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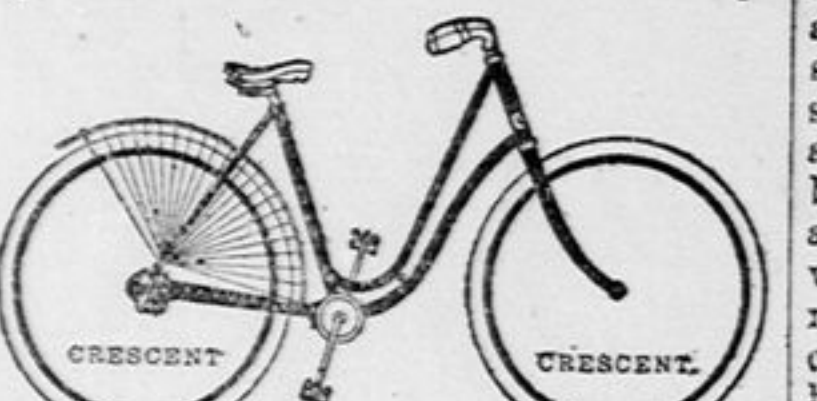
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WHISPER AND SHRUG

AND WITH HAND TO THE MOUTH, CREATING A FUNNEL, THE GOSSIP VOICES ONLY EVIL.

These Precious Liars Are the Worst Poes of Society, and Affect an Interest in Humanity Only to Blast the Fair Fame of the Individual—Talmage's Holy Anathema!

Washington, July 2.—Rev. Dr. Talmage preached this morning from the text, Romans 1, 29, "Full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity—whisperers." He said:

Paul was here calling the long roll of the world's villainy, and he puts in the midst of this roll those persons known in all cities and communities and places as whisperers. They are so called because they generally speak under cover and in a confidential way, their hand to the side of their mouth acting as a funnel to keep the precious information from wandering into the wrong ear.

Some people whisper because they are hoarse from a cold or because they wish to convey some useful information without disturbing others, but the creature photographed by the apostle in my text gave muffled utterance from sinister and depraved motive, and sometimes you can only hear the sibilant sound as the letter "S" drops from the tongue into the listening ear, the brief hiss of the serpent as it projects its venom.

Whisperers are masculine and feminine, with a tendency to majority on the side of those who are called "the lords of creation." Whisperers are heard at every window of bank cashier and are heard in all counting rooms as well as in sewing societies and at meetings of asylum directors and managers.

From the frequency with which Paul speaks of them under different titles I conclude that he must have suffered somewhat from them. His personal presence was very defective, and that made him perhaps the target of their ridicule, and besides that he was a bachelor, persisting in his celibacy down into the sixties—indeed, all the way through—and some having failed in their carnal designs upon him, the little missionary was put under the raking fire of these whisperers. He was no doubt a rare morsel for their scandalization, and he cannot keep his patience any longer, and he lays hold of these miscreants of the tongue and gives them a very hard setting down in my text among the scoundrelly and the murderous. "Envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity—whisperers."

The law of libel makes quick and stout grip of open slander. If I should in a plain way, calling you by name, charge you with fraud or theft or murder or uncleanness, to-morrow morning I might have peremptory documents served on me, and I would have to pay in dollars and cents for the damage I had done your character. But these creatures spoken of in my text are so small that they escape the fine tooth comb of the law. They go on, and they go on, escaping the judges and the juries and the grand jury cannot find them. Shut them off from one route of perjury, and they start on another. You cannot by the force of moral sentiment persuade them to desist. You might as well read the Ten Commandments to a flock of crows, expecting them to retreat under the force of moral sentiment. They are to be found everywhere, these whisperers. I think their paradise is a country village of about 1,000 or 2,000 people where everybody knows everybody, but they also are to be found in large quantities in all our cities.

They have a prying disposition. They look into the basement windows at the tables of their neighbors and can tell just what they have morning and night to eat. They can see as far through a key-hole as other people can see with a door wide open. They can hear conversation on the opposite side of the room, indeed, the world to them is a whispering gallery. They always put the worst construction on everything.

Some morning a wife descends into the street, her eyes damp with tears; and that is a stimulus to the tattler and is enough to set up a business for three or four weeks. "I guess that husband and wife don't live happily together. I wonder if he hasn't been abusing her? It's outrageous! He ought to be disciplined. He ought to be brought up before the church. I'll go right over to my neighbors, and I'll let them know about this matter." She rushes in all out of breath to a neighbor's house and says: "Oh, Mrs. A. All, have you heard the dreadful news? My neighbor, poor thing, came down off the steps in a flood of tears. That brute of a husband has been abusing her. Well, it's just as I expected. I saw him the other afternoon very smiling and very gracious to some one who smiles back, and I thought then I would just go up to him and tell him he had better go home and look after his wife and family, who probably at that very time were upstairs crying their eyes out. Oh, Mrs. A. All, do have your husband go over and put an end to this trouble! It's simply outrageous that our neighbor's household should be disturbed in this way! It's awful!"

The fact is that one man or woman set on fire of this hellish spirit will keep a whole neighborhood a-boil. It does not require any very great brain. The chief requisite is that the woman have a small family or no family at all, because if she have a large family then she would have to stay at home and look after them. It is very important that she be single or have no children at all, and then she can attend to all the secrets of the neighborhood all the time. A woman with a large family makes a very poor whisperer.

It is astonishing how these whisperers gather up everything. They know everything that happens. There are telephone telegraph wires reaching from their to all the houses in the neighbor-

hood. They have no taste for healthy news, but for the scraps and peelings thrown out of the scullery into the back yard they have great avidity. On the day when there is a great scandal in the newspapers they have no time to go abroad. On the day when there are four or five columns of delightful private letters published in a divorce case she stays at home and reads and reads and reads. No time for her Bible that day, but toward night, perhaps, she may find time to run out a little while and see whether there are any new developments.

Satan does not have to keep a very sharp lookout for his evil dominion in that neighborhood. He has let out to her the whole contract. She gets husbands and wives into a quarrel and brothers and sisters into antagonism, and she disgusts the pastor with the flock and the flock with the pastor, and she makes neighbors who before were kindly disposed toward each other oversuspicious and critical, so when one of the neighbors passes by in a carriage they hiss through their teeth and say, "Ah, we could all keep carriages if we never paid our debts!"

When two or three whisperers get together, they stir a caldron of trouble, which makes me think of the three witches of "Macbeth" dancing around a boiling caldron in a dark cave:

Double, double, toil and trouble, Fire burn and caldron bubble, Fillet of a fenny snake In the caldron boil and bake; Eye to eye and toe to toe, Wool of bat and tongue of dog, Lizard's leg and blind worm's sting, Lizard's fork and owl's wing For a charm of powerful trouble, Like a hell-bell both bubble, Double, double, toil and trouble, Fire burn and caldron bubble, Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf, Witch's mummy, maw and gulf Of the ravin'd salt sea shark; Make the gruel thick and stink; Add thereto a tiger's chandron For the ingredients of our caldron. Double, double, toil and trouble; Fire burn and caldron bubble; Cool it with a baboon's blood, Then the charm is firm and good.

I would only change Shakespeare in this, that where he puts the word "witch" I should put the word "whisperer." Ah, what a caldron! Did you ever get a taste of it? I have more respect for the poor wail of the street that goes down under the gaslight with no home and no God—for she deceives no one as to what she is—than I have for these hags of respectable society who cover up their tiger claws with a fine shawl and bolt the hell of their heart with a diamond breastpin.

The work of masculine whisperers is chiefly seen in the embarrassment of business. Now, I suppose there are hundreds of men here who at some time have been in business trouble. I will undertake to say that in nine cases out of ten it was the result of some whisperer's work. The whisperer uttered some suspicion in regard to your credit. You sold your horse and carriage because you had no use for them, and the whisperer said: "Sold his horse and carriage because he had to sell them. The fact that he sold his horse and carriage shows he is going down in business."

One of your friends gets embarrassed, and you are a little involved with him. The whisperer says: "I wonder if he can stand under all this pressure? I think he is going down. I think he will have to give up." You borrow money out of a bank, and the director whispers outside about it, and after awhile the suspicion gets fairly started, and it leaps from one whisperer's lips to another whisperer's lips until all the people you owe want their money and want it right away, and the business cycles come around soon like a pack of wolves, and, though you had assets four times more than were necessary to meet your liabilities, crash went everything. Whisperers! Oh, how much business men have suffered!

Sometimes in the circles of clergymen we discuss why it is that a great many merchants do not go to church. I will tell you why they do not go to church. By the time Saturday night comes they are worn out with the annoyances of business life. They have had enough meanness practiced upon them to set their whole nervous system a-twitch.

Rather than the defamation of good names it seems to me it would be almost as honorable and useful if you just took a box of matches in your pocket and a razor in your hand and go through the streets and see how many houses you can burn down and how many throats you can cut. That is not a much worse business. The destruction of a man's name is worse than the destruction of his life. A woman came in confessional to a priest and told him that she had been slandering her neighbors. The priest promised her absolution on condition of her performing a penance. He gave her a thistle top and said, "You can take that thistle and scatter the seeds all over the field." "Now," said the priest, "gather up all those seeds." She said, "I can't." "Ah," he said, "I know you can't. Neither can you gather up the evil words you speak about your neighbors." All good men and all good women have sometimes had detractors after them. John Wesley's wife whispered about him, and he was a good man as ever lived—and kept on whispering about the carnal relation was dissolved.

Jesus Christ had these whisperers after him, and they charged him with drinking too much and keeping bad company. "A wine bibber and the friend of publicans and sinners." You take the best man that ever lived and put a detective on his track for ten years, watching where he goes and when he comes and with determination to misconstrue everything and to think he goes here for a bad purpose and there for a bad purpose, with that determination of destroying him, at the end of ten years he will be held despicable in the sight of a great many people.

If it is an outrageous thing to despoil a man's character, how much worse is it to damage a woman's reputation? Yes, that evil grows from century to century, and it is all done by whisperers. A suspicion is started. The next whisperer who gets hold of it states the suspicion as a proven fact, and many a good woman, as honorable as your wife or your mother, has been whispered out of all kindly associations, and whispered into the grave. Some people say there is no hell, but if there be no hell for such a despoiler of womanly character it is high time that some philanthropist built one. But there is such a place established, and what a time they will have when all the whisperers get down there together rehearsing things! Everlasting carnival of mad—Were it not for the un-

comfortable surroundings you might suppose they would be glad to get there. In that region where they are all bad what opportunities for exploitation by these whisperers. On earth, to despoil their neighbors sometimes they had to lie about them, but down there they can say the worst things possible about their neighbors and tell the truth. Jubilee of whisperers. Semi-heaven of scandal-mongers stopping their gabble about their diabolical neighbors only long enough to go up to the iron gate and as some newcomer from the earth, "What is the last gossip in the city on earth where we used to live?"

Now, how are we to war against this iniquity which curses every community on earth? First, by refusing to listen to or believe a whisperer. Every court of the land has for a law and all decent communities have for a law that you must hold people innocent until they are proved guilty. There is only one person worse than the whisperer, and that is the man or woman who listens without protest. The trouble is, you hold the sack while they fill it. The receiver of the stolen goods is just as bad as the thief. An ancient writer declares that a slanderer and a man who receives the slander ought both to be hanged—the one by the tongue and the other by the ear—and I agree with him.

When you hear something bad about your neighbors, do not go all true and ask about it, whether it is true, and scatter it all over it. You might as well go to a small hospital and take a patient and carry him all through the community asking people if they really thought it a case of smallpox. That would be very bad for the patient and for all the neighbors. Do not retail slanders and whisperings. Do not make yourself the inspector of warts, and the supervisor of carbuncles, and the commissioner for street gutters, and the holder of stakes for a dog fight. Can it be that you, an immortal man; that you, an immortal woman, can find no better business than to become a gutter inspector?

Besides that, at your family table allow no detraction. Teach your children to speak well of others. Show them the difference between a bee and a wasp—the one gathering honey, the other thrusting a sting. I read of a family where they kept what they called "A Slander Book," and when any slanderous words were uttered in the house about anybody or detraction uttered it was all put down in this book. The book was kept carefully. For the first few weeks there were a great many entries, but after awhile there were no entries at all. Detraction stopped in that household. It would be a good thing to have a slander book in all households. Are any of you given to this habit of whispering about others? Let me persuade you to desist. Mount Taurus was a great place for eagles, and cranes would fly along that way, and they would cackle so loud that the eagles would know of their coming, and they would pounce upon them and destroy them. It is said that the old cranes found this out, and before they started on their flight they would always have a stone in their mouth so they could not cackle, and then they would fly in perfect safety. Oh, my friends, be as wise as the old cranes and avoid the folly of the young cranes. Do not cackle.

Let me charge you, my friends, to make right and holy use of the tongue. It is loose at one end and can swing either way, but it is fastened at the other end to the floor of your mouth, and that makes you responsible for the way it wags. Xanthus, the philosopher, told his servant that on the morrow he was going to have some friends to dine, and "told him to get the best thing he could find in the market. The philosopher and his guests sat down the next day at the table. They had nothing but tongue—four or five courses of tongue—tongue cooked in this way and tongue cooked in that way, and the philosopher lost his patience and said to his servant, "Didn't I tell you to get the best thing in the market?" He said: "I did get the best thing in the market. Isn't the tongue the organ of sociality, the organ of eloquence, the organ of kindness, the organ of worship?"

Then Xanthus said, "To-morrow I want you to get the worst thing in the market." And on the morrow the philosopher sat at the table, and there was nothing there but tongue—four or five courses of tongue—tongue in this shape and tongue in that shape, and the philosopher again lost his patience and said, "Didn't I tell you to get the worst thing in the market?" The servant replied: "I did, for isn't the tongue the organ of blasphemy, the organ of defamation, the organ of lying?"

Oh, my friends, employ the tongue which God so wonderfully created as the organ of taste, the organ of deglutition, the organ of articulation to make others happy and in the service of God! If you whisper, whisper good—encouragement to the fallen and hope to the lost. Ah, my friends, the time will soon come when we will all whisper! The voice will be enfolded in the last sickness, and, though that voice could laugh and shout and sing and halloo until the forest echoes answered, it will be so feeble then we can only whisper consolation to those whom we leave behind and only whisper our hope of heaven.

While I speak this very moment there are hundreds whispering their last utterances. Oh, what that solemn hour comes to you and to me, as come soon it will, may it be found that we did our best to serve Christ, and to cheer our comrades in the earthly struggle, and that we consecrated not only our hand, but our tongue to God. So that the shadows that fall around our dying pillow shall not be the evening twilight of a gathering night, but the morning twilight of an everlasting day.

This morning at half past 4 o'clock I looked out of my window, and the stars were very dim. I looked out a few moments after, and the stars were almost invisible. I looked out an hour or two afterward. Not a star was to be seen. What was the matter with the stars? Had they melted into darkness? No. They had melted into the glorious light of a Sabbath morn.

Why Mot's Fly to Flames. Mot's fly against the candle flame because their eyes can bear only a small amount of light. When, therefore, they come within the light of a candle their sight is overpowered and their vision confused, and as they cannot distinguish objects they pursue the light itself and fly against the flame.

An Extraordinary Egg. A colliery worker at Walkden upon opening an ordinary hen's egg for breakfast the other day discovered five or six coils measuring 12 or 14 inches inside, consisting apparently of extremely fine black wire.

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