

Parsee gentleman, with whom I lived for some weeks in very close companionship, to obtain for me permission to visit those Towers of Silence, that are the strange last resting-place of his race, and that will be, at some future period, of himself. This permission was gained with some small difficulty, but at length it was obtained, and one hot, cloudless day we drove to Malabar Hill for the purpose of visiting that weird place of sepulture. An old and venerable Parsee received us and conducted us the whole time that we stayed within the grounds. He led us first along a well kept pathway to an old stone-vaulted building with open colonnades all around; this is the house of prayer, where the friends of the deceased remain whilst the body is placed upon the tower. Near by, in somewhat similar buildings, dwell the custodians of the place, and the bearers of the dead, who live apart. There, too, is the bathing house, where at each funeral the corpse-bearers change their clothes and wash themselves clean from the defilement of having touched the dead. In front and around these buildings is a garden of flowers as luxuriant and beautiful as constant care and attention can make them. From this garden we enter a wild and uncultivated part where the towers are placed. There are six in all, five placed together, some of which are very old and closed, and one, that stands apart, where the bones of notorious criminals of their faith lie crumbling in eternal separation from those of pure living and good repute.

It is somewhat misleading to call these buildings towers, for they are not high, though how else to describe them is difficult. They are low, massive, circular structures of about thirty yards in diameter, but not more than five or six in height. They are built of most carefully joined blocks of granite, and then plastered all over with a white cement, so that none of the water that falls upon the tower can possibly defile the earth by oozing out, except at the proper outlets for it, where are placed filters of sandstone and charcoal for its purification. The tower stands in a shallow, dry moat, and there is one narrow stone bridge which leads from the ground