

# SWearing and Swearing.

Dr. Talmage Preaches About the Sin and Absurdity of Profanity.

An Awful and Growing Habit—Old Men, Children and Women Curse.

Note Particle of Excuse for It—Job's Example a Caution One.

Brooklyn, April 8.—One of the hymns sung at the Tabernacle this morning begins with the words:—

"Swear on lips and lips express  
The holy spirit's power."

After reading appropriate passages of Scripture the Rev. J. De Witt Talmage, D. D., preached on the habit of cursing and swearing. His text was from the Book of Job, Chapter 14, verses 7, 8, and 9: "Who went forth from the presence of the Lord, and swore with surety from the sole of his foot into his own hand. And he took him a pothern, to scrape himself withal, and he set down among the ashes. Then said his wife unto him, 'Woeart thou still retain these sayings? Curse God and die!'"

A story of a merchant and his wife, Job was the richest man in all the East. He had camels and oxen and asses and sheep, and what would have made him rich without anything else, seven sons and three daughters. It was the habit of these children to gather together for family reunion, the day Job's thinking of his children as gathered together at a banquet at the elder brother's house.

While the old man is seated at his tent door, he sees some one running, evidently from his manner bringing bad news. What is the matter now? "Oh," says the messenger, "a foraging party of Sabians have fallen upon the oxen and the asses, and destroyed them, and but herded the servants except myself." Stand aside. Another messenger running. What is the matter now? "Oh," says the man, "the lightning has struck the sheep and the shepherds, and all the shepherds are destroyed except myself." Stand aside. Another messenger running. What is the matter now? "Oh," he says, "the hail has struck the four corners of the tent where your children were assembled at the banquet, and they are all dead."

But the chapter of calamity has not ended. Job was smitten with elephantiasis, or black leprosy. Tumors from head to foot forehead ridged with tubercles, eyelashes fall out, nostrils exoriated, voice destroyed, intolerable excoriations from the entire body, until, with none to dress his sores, he sits down in the ashes with nothing but pieces of broken pottery to use in the surgery of his wounds. At this moment, when he needed all encouragement, and all consolation, his wife comes in in a fit of rage, and says, "This is intolerable, our property gone, our children slain, and now you covered up with this loathsome and disgusting disease. Why don't you swear? Curse God, and die!"

Ah, Job knew right well that swearing would not cure one of the tumors of his agonized body, would not bring back one of his destroyed camels, would not restore one of his dead children. He knew that profanity would only make the pain more unbearable, and the poverty more distressing, and the bereavement more exasperating. But talking from the profanity abroad in our day, you might come to the conclusion that there was some great advantage to be reaped from profanity.

Blasphemy is all abroad. You hear it in every direction. The dryman swearing at his cart, the sewing girl in profanity at the tangled skein, the accountant cursing the long line of troublesome figures, swearing at the store, swearing in the loft, swearing in the cellar, swearing on the street, swearing in the factory. Children swear. Men swear. Women swear, swearing from the rough calling on the Albigity in the law restaurant, clearing up to the reckless "O Lord" of a guttering drawing room, and the one is as much blasphemy as the other.

There are times when we must cry out to the Lord by reason of our physical agony or our mental distress, and that is only a wrong out of our weakness toward the strong arm of a father. It was no profanity when James A. Garfield, shot in the Washington depot, cried out, "My God, what does this mean?" There is no profanity in calling out upon God in the day of trouble, in the day of darkness, in the day of physical anguish, in the day of bereavement, but I am speaking now of the triviality and of the recklessness with which the name of God is sometimes misapplied. The whole land is cursed with it.

A gentleman coming from the West said the other day after dinner to two persons who were indulging in profanity, and he took up his hand to it as he would make a record of their profanity, and at the end of two days several sheets of paper were covered with these impressions, and at the close of the journey he handed the manuscript to the publisher, and the man, "what we have uttered so many profanities the last few days," it is reported the gentleman, "then said the man who had taken the manuscript, 'I will never swear again.'"

It is a comparatively unimportant thing to make a record of our impurities of speech. The more memorable consideration is that every improper word every oath uttered, has a record in the book of God's remembrance, and that the day will come when all our crimes of speech if unrepented of will be our condemnation. I shall not to say dead in a straggles. I hate abstractions. I am going to have a plain talk with you, my brother, about a habit that you admit to be wrong.

The habit grows in the community in the fact that young people think it mainly to swear. Little children, hardly able to walk straight on the street, yet have enough distinctness of utterance to let you know that they are damning their own souls, or damning the souls of others. It is an awful thing the first time the little feet are lifted to have them set down on the burning pavement of hell!

Between sixteen and twenty years of age there is apt to come a time when a young man is as much ashamed of not being able to swear as he is of not being able to read. He has his hat, his boots, and his coat of the right pattern, and now, if he can only swear without awkwardness, and as well as his comrades he believes he is in the fashion. There are young men who walk in an atmosphere of imprecation—oaths on their lips, under their tongues, next to their stock of hair. They do not talk from the elegant drawing-room, but from the street and the club-house ring with their profanities. They have no regard for God, although they have great respect for the ladies. My young brother, there is no manliness in that. The most gentlemanly thing a man can do is to swear.

Fathers foster this great crime. There are parents who are very careful not to swear in the presence of their children, in a moment of sudden anger they look around to see if the children are present when they indulge in this habit. Do you not know, O father, that your child is aware of the fact that you swear? He overhears you in the next room, or someone else has informed him of your habit. He is practicing now. In ten years he will swear as well as you do. Do not, O father, be under the delusion that you may swear and your son not know it. It is an awful thing to start the habit in a young man, the father to be profane, and then to have the echo of his example come back from other generations; so that generations after generations curse the Lord.

The crime is also fostered by a host of mechanics, boss carpenters, those who are at the head of men in hat factories, and in dock yards, and at the head of the great business establishments. When you go down to look at the work of sea-birds, and you find it is not done right, what do you say? It is not praving, is it? The employer swears, and you are tempted to swear. The man says, "I don't know why my employer, worth \$5,000, or \$10,000, should have any luxury I could be denied simply because I am poor. Because I am poor and dependent on a day's wages, haven't I as much right to swear as he has with his large income?" Employers swear, and that makes so many employees swear.

The habit also comes from a profanity of temper. There are a good many people who when they are at peace have rightness of speech, but when a word of their throats with imprecation. Perhaps at the rest of the year they talk in right language, but now they pour out the lava of a whole year in one red-hot paragraph of five minutes. I knew of a man who exposed himself for the bit, saying, "I only swear once in a great while. I must do that just to clear myself out."

The habit comes also from the profane use of bywords. The transition from a byword which may be perfectly harmless to imprecation and profanity, is not a very large transition. It is "my stars" and "my eyes on me!" and "good gracious!" and "by George!" and "by Jove," and you go on with that a little while, and then you swear. These words, perfectly harmless in themselves, are next door to imprecation and blasphemy. A profane use of bywords always ends in profanity. The habit is creeping up into the highest styles of society. Women have no patience with flat and unvarnished profanity. They will order a man out of the parlor for indulging in blasphemy, and yet you will sometimes find them with fairy lip to the lip, and under chandeliers which bring no flush to their cheeks, taking on their lips the hottest of names in utter triviality.

Why, my friends, the English language is comprehensive and capable of expressing all shades of feeling and every degree of energy. Are you happy, Noah Webster will give you ten thousand words with which to express your exhilaration. Are you righteously indignant, there are whole armies in the vocabulary—whole armies of denunciation and scorn, and sarcasm, and irony, and caricature, and wrath. You express yourself against some man, or some society, in all the oaths that ever smothered up from the pit, and I will come right on after you and give a thousand more emphatic expressions of denunciation to the same meanness and the same hypocrisy in words a mass which no slim, has ever trailed, and into which the fires of hell have never shot their forked tongues—the pure, the innocent, God-honored Anglo-Saxon in which Milton sang, and John Bunyan dreamed, and Shakespeare dramatized.

There is no excuse for profanity when we have such a magnificent language, such a flow of good words, potent words, mighty words, words just to suit every crisis and every case. Whatever be the cause of it, profanity is on the increase, and if you do not know it is because

your ears have been hard-nosed by the use of imprecations, so that you are not stirred and moved as you ought to be by profanities in their cities, which are enough to bring hurrahs and the like to it which consume a column.

Do you know that this trivial use of God's name results in perjury? Do you know that perjury is the taking of the name of God on their lips in carelessness and thoughtlessness are fostering the crime of perjury? Make the name of God a possession in the community and it is no power when in court room and in legislative assembly it is employed in solemn adjuration. See the way sometimes they administer the oath. "If you don't kiss the book," snarling which is always a violation of the oath, because in some circles a grand oath. You say to a man, "How is it possible for you to sell these goods so cheap? I don't understand it." "Ah," he replies, with a twinkle of the eye, "the custom-house on these goods isn't as much as it might be." An oath does not mean as much as it would were the name of God used in reverence and in solemnity. Why is it that so often jurors render unaccountable charges, assess atrocious schemes, pass in our State captives, and there are most unjust charges made in trials, torn from one thing and put upon another?

What is an oath? Any thing solemn? Anything that calls upon the Albigity?

Anything that marks an event in a man's history? Oh, no! It is kissing the book! There is no habit, I tell you plainly, and I talk to hundreds and thousands of men to lay who will thank me for my utterance. I tell you, my brother, I talk to you not professionally but just as one brother talks to another on some very important theme. If you there is no habit that so depletes a man's nature as the habit of profanity. You might as well try to raise vineyards and orchards on the sides of belching Stromboli as to raise anything good on a heart from which there pours out the scoria of profanity. You may swear yourself down, you cannot swear yourself up. When the Mohammedan finds a piece of paper he cannot read he puts it aside very cautiously for fear the name of God may be on it. That is one extreme. We go to the other. Now what is the cure of this habit? It is a mighty habit. Men have struggled for years to get rid of it. There are men in this house of God who would give half their fortune to get rid of it. An aged man was in the delirium of a fever. He had for many years lived a most upright life, and was honored in all the community; but when he came into the delirium of this fever he was full of imprecation and profanity, and they could not understand it. After he came to his right reason he explained it. He said: "When I was a young man I was very profane. I conquered the habit, but I had to struggle all through life. You haven't for forty years heard me say an improper word, but it has been an awful struggle. The tiger is chained but he is alive yet."

If you would get rid of this habit, I want you, my friend, to dwell upon the uselessness of it. Did a volley of oaths ever start a heavy load? Did they ever extirpate meanness from a customer? Did they ever collect a bad debt? Did they ever cure a tooth-ache? Did they ever stop the twinge of the rheumatism? Did they ever help you forward one step in the right direction? Come now, tell me, ye who have had the most experience in this habit, how much have you made out of it? Give thousands of dollars in all your life? No. One thousand? No. One hundred? No. One dollar? No. One cent? No. If the habit be so utterly useless, away with it.

But you say, "I have struggled to overcome the habit of a long while, and I have not been successful. You struggled in your own strength, my brother, get your arms and legs to it, it is in such a crisis of his history, God alone by his grace can emancipate you from that trouble. Call upon him day and night that you may be delivered from this crime. Remember also in the cure of this habit that it crosses a man's indulgence. The Bible reiterates from chapter to chapter and verse after verse the fact that it is necessary for this life, and that it makes a man miserable for eternity. There is not a sin in all the catalogue that is so out of proportionally and so heavily punished in this world as the sin of profanity. There is not a city or a village but can give an illustration of a man struck down at the moment of imprecation. A couple of years ago, briefly referring to this sin a sermon, I gave some instances in which God had struck swimmers dead at the moment of their profanity. That sermon brought to me from many parts of this land and other lands statements of similar cases of instantaneous visitation from God upon blasphemers. My opinion is that such cases occur somewhere every day, but for various reasons they are not reported.

In Scotland a club assembled every week for purposes of wicket-ball, and there was a competition as to which could use the most horrid oath, and the man who succeeded was to be president of the club. The competition went on. A man uttered an oath which confounded all his comrades, and he was made president of the club. His tongue began to swell, and he protruded from the mouth, and he could not draw it in, and he died, and the physicians said, "This is the strangest thing we ever saw; we never saw any account in the books like unto it. We can't understand it." I understand it. He cursed God and died.

At Catskill, N. Y., a group of men stood in a blacksmith's shop during a violent thunder storm. There came a crash of thunder and some of the men trembled. One man said, "Why, I don't see what you are afraid of. I am not afraid to go out in front of the shop and defy the Albigity. I am not afraid of lightning." And he had a water on the subject, and he went out, and he shook his fist at the heavens, crying, "Strike, if you dare, and I will not be killed by a bolt. What do you say?" Any mystery about it? No, no. He cursed God and died.

Oh, my brother, God will not allow this sin to go unpunished. There are stories of writing with manifold sheets, so that a man writing on one leaf writes clear through ten, fifteen, or twenty sheets, and so every profanity we utter goes right down through the leaves of the book of God's remembrance. It is no exceptional sin. Do you suppose you could count the profanities of last week? Do you suppose you could count the profanities of one store, shop, factory? They cursed God, they cursed his Word, they cursed his only begotten Son.

One morning on Fulton street, as I was passing along I heard a man swear by the name of Jesus. My hair stood. My blood ran cold. My breath caught. My mouth opened. Do you not suppose that God is aggravated? Do you not suppose that God knows about it? Always as used to have a dove in which his omphalos were incanted, and he listened at the top of that dove, and he could hear every oath he could hear every sibilant, and he could hear every whisper of those who were not sworn, but he was a tyrant. God is not a tyrant, but he is over this world, and he hears everything—every voice of prayer, every voice of imprecation. He hears it all. The oaths seem to stir on the air, but they have eternal consequences. They come back from the ages to come.

Listen! Listen! "All blasphemers shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." And if, according to the theory of some, a man can add to the next world the sins which he committed in this world, an unpardonable imprecation of the name of God, or cursing in the name of God, to an eternity.

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The habit grows. You start with a small oath, and you will come to the large one. I saw a man die with an oath between his teeth. You are only gradually come to his tremulous preparation, but the habit grows on him until in the last moment, supposing Christ stood at the red, he would say, "In his name, Amen." Oh, my brother, you begin to swear, and the time is coming possible for you in the wrath of God.

Who is this God whose name you are using in swearing? Who is He? Is He a tyrant? Has He pursued you all your life long? Has He starved you, or been your tyrant, or your foe? No. He has loved you. He has sustained you. He watched you last night, He will watch you to-night. He wants to love you, wants to help you, wants to save you, wants to comfort you. He was your father's God and your mother's God. He has honored them from the blast, and He wants to shelter you. Will you spit in His face, you an imprecation? Will you ever thrust Him back by an oath?

Who is this Jesus whose name I heard in the imprecation? Has he pursued you all your life long? What vile thing has he done to you that you should dishonor his name? Why, he was the Lamb whose blood simmered in the fires of sacrifice for you. He is the brother that took off his crown that you might put it on. He has pushed you all your life long with mercy. He wants you to love him, wants you to love him. He comes with streaming eyes and broken heart and blist-red feet to save you. On the craft of our doated humanity he pushed out into the sea to take you out of the wreck.

Where is the hand that will ever be lifted in imprecation again? Let that hand, now blood-tipped, be lifted that I may see it. Not one. Where is the voice that will ever be uttered in dishonoring the name of that Christ? Let it speak now. Not one. Not one. Oh, I am glad to know that all these vices of the community and these crimes of our city will be gone. Society is going to be bettered. The world, by the power of Christ's gospel, is going to be saved, and this crime, this iniquity, and all the other iniquities will vanish before the rising of the Sun of Righteousness upon the nation.

There was one day in New England memorable for storm and darkness. I hardly ever saw such an evening. The clouds which had been gathering all day unnumbered the rafter's. The Housatonic, which flows quietly, save as the paddles of pleasure parties rattle the oarlocks, was washed into foam, and the waves hardly knew where to lay themselves.

Oh! what a time it was! The hills jared under the rumbling of God's chariots. Flaming sheets of rain drove the cattle to the bars, or beat against the window pane as though to dash it in. The grain fields threw their crown of gold at the feet of the storm king. When night came it was a double night. Its mantle was torn with the lightning, and into its locks were twisted the leaves of uprooted oaks and the shreds of canvas torn from the masts of the beached shipping. It was such a night as makes you thank God for shelter, and open the door to look in the spaniel howling outside with terror.

We went to sleep under the full blast of heaven's great orchestra, the forests with uplifted voices, in chorus that filled the mountains, praising the Lord. We woke not until the fingers of the sunny morn touched our eyelids. We looked out the window and the Housatonic slept as quiet as in an ant's dream. Pillars of clouds set against the sky looked like the castles of the beast built for heavenly hiarchs on the beach of the azure sea. All the trees sparkled as though there had been some great grief in heaven and each leaf had been God-appointed to catch an angel's tear. It seemed as if our father had looked upon the earth, his wayward child, and stooped to her tear-wet cheek and kissed it. So will the darkness of sin and crime leave our world before the dawn of the morning.

The light shall pierce the city spires and strike the forests of Maine and the masts of Mobile, and all between. And one end resting on the Atlantic coast and the other resting on the Pacific beach, God will open a great rain over the peace, in token of everlasting covenant that the world shall never more see a deluge of crime.

"Aunt" says some one, "preaching against the evils of society will accomplish nothing. Do you not see that the evils go right on?" I answer, we are not at all discouraged.

It seemed insignificant for Moses to

stretch his hand over the Red Sea. Who power could that have over the waters? But the east wind blow all night; the waters gathered into two glittering pavilions on either side. The billows reared as God's hand reached back upon their crystal bits. Wheel into line, O Israel! March! March! Pearls are under the fact. The shout of hosts mounting the beach answers the shout of hosts mounting the beach, as the last line of the Israelites have gained the beach, the shells clang and the cymbals clang; and as the waters when the pursuing foe, the swift-fingered winds of the water-kecks of the foam play the grand march of Israel delivered, and the awful dirge of Egyptian overthrow. So we go forth; and stretch out the hand of prayer and Christian effort over these dark, boiling waters of crime and sin. "Aha! Aha!" says the deriding world. But wait. The winds of divine help will begin to blow. The way will clear for the great army of Christian philanthropists; the glittering treasures of the world's beneficence will line the path of our feet; and to the other shore we will be greeted with the clash of all heaven's cymbals; while those who resist and deride and pursue us will fall under the sea, and there will be nothing left of them but her and there, east high and dry upon the beach the spirit wheel of a chariot, and thrust out from the earth, the breathless nostril of a riderless charger.

## NEEDS OF THE NATION.

Discussed by Senator Vance.

Written for the Baltimore Sun, March 13, 1876.

III.

In the information of our government one of the earliest things to receive consideration was the matter of taxation. In the estimation of freemen it was also most important and deserved and received the most mature and earnest examination. And surely no people on earth were better fitted to deal with it than those who established our government. It was the prime cause which had led to separation and independence. For centuries our English ancestors had struggled against their princes for just principles of taxation, and their statesman had sounded all the depths and shallows of the subject. Their wisdom and experience were the richest inheritance of their children in the American wilderness.

Profiting by these lessons which the history of their ancestors afforded, our founders established such kinds and methods of taxation as were best suited to the situation of our communities and the upholding of liberty. The States, for the support of their local governments, having the power of direct taxation of wealth, licenses, polls and the like, were forbidden to impose any duties or burdens on either foreign or interstate commerce. To the federal government was given the power to tax foreign commerce as well as all the other objects of taxation on which the States were permitted to levy. In short, the taxing power of the State was limited; that of the federal government was unlimited, in the particular that it was both foreign and domestic. The only restriction laid upon it was that direct taxes upon the property of the country must be imposed in proportion to population. This has in many ways proved unfortunate. It is manifestly so unequal and unjust as to deter the law-makers from resorting to it when it could possibly be avoided. This forced the bulk of taxation into methods less offensive but really more unequal and unjust still, when it remains entrenched.

The debates in the First Congress on this subject show a decided preference for tariff taxation over the direct kind. In this the representatives followed the commendation of Hamilton. In fact, there was scarcely a dissenting opinion. The primary object was revenue, and one of the reasons most frequently given for adopting this rather than direct taxation was that it would at the same time incidentally encourage or protect, if you please, our infant manufactures. Such were the origin and intention of our first tariff laws, and such continued to be their object for more than a quarter of a century. Those who claim that Alexander Hamilton and the members of the early Congresses were protectionists *per se*, and enacted tariffs for protection and not for revenue,

(CONTINUED ON THIRD PAGE.)