

bors' business and his or her sins of omission and commission, and surely the results would be more beneficial and healthy to the individual as well as to society.

Women who respect themselves should be above this wicked amusement. I call it amusement because to all gossips it is a positive pleasure to blacken the character of their associates, especially some one that is really better than the tale-bearer. And if a woman persists in this course; if she will take up every bit of street report that affects in any way the life of another, and will revel in it somewhat as a cat rolls about in a bed of valerian, and helps to discomfort and blacken the reputation of that other brother or sister, it is proof beyond question that she possesses no self-respect, no compassion, and a lamentable want of forethought. That she is deficient in self-respect is manifest; because if she had that proper sense she would never aid in besmirching and ruining the character of another when such criticism can get no good for the scandal-monger. If there were any genuine feelings of pleasure, or any material benefits, arising from the indulgence of this appetite, there would be some reasons for it. But there are none, unless one might call the gratification of a low and morbid taste a material benefit. It is also plain that the retailer of scandal has no compassion. Argument is not necessary to prove that this assertion is impregnable. If there were compassion it would lead us to protect and save and forgive. It would never prompt us to injustice and cruelty.

And as for the lamentable want of forethought, it is shown in the absolute disregard of future contingencies. Does the gossip know that her life will ever be free from mistake? Is she sure that no one can ever lay a sin, big or little, at her door? And should she fall from grace, or by some act lose caste in the eyes of her friends, does she think that they will show pity and sympathy for her? That would not be human nature. If we criticise others we must expect to be criticised in turn. When we show compassion, then we can with justice demand that compassion shall be shown to us. Remember that!

I think that one of the most touching episodes in the life of our beloved Savior Jesus Christ, and one of the prettiest incidents in the New Testament, is the story that John tells of the woman who was taken in the commission of a wrong act. The Pharisees then, as they generally do in these modern days, took a principal part in the procedure. They brought the poor woman to our Savior and, arraigning her before Him, accused her, with some show of superior morality, and said unto Christ: "Master, this woman was taken in adultery—in the very act. Now, Moses in the law commanded that such should be stoned; but what sayest Thou?" This they said, tempting Him, that they might have to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So, when they

continued asking Him, He lifted up himself and said unto them: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." And again he stooped down and wrote upon the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest even unto the last, and Jesus was left alone and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, He said unto her: "Woman, Where are those thine accusers? no what man condemned thee?" She said: "No man, Lord;" and Jesus said unto her: "Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more." The story is told in the simple and therefore moving style of the holy Bible.

The man who will so far forget himself as to circulate evil stories about a woman, whether he knows them to be false or true, is little better than a dog. Indeed, on second thought, he is not half so good. He is more of a brute than a dog, and something more of a man than a vampire. But he clearly belongs to the rapistia. He should take his place among those creatures that are not permitted to walk upright in the image of their Maker, but crawl about on all fours. It is bad enough for a woman to blacken the character of another woman; for a man, however, to be an aider and abettor of so dastardly, so villainous and so degrading an act—but, honestly, is there a real man who would do it? Are they not reptiles who have the semblance of a man and who are betailed until they pass in the world as men?

The gossip and the scandal-monger have been execrated from the beginning of time. In the crudest forms of organized society the gossip was singled out as the object for contemptuous remarks. We find here and there in the Bible these references. As far back as Leviticus there is this injunction: "Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among the people." Solomon wrote: "The words of a tale-bearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly." There are other passages to the same intent.

The old Latin writer Juvenal wrote:

"There is a lust in man no charm can tame
Or loudly publishing our neighbor's shame;
On eagle's wings immortal scandals fly,
While virtuous actions are but born and die."

There is a pathetic history narrated by the Talmud about a noble woman who sinned once. But for that one sin she was singled out by the tale-bearers for their derision and scorn. Rachel, however, was a grand woman. She knew that she had sinned, and she knew, too, that the circumstances under which her error had been committed were such as to entitle her to the mercy of her townswomen. She also knew that a life of blameless conduct might be the offering which would atone for her misdeed. And she lived a noble life—a life that not only silenced the scandal-mongers,

but that converted all their vituperation into affection.

Where there is one woman like Rachel, with courage enough to sustain her in the hour of tribulation, and with resolution sufficient to live down the stain upon her reputation and its attending consequences, there are a hundred who give up in despair. A man survives the effects of a tale-bearer's words better than a woman; but even in the case of a man, especially a man of fine sensibilities, the tongue of a gossip is venomous and stings with wasp-like severity. Few women there are that can arm themselves against this poison. They bear the punishment so long as they live. Do you say that they deserve some penalty that will last with their lives, that will cause them to lose friends, social caste and serenity of mind? Then think how easy it is to make a mistake; how much loftier a trait of the mind it is to forgive than to censure. Is it not the mission of human kind to bring joy and light to hours that are gloomy and darksome? Is it not the mission of men and women to assuage the grief of the afflicted and to make the cross light instead of heavy? O! ye that spare not where mistakes have been made, think of this. If you are without sin, cast the first stone. If you are not without fault why do you censure?

The world is too uncharitable. We should cultivate charity; charity for the shortcomings, for the misdeeds of others. What does Paul, the great Apostle, say of charity? "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. * * * And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh not evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." These words have the ring of the true metal about them. Charity is another word for mercy. As we expect to be judged when we are arraigned for error, so should we judge others. "Sweet mercy is nobility's true badge," writes Shakespeare. In other words, that man is the noblest who is the most merciful. Mercy is a grand quality of the human soul. Shakespeare, in his "Merchant of Venice," puts this exquisite sentiment in the mouth of Portia:

"The quality of mercy is not strained:
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath; it is twice blessed:
It bleseth him that gives and him that takes;
'Tis mightiest in the mighty; it becomes
The tarried monarch better than his crown."

Let us never forget to be merciful where there is error; for "With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again."

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