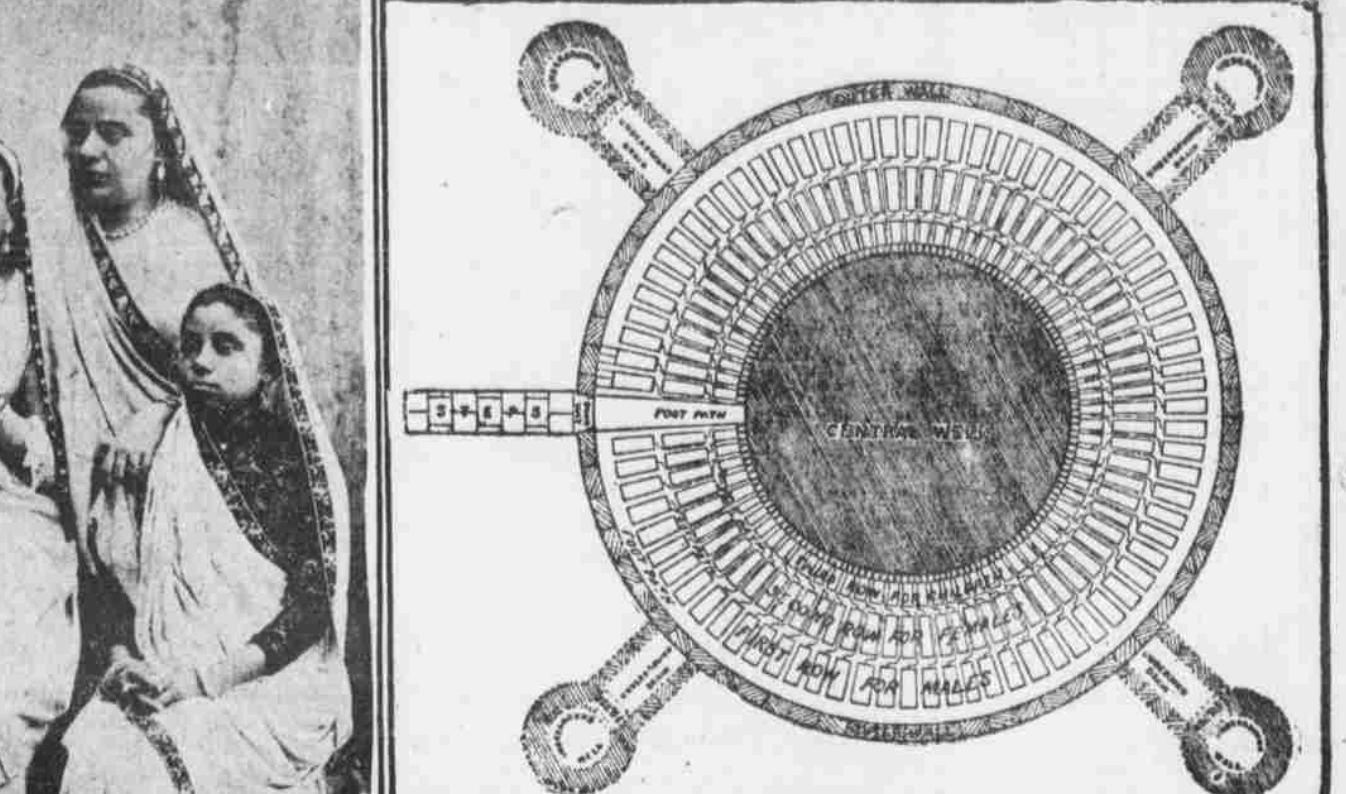
A white-haired, silver-bearded old fellow of this faith tells me that one of the chief elements of the religion is the belief that life is immortal, and that all human beings are free moral agents, and therefore responsible. They believe in rewards and punishments, and that in this

life we settle our future existence. As to the Parsee God, he is called the Deo, the Creator and the Governor of the World. He is the emblem of glory and light, and for this reason the Parsee when he worships stands before the fire or turns his face to the sun as the symbol of the Almighty.

It seems strange to think of a beautiful, well bred, intelligent woman, the wife of a millionaire, fighting in the courts of India for her right to Parsee burial. This means that as death she will be laid naked upon the Towers of Silence, and have the flesh picked from her bones by a flock of vultures which have always fed upon human flesh. This is the universal Parsee disposition of the dead. They do not bury the body in the earth nor burn it. They is too holy and sacred to be defiled with a corpse and the work of the worms is too slow and too vile. Instead they lay their bodies out in the open on an iron grating under the sky and the birds pick the bones.

The places where the towers of the dead stand is a beautiful one. It is called the Towers of Silence, and is situated upon a hill, an elevation rising almost straight up from the sea, and washed by the winds from a beautiful ocean. The hill is covered with a beautiful garden. You walk up to it over well paved roads shaded by tropical trees and bordered with flowers and shrubs. Winding your way through this luxuriant vegetation you at last reach a point from where you can see far out over the Indian ocean, and turning landward view the

## Rich Parsees - The Financial Kings of India



### Ground Plan of the Tower of Silence

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**Laid Upon a Gridiron.**  
Each tower is about twenty-five feet in height and ninety feet in diameter. It is crowned with a grating or great circular gridiron which slopes toward the center, where a well five feet in width runs down to the sea.

The gridiron grating is cast in sections and so formed that there are foot paths here and there through it. In each tower there are certain divisions for the disposal of the dead. One section is devoted to the bodies of men, another to those of women, and a third to the children, the last part nearest the well. The bodies are stripped naked before they are placed upon the towers; and after the flesh has been devoured by the vultures the skeletons are left to bleach and dry in the sun.

The bodies are taken into the towers by two bearded men dressed all in white. These are the carriers of the dead. At every funeral they take the corpse and, entering the tower through an opening about eight feet from the ground, walk up a flight of steps and place it upon its proper location. After it has been stripped by the birds, and has become perfectly dry, they take bones and throw the bones into the well, where they are left to crumble to dust.

These towers are well drained. The heavy rains of the tropics fall upon them, but the water runs off into the sea and there are filters below them filled with charcoal so that all is kept clean. Indeed, the bones dust accumulates so slowly that it has taken forty years to make it rise to five feet.

## A Look at the Vultures.

I shall never forget my visit to these towers of silence. None but the Parsees can go close to them and it was through a Parsee of high rank that I gained admittance. Climbing the hill with one of the sections, I made my way through the paths of a garden comprising perhaps sixty acres of trees and flowers. I was shown the Parsee Temple and then taken to a place where I could overlook the great towers.

At first each seemed to me a huge cylinder of white with a fringe of coping of mighty black birds. As I continued to look the birds sprang into life. They raised their heads and craned their necks, and I thought they imagined us corpse bearers. A moment later a funeral made its way up the hill, and I saw that they were gazing at it. In front came the two carriers of the dead and upon their shoulders lay the corpse of a baby, which was clad in white. The carriers had their faces covered, and behind them came mourners on foot, in white clothing. All Parsees walk to their funerals and they dress much the same. There are no differences of condition at the towers of silence.

"Naked we came into the world and naked we must depart from it," said my old Parsee guide. "The bones of us all go into these reservoirs, and the flesh of the rich and the poor feed the same vultures."

As the procession drew near the birds grew excited. They flapped their wings and flew from the sides of the tower to the other. The stone of the grating is such that I could not see the little body as it was stripped and laid in its place. Such sights are visible only to the carriers, but I could tell the time of the exposure by the flock of vultures which came flying from the various towers to that part of the enclosure, and by the flapping of the wings and the noise. The sight was a horrible one, but when I thought that those birds in two hours would accomplish what millions of insects and slimy worms might have done in weeks or months in part of the year, I doubted after all whether their method is not better than ours.

**Lovers' Cousinship.**  
A remarkable story of ill-fated devotion and love is reported from Braila, Roumania, and it is said that it should be made the most novel as well as a historic event in the annals of the organization.

# Curious and Romantic Courtships and Unique Capers of Cupid

## A Trolley Honeymoon.

**A** WEDDING ceremony that held the sympathetic interest of many was that of Rev. Herman Tausky, 70 years old, of 39 East One Hundred and Twenty-first street, and Mrs. Barbara Nalmski, 20 years old, and who looks not a day over 16, of 191 East One Hundred and Twelfth street, New York City. The ceremony was performed by Rev. Mr. Thayer, in the parlor of the bride's home. The bride was given away in marriage by her grandson, Henry Hauman.

All the neighborhood and thousands of the couple's friends learned of their intention to be married when they made application at the city hall for a license reports the New York American. The block on which the bride lives was crowded with women and children, all well-wishers, who had come to see that the aged couple got a proper send-off when they departed on their honeymoon.

The ceremony was simple. The bride wore a plain black dress of silk, while the bridegroom made no pretensions at adhering to conventionality and appeared in a sack suit of black, with a white waist hat.

## Wants a Wife Just to Cook.

Adam Reinheimer, a farmer of Cass county, Indiana, has advertised for a wife and has made so good a plea for help from the feminine world that the newspapers of the state have taken up his cause and are helping him in his search for a wife.

Mr. Reinheimer is 39 and has been trying to get along without a woman in the house. His ladder is always full, he has the earliest spring chickens in the county, his hens supply fresh eggs all the winter through and he has two Jersey cows that furnish milk and butter enough for two families.

He does not conceal the fact that he wants a wife that can cook. He can wash and is willing to do it, he is willing to do the scrubbing or hire some one to do it, and he promises that the wood shall be supplied at the stove and he will make the early morning fire himself.

"I don't mind washing dishes, scrubbing the floors, feeding the stock and the hens, but I can't cook," he says. "Why, I took me three months to learn to boil water without burning it. And when I got so I could boil an egg I thought I could get along forever without a woman, but I've had eggs and eggs and eggs, all I'm ashamed to look a chicken in the face."

## Marrying the Deaf.

"How to marry a deaf person who is getting married when it is time to make the responses puzzled every clergyman," a New York curate said. "If a person is only slightly deaf I can make him hear by raising my voice, or if he is afraid to depend upon his ears a bell tells him when it is his turn to say something. But I married a couple the other day who distrust both ears and nose."

"Said the bridegroom: 'Mary is very deaf. When I speak to her for her to say, 'I do,' will you lend her?'"

**Parred and Rowed.**  
Wedded more than thirty years ago, parted for most of the time by mutual distrust due to stories circulated by an alleged friend, and remarried last week in the romantic story of Wilbur M. Combs, an insurance man of New York, and Mrs. Rosa M. Traver of Auburn, N. Y.

In 1878 Combs married a beautiful young woman of Auburn, near Auburn. Soon afterward while on a business trip to New Jersey, the young husband heard stories of faithlessness and left his wife. Misleading statements reached his wife's ears and forced Combs and married a man named Traver. A pretty girl, born of the first union, grew to girlhood, became a beautiful woman and died two years ago. Over her bier the parents met and were reconciled. The woman was a widow. In conversation both learned that they had been victims of false reports and on June 29, Mr. Combs, now an old man, led his silver-

## A Pair Over Sixty.

That Cupid "moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform" and that love never grows old, and a number of other things, have just been brought out at Columbus, Ind., by the marriage of John Wesley Lawrence, aged 65, of Hartsville, Ind., and Mrs. Emma Foust, aged 67, of Philadelphia.

Mr. Lawrence is a retired contractor and was a trustee of the United Brethren college at Hartsville when a second flourished there for several years. He is a middle-aged man and would have attracted no attention in his own town, but he has the fact that he wore a long streamer of blue ribbon in his buttonhole. Inquisitive friends asked why. And he told them. He hated the color of his coat and said he had wanted to meet Mrs. Foust, who said she had visited her sister, Mrs. Lyman Hawkins, in his home town, but he had never spoken a word to her in his life.

After the returned home Mrs. Hawkins suggested to him that she might arrange a match between her sister and him. Lawrence agreed, and Mrs. Hawkins contacted the correspondence.

The meeting was arranged by letter, and Mr. Lawrence and Lawrence went to Columbus to meet Mrs. Foust. As Mr. Lawrence had never spoken to her and had not seen her for some time, he was afraid there might be some mistake when her car arrived. Consequently he arranged himself in his room and this was a town that he was in.

## Weddings on Horseback.

Mounted on horseback and attended by about 200 friends similarly situated, Miss Evelyn Baker, a former Boston belle, and George H. Morse, both members of the Out West club, were the central figures in a picturesque wedding ceremony in Los Angeles.

Out in an open stretch of land just north of a grove of live oak trees in the northern end of Griffith park, the happy couple and their members of the unique club party formed a semi-circle on their equine white mounts. Also astride his horse, performed the ceremony that united the happy couple.

The details had been left in charge of the Out West club, horseback riders of southern California, and they decided that it should be made the most novel as well as a historic event in the annals of the organization.

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Mr. Lawrence did not arrive until after the office of the county clerk closed, and he decided over the telephone to return here from his home in the country and issue a marriage license. So, Mr. Lawrence drove to Hartsville with Mrs. Foust, and they

decided to return to Columbus for the license the next day.