

REV. DR. TALMAGE.

THE BROOKLYN DIVINE'S SUNDAY SERMON.

Subject: "Tomb and Temple."

Text: "From India even unto Ethiopia."—Esther 1, 1.

In all the Bible this is the only book in which the word India occurs, but it stands for a realm of vast interest in the time of Esther, as in our time, it yielded to men, as now, spices and silk, and cotton and rice and indigo and ores of all richness and precious stones of all sparkle and had a civilization of its own as marked as Egyptian or Grecian or Roman civilization.

In a journey around the world it may not be easy to find the exact point which divides the pilgrimage into halves. But there was one structure toward which we were all the time traveling, and having seen that we felt that if we saw nothing more our expedition would be a success. That one object was the Taj Mahal of India. It is the crown of the whole earth. The spirit of architecture met to enthrone a king, and the spirit of the Parthenon of Athens was there, and the spirit of St. Sophia of Constantinople was there, and the spirit of St. Isaac of St. Petersburg was there, and the spirit of the Baptistery of Pisa was there, and the spirit of the pyramid of Luxor obelisk, and of the Persepolis tower of Naqin, and of St. Mark's of Venice, and the spirit of all the great towers, great cathedrals, great mausoleums, great sarcophagi, great capitals for the living and of great necropolises for the dead were there.

And the presiding genius of the throne with ravel of Indian marble and the table of Russian malachite, and called the throng of spirits to order, and called for a voice as to which spirit should wear the chief crown, and mount the chief throne, and wave the chief scepter, and give the glorious acclaim the cry was: "Long live the spirit of Taj, king of all the spirits of architecture! This is the Taj Mahal of India!"

The building is about six miles from Agra, and as we rode out in the early dawn we heard nothing but the hoofs and wheels that pulled and turned us along the road, at every yard of which our expectations rose until we had some thought that we might be disappointed at the first glimpse, as some are appointed to the river of life is not quite up to their expectations, and the conquerors ride seem a little spring halt or spavined?

My son said, "There it is!" I said, "Where?" For that which he saw to be the building seemed to me to be the Taj Mahal, and the morning cloud blushing under the stars of the rising sun. It seemed not so much built up from earth as let down from heaven.

Fortunately you stop at an elaborated gateway of red sandstone, and the Taj Mahal is from the Taj, an entrance so high, so arched, so graceful, so four domed, so painted and chiseled and scrolled that you come very gradually upon the Taj, which structure is enough to intoxicate the senses, as some are appointed to the river of life is not quite up to their expectations, and the conquerors ride seem a little spring halt or spavined?

There are eighty-four fountains that spout and hiss and splash themselves to fall in showers of pearl in basins of snowy whiteness. Beds of all imaginable flowers greet the nostrils before they do the eyes, and seem to roll in waves of color as you advance toward the vision you are soon to have of what human genius did when it did its best: moon flowers, lilies, marigolds, tulips and almost every where the flowers of the East and West in bloom; on either side trees from many lands bend their arborescence over your head or seem with convoluted branches to reach out their arms toward you in welcome. On and on you go amid the floral and fragrant press and poplar and oleander and yew and sycamore and bay and palm and trees of such novel branch and leaf and girth you cease to ask their name or quality.

As you approach the door of the Taj one experiences a strange sensation of awe and tenderness and humility and worship. The building is only a grave, but what a grave! Built for a queen, who, according to some, was very beautiful, and the Taj Mahal had. I choose to think she was very good. At any rate, it makes me feel better to think that this commemorative pile was set up for the immortalization of virtue rather than vice. The Taj is a mountain of white marble, but never such walls faced each other with exquisiteness; never such a tomb was cut from block of alabaster; never such a congregation of precious stones, agate and opal and emerald and chrysoberyl and glorified a building since sculptor's chisel cut its first curve, or painter's pencil traced its first figure, or mason's plumb line measured its first wall, or architect's compass swept its first circle.

The Taj has sixteen great arched windows, four at each corner; also at the four corners of the Taj stands a minaret 137 feet high at each corner of the building a splendid mosque of red sandstone. Two hundred and fifty years has the Taj stood, and yet not a wall is cracked, nor a mosaic loosened, nor an arch sagged, nor a panel dented, and the stones of 250 summers disintegrated a marble. There is no story of age written by mosses on its white surface. Nizam, the queen, was beautiful, and Shah Jehan, the king, here proposed to let all the centuries of time know it. She was married at twenty years of age and died at twenty-nine. Her life ended as another life began. As the rose bloomed the rosebush perished.

To adorn this dormitory of the dead, at the command of the king, Bagdad sent to this building its corallian and Ceylon its lapis lazuli, and Persia its turquoise, and Lanka its sapphires, and Yemen its agate, and Panna its diamonds and blood stones, and sardonyx and chalcidony and moss agates are as common as though they were pebbles. You had one spray of vine beads with eighty and another with 100 stones. Twenty thousand men were twenty years in building it, and although the labor was slave labor, and not paid for, the building cost what would be about \$60,000,000 of our American money. Some of the jewels have been picked out of the wall by looters, but looters, and substitutes of less value have taken their places, but the vines, the traceries, the arabesques, the splendours, the entablatures are so wonderful that you feel like dating the rest of your life from the day you first saw them. In letters of black marble the whole of the Koran is spelled out in and on this august pile. The king sleeps in the tomb beside the queen, although he intended to build a palace as black as this was white on the opposite side of the river for himself to sleep in. Indeed the foundation of such a necropolis of black marble is still there, and from the white to the black temple of the dead a bridge was to cross, but the son dethroned him and imprisoned him, and it is wonderful that the king had any place at all in which to be buried. Instead of windows to let in the light upon the two tombs, there is a trellis work of marble, marble cut so delicately that the sun shines through it as easily as through glass. Look the world over and find so much transparency, canopies, traceries, lace work, embroideries of stone.

We had heard of the wonderful resonance of this Taj, and so I tried it. I suppose there are more sleeping echoes in that building waiting to be awakened by the human voice than in any building ever constructed. I uttered one word, and there seemed descending invisible choirs in full chant, and there was a reverberation that kept on long after one would have expected it to cease. When a line of a hymn was sung, there were replying, rolling, rising, falling, interweaving sounds that seemed modulated by being seraphic. There were aerial soprano and basses, soft, high, deep, tremulous, emotional, commingling. It was like an antiphonal of heaven. But there are four or five Taj Mahals. It has one appearance at sunrise, and another by moonlight. Indeed the silver trowel of the moon, and the golden trowel of the sunlight, and the leaden trowel of the storm build and rebuild the Taj Mahal, and there are great white domes. It has all moods, all complexions, all grandeur. From the top of the Taj, which is 250 feet high, springs a spire thirty feet higher, and that is enameled gold. What an emblem in eternal rhythm! Lyrics and elegies in marble. Sculptured hosanna. Masonry of supernatural hands. Mighty doxology in stone. I shall see nothing to equal it till I see the great white throne and on it Him from whose face the earth and heavens flee away.

The Taj is the pride of India, and especially of Mohammedanism. An English official at the fortress told me that during the general mutiny in 1857 the Mohammedans proposed insurrection at Agra the English Government aimed the guns of the fort at the Taj and said, "You make insurrection, and that threat ended the disposition for mutiny at Agra."

But I thought while looking at that palace for the dead all this constructed to cover a mortal dust, but even so, that Taj Mahal probably gone from the mausoleum. How much better it would have been to expend \$60,000,000, which the Taj Mahal cost, for the living. What asylum it might have built for the sick, what homes for the homeless! What improvement our century has made upon other centuries in lifting in honor of the departed memorial churches, memorial hospitals, memorial reading rooms, memorial observatories, by all possible means let us keep the memory of departed loved ones fresh in mind, and let there be an appropriate headstone or monument in the cemetery, but there is a diviling line between reasonable commemoration and wicked extravagance. The Taj Mahal has its uses as an architectural achievement, eclipsing all other architecture, and as a memorial of a departed wife and mother, and presses no more than the plainest slab in many a country graveyard. The best monument we can any of us have built for us when we are gone is in the memory of those whose sorrows we have alleviated, the wounds we have healed, in the kindnesses we have done, in the ignorance we have enlightened, in the recreant we have reclaimed, in the souls we have saved. Such a monument is built out of material more precious than marble or bronze and will stand amid the eternal splendors long after the Taj Mahal of India shall have gone down in the ruins of a world of which it was the costliest monument. But I promised to take you not only a tomb of India, but a unique heathen temple, and it is a temple underground.

With miner's candle we had seen something of the underside of Australia, and as with guide's torch we had seen at different times something of the underside of America, as in Mammoth cave, but we are now to enter one of the sacred caverns to see the most costly called the Elephanta. We had it all to ourselves, the steam yacht that was to take us about fifteen miles over the harbor of Bombay and between enchanted islands, and along rocks, curves and gables and pictured rocks, and we prepared the mind for appreciation of the most unique spectacle in India. The morning had been full of thunder and lightning and deluge, but the atmospheric agencies had ceased, and the cloudy ruler of the storm were piled up in the heavens, huge though almost darkly purple enough to make the skies as grandly picturesque as the earthly scenery amid which we were moving.

After an hour's cutting through the water we came to the long pier reaching from the island called Elephanta. It is an island small of girth, but 600 feet high. It declines into the marshes of mangroves. But the whole island is one tangle of foliage and verdure, convolvulus creeping the ground; mosses climbing the rocks; vines slithering the long arms of the trees; red flowers here and there in the woods, like incendiary torches, and to set the rocks on fire—acacia and acacia, acacia to which can most charm the beholder; tropical bird meeting particooled butterfly in jungles planted the same summer the world was born. We stepped onto the boat amid enough natives to afford all the help we needed for landing and guidance. You can be carried by coolies in an easy chair, or you can walk, if you are pleased with two stout limbs, which the palmist evidently lacked, or he would not have so depreciated them when he said: "The Lord taketh no pleasure in the legs of a man." We passed up some stone steps, and entered the walls we saw a cobra, one of those snakes which greet the traveler oftentimes in India. Two of the guides left the cobra dead by the wayside. They must have been Mohammedans, for Hindus never kill that sacred reptile.

And now we come near the famous temple hewn from one rock of porphyry at least 800 years ago. On either side of the chief temple is a chapel, these cut out of the same rock. So vast was the undertaking, and the Hindu so great the human impossibility that they say the gods scooped out this structure from the rock and carved the pillars and hewed its shape into gigantic idols and dedicated it to all the gods. We climb many stone steps before we get to the gateways. The entrance to this temple has sculptured doorkeepers leaning on sculptured devils. How strange! We have seen doorkeepers of churches and auditoriums who seemed to be leaning on the angels of health and comfort and all the textures and janitors of the earth who have spoiled sermons and lectures and poisoned the lungs of audiences by inefficiency ought to visit this cave of Elephanta and beware of what these doorkeepers are doing, when instead of leaning on the angels they lean on the devils.

In these Elephanta caves everything is on a Samsonian and Titanian scale. With chisels that were dropped from nerveless hands at least eight centuries ago, the forms of the gods Brahma and Vishnu and Siva were cut into the everlasting rock. Siva is here represented by a figure six feet tall, also high, one-half man and one-half woman. Run a line from the center of the forehead straight to the floor of the rock, and you divide this idol into masculine and feminine. Admired as this idol is by many, it was to me about the worst thing that was ever cut into porphyry, perhaps because there is hardly anything on earth so objectionable as a being half man and half woman. Do be one or other, my hearer. Man is admirable and woman is admirable, but either in flesh or traprock a compromise of the two is hideous. Save us from effeminate men and masculine women!

Under the King Bavana worshipping. Yonder is the sculpture representation of the marriage of Siva and Parvati. Yonder is Daksha, the son of Brahma, horn upon the thumb of his right hand. He has sixty daughters. Seventeen of these daughters were married to Kasyapa and became the mothers of the human race. Yonder is a god with three heads. The center God has a crown wound with necklaces of skulls. The right hand god is in a paroxysm of rage, with forehead of snakes, and in his hand is a cobra. The left hand god has pleasure in all its features, and the hand has a flower. But there are gods and goddesses in all directions. The chief temple of this rock is 130 feet square and has twenty-six pillars rising to the roof. After the conquerors of other lands and the tourists from all lands have defaced and chipped and blighted and carried away curios and mementos

for museums and homes, there are enough entrancements left to detain one unless he is cautious until he is down with some of the snakes which encompass this island or get bitten with some of its snakes. Yes, I felt the chilly dampness of the place and left this congress of gods; this parade of demoniacs, this pantheon of indifferent devities, and came to the steps and looked off upon the waters which rolled and flashed around the steam yacht that was waiting to return with us to Bombay, as we stepped aboard, our minds filled with the idols of the Elephanta caves. I was impressed as never before with the thought that man must have a religion of some kind even if he has to contrive one himself, and he must have a god even though he make it with his own hand. I rejoice to know the day will come when the one God of the universe will be acknowledged throughout India.

That evening of our return to Bombay I visited the Young Men's Christian Association with the same appointments that you find in the Young Men's Christian Association of Europe and America, and I found after that I addressed a throng of native children who are in the schools of the Christian missions. Christian universities gather under their wing of benediction a host of students from all parts of India, Bombay and Calcutta, the two great commercial cities of India, feel the elevating power of an aggressive Christianity. Episcopalian liturgy, and Presbyterian Westminster catechism, and the Bible in the dialects of Bombay and Calcutta, the two great commercial cities of India, feel the elevating power of an aggressive Christianity. Episcopalian liturgy, and Presbyterian Westminster catechism, and the Bible in the dialects of Bombay and Calcutta, the two great commercial cities of India, feel the elevating power of an aggressive Christianity.

The work which Shoemaker Carey inaugurated at Serampore, India, translating the Bible into forty different dialects and leaving his worn-out body amid the natives whom he had come to save, and going up into the heavens from which he can better watch all the fields—that work will be compared in the salvation of the millions of India, and beside him gazing from the same high places stand Bishop Heber and Alexander Duff and John Scudder and Mackay, who fell at Delhi, and Moncrieff, who fell at Cawnpur, and Polehampton, who fell at Lucknow, and Freeman, who fell at Fottigarh, and all heroes and heroines who for Christ's sake lived and died for the Christianization of India, and the work will be compared in the salvation of the millions of India, and beside him gazing from the same high places stand Bishop Heber and Alexander Duff and John Scudder and Mackay, who fell at Delhi, and Moncrieff, who fell at Cawnpur, and Polehampton, who fell at Lucknow, and Freeman, who fell at Fottigarh, and all heroes and heroines who for Christ's sake lived and died for the Christianization of India, and the work will be compared in the salvation of the millions of India.

If any clergyman asks me, as an unbelieving minister of religion once asked the Duke of Wellington, "Do you not think that the work of converting the Hindus is all a practical farce?" and another minister said, "I am sure that the unbelieving minister 'Look to your marching orders, sir.'" Or if any one having joined in the gospel attack feels like retreating I say to him, as General Hancock said to a retreating regiment, "The enemy are in front, not in the rear," and leading them again into the fight, though two horses had been shot under him.

In the taking of this world for Christ will be no holiday celebration, but as tremendous as when in India during the mutiny of 1857 a fortress manned by sepoy was to be captured by Sir Colin Campbell and the British, the sepoy may have upon the attacking columns burning missiles and grenades, and fired on them shot and shell, and poured on them from the ramparts burning oil until a writer who witnessed the battle said, "It was a picture of hell in a picture." Then Sir Colin addressed his troops, saying, "Remember the women and children must be rescued!" and his men replied: "Aye, aye, Sir Colin!" We stood by at Bangalore, and the sepoy may have upon the attacking columns burning missiles and grenades, and fired on them shot and shell, and poured on them from the ramparts burning oil until a writer who witnessed the battle said, "It was a picture of hell in a picture." 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