



*The Sword and the  
trowel; ed. by C.H. Spurgeon*

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good. He witnessed the revival of earnestness and true religion amongst the Friends in England. He was rather limited in his conceptions of the gifts God uses for the ministry; and although he wrote and read religious addresses, he held that the blessings of the Holy Spirit were confined to purely oral delivery. His death-bed was a noble illustration of the power of godliness at the last extremity of life. He closed his eyes to all human merit, looked solely to Christ, and fell asleep, to realise the fulness of the gospel which he had imperfectly preached on earth.

## John Ploughman's Talk.

### ON GOSSIPS.

**I**N Walton church, in our county, there is a brank, or scold's bridle, which was used in years gone by to keep women's tongues from troubling their husbands and their neighbours. They did queer things in those good old times. Was this bridle a proof of what our parson calls the wisdom of our ancestors, or was it a bit of needless cruelty?

"It is nothing—only a woman drowning," is a wicked and spiteful old saying, which, like the bridle, came out of the common notion that women do a world of mischief with their tongues. Is it so or not? John Ploughman will leave somebody else to answer, for he owns that he cannot keep a secret himself, and likes a dish of chat as well as anybody; only John does not care for cracking people's characters, and hates the slander which is so sweet to some people's teeth. John puts the question to wiser men than himself: Are women much worse than men in this business? They say that silence is a fine jewel for a woman, but it is very little worn. Is it so? Is it true that a woman only conceals what she does not know? Are women's tongues like lambs' tails, always wagging? They say foxes are all tail, and women all tongue. Is this false or not? Was that old prayer a needful one—"From big guns and women's tongues deliver us"? John has a right good and quiet wife of his own, whose voice is so sweet that he cannot hear it too often, and therefore he is not a fair judge; but he is half afraid that some other women would sooner preach than pray, and would not require strong tea to set their clappers going; but still, what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, and some men are quite as bad blabs as the women.

What a pity that there is not a tax upon words: what an income the Queen would get from it; but, alas! talking pays no toll. And if lies paid double, the Government might pay off the National Debt; but who could collect the money? Common fame is a common liar. Hearsay is half lies. A tale never loses in the telling. As a snow-ball grows by rolling, so does a story. They who talk much lie much. If men only said what was true, what a peaceable world we shou'd see. Silence seldom makes mischief; but talking is a plague to the parish. Silence is wisdom; and, by this rule, wise men and wise women are scarce. Still waters are the deepest; but the shallowest brooks brawl the most; this shows how plentiful fools must be. An open mouth

shows an empty head. If the chest had gold or silver in it, it would not always stand wide open. Talking comes by nature, but it needs a good deal of training to learn to be quiet; yet regard for truth should put a bit into every honest man's mouth, and a bridle upon every good woman's tongue.

If we must talk, at least let us be free from slander, let us not blister our tongues with backbiting. Slander may be sport to tale-bearers, but it is death to those whom they abuse. We can commit murder with the tongue as well as with the hand. The worst evil you can do a man is to injure his character, as the Quaker said to his dog, "I'll not beat thee, nor abuse thee, but I'll give thee an ill name." All are not thieves that dogs bark at, but they are generally treated as if they were; for the world for the most part believe that where there is smoke there is fire, and what everybody says must be true. Let us then be careful that we do not hurt our neighbour in so tender a point as his character, for it is hard to get dirt off if it is once thrown on; and when a man is once in people's bad books, he is hardly ever quite out of them. If we would be sure not to speak amiss, it might be as well to speak as little as possible; for if all men's sins were divided into two bundles, half of them would be sins of the tongue. "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body."

Gossips of both genders, give up the shameful trade of talebearing; don't be the devil's bellows any longer to blow up the fire of strife. Leave off setting people by the ears. If you do not cut a bit off your tongues, at least season them with the salt of grace. Praise God more and blame neighbours less. Any goose can cackle, any fly can find out a sore place, any empty barrel can give forth sound, any brier can tear a man's flesh. No flies will go down your throat if you keep your mouth shut, and no evil speaking will come up. Think much, but say little: be quick at work and slow at talk; and above all, ask the great Lord to set a watch over your lips.

## The Yearly Atonement.

BY JOHN ALDIS, JUN.

Leviticus xvi., xxiii., 26—32; Numbers xxix. 7—11.

THE attention of the readers of this Magazine has already been called to some of the shadows of heavenly things which were given to direct the faith and sustain the hope of the saints of yore (see *October, 1866, and February, 1867*). In this paper the writer wishes to depict the events of the only divinely-appointed fast of the Jewish calendar, and to show their typical significance. He has detailed them in what appears to him the most probable order; though, in some minute particulars, it is impossible to ascertain exactly the mode of procedure. And he ventures to hope that, as the reader turns for confirmation to the Scriptures indicated above, he will find that, in the main at least, the description is in accordance with the oracles of God. May the reader be led to a more earnest study of the ancient type, and thereby to a warmer love to, and simpler faith in, him who is the substance of these shadows.