THE GENTLE ART OF CURSING

A. D. FRASER

THE student of Comparative Religion or of Folk-lore has not to carry his researches very far to ascertain the interesting fact that the art of clothing one's self with cursing as with a garment is no invention of the modern world; nor yet does it take its origin from the Golden Age of the chosen people of Israel. So apparent, indeed, is it that the principle of cursing is inherent in the human heart that, to arrive at the root of the matter, one must needs prosecute his studies backwards to a point of time far ante-dating the beginnings of recorded history. And even in the dim and shadowy region of the prehistoric it is impossible to lay one's finger on the source of imprecation.

The curse which is to be heard in the streets of the modern civilized or semi-civilized city is markedly differentiated from the ancient or primitive type. The former is—if a pun may be forgiven—a thing quite *cursory*. That is to say, it constitutes the incidental and irrational outpouring in words of a more or less uncultivated mind when under the influence of anger or irritation, or—it may be—out of mere force of habit. In other words, the curse is something purely subjective. It is an expression of personal feeling, and however strongly it may be worded, it is not intended or expected to be efficacious. The Tommy Atkins or Jack Tar, who is heard so frequently to damn his commanding officer, has but little hope that the mere utterance of his lips will plunge his superior into that state of eternal woe to which he refers so familiarly and flippantly.

But the curse which was—and is still—employed by primitive peoples was an infinitely more potent and terrible thing. It was essentially a prayer, with or without the accompaniment of magical rites, to unseen and grisly powers, and was intended and expected to wither and blight and kill. The imprecation was not only subjective but, indeed primarily, objective, and had for its purpose the discomfiture of him against whom it was directed, in this life and often in the life to come. This formal and efficacious system of cursing is employed in all good faith by many savage and semi-savage tribes of the present day, and a full confidence in the power of the curse when administered by the proper author-

ities was far from dead, even in the minds of educated men, as lately as the Middle Ages. Witness the formidable abbott with his paraphernalia of bell, book and candle, by means of which he was wont to make the enemies of Mother Church to quake both inwardly and outwardly! But towards the close of the mediaeval period the formal curse appears to have become, like so many elements of the Dark Ages, a matter of pure and unadulterated form. The following imprecation may, by way of illustration, be quoted from a late pre-Renaissance document:

> In the case of anyone who shall trespass upon the grounds of this monastery wantonly—may Holy God blot out his name from out the Book of Life! Let him be tormented in this life and in the life to come! Let him be stricken with blindness, leprosy and palsy! Let him be smitten by sun-stroke, by lightning and by apoplexy! And let him pay a fine of ten shillings to the governing head of this monastery as a punishment for his unholy crime.

It is hard to believe that the folk even of that day could have read such a pronunciamento without at least an inward smile.

It is manifest that little is to be gained by a study of the curse employed in our modern world; for this is, in biological terminology, but one of the vestigial remains of a practice once considered, and often proving, useful—or, from the other point of view, harmful. We are concerned with the imprecation of primitive society, and particularly with that of the ancient world.

The employment of the formal, efficacious curse is thus older than recorded history. The art was cultivated by the Babylonians and the Assyrians, and perhaps most intensively of all by the countrymen of the recently resurrected Tuthankhamen, whose baneful imprecation on those who should be destined to disturb the remains of his earthly tabernacle has—according to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and other eminent leaders of modern thought—so tragically brought about the death of the archaeologist, Lord Carnarvon. The science, moreover, was adopted by, or was native to, the ancient Greeks; and its virulence lost nothing in the hands of the vindictive and vendetta-loving Romans. It is, however, much to the credit of the classical peoples that the practice of cursing was in historical times confined to the lower strata of society, and was regarded with contempt by the upper orders. With the Hebrews, on the other hand, there appears to have been widespread belief in the efficacy of the curse down to comparatively late times.

There are three ways in which a curse may be rendered operative: (1) through the spoken word; (2) by means of a type of

magic which is commonly known to students of folk-lore by the name "homoeopathic" or "imitative;" (3) by the aid of writing. The first of these processes is, naturally enough, within the reach of everybody; a knowledge of the second may without difficulty be acquired; the third may be known only to the educated few. So we find that various permutations and combinations of these imprecatory methods were made; while if one were able to employ all three at the same time, there was little fear that his efforts should fail to be crowned by the most complete success.

If one may judge by many of the narratives and allusions which we meet with in the Old Testament, the ancient Hebrews must have been a people of singular expertness in their employment of the spoken curse. To treat comprehensively of the question of imprecation in Jewish literature would call for the writing of a whole volume; we must content ourselves with noting a few of the more striking examples in the sacred writings which appear particularly suggestive in their relation e. g., to the imprecations of the Greeks and Romans. In the *Second Book of Kings*, the servant of the Lord, Elisha, upon being taunted by a band of little children upon a slight physical defect, baldness, turns—presumably in a passion—and curses them in the name of Jehovah. Such a procedure may have been natural enough in the case of a sensitive man; but what of the result? Two hungry she-bears immediately rush from a grove near by and tear, kill and mangle forty-two of the band of thoughtless little jesters. No word of censure, moreover, or even of protest comes from the pen of the author of the narrative. On the contrary, he doubtless would have marvelled had the curse of one so powerful as the prophet failed to bring about a punishment so swift and so dire.

Again, in the same Book, the imprecatory powers of Elisha are manifested in relation to the sly Gehazi who attempts to secure for himself a gratuity by underhand means. As soon as the prophet becomes aware of the trick, he pronounces against his treacherous servant what is essentially a curse, and the culprit goes forth from his presence blasted by that most loathsome of diseases, leprosy.

Still more remarkable is the narrative which we have in the *Book of Numbers*. The children of Israel have invaded the territory of the Moabites, after completely routing Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, and thereby gaining for themselves a reputation for military prowess. The king of the Moabites, Balak, the son of Zippor, in deadly fear of losing his kingdom and his crown, sends in all haste for the seer, Balaam, the son of Beor,

formally requesting him to come and curse this swarm which has so rudely disturbed the repose of the Caananites after coming up out of the land of Egypt. His envoys bear gifts from the king, and likewise convey the somewhat curious compliment, "for I wot that he whom thou cursest is cursed." After the successful carrying out of certain negotiations, Balaam sets forth on his mission, riding on his ass. Thus far the story possesses no more than a moderate degree of interest; but the sequel is astonishing. So formidable a power does Balaam hold within him, and so disastrous are the consequences which are to be anticipated from its operation, that the angel of the Lord has actually to stand in the way, sword in hand, and turn him aside perforce from his purpose. The final warning is preceded by the somewhat extraordinary dialogue between the ass and his master, the former presumably speaking in good Moabitish; Balaam, on his side, answers the questions of the beast in the most matter of fact manner imaginable, apparently forgetting in his excitement and chagrin that there is anything at all unusual in the situation.

The principle which is involved in this episode—that of one of two belligerent parties in time of war having recourse to the services of a neutral imprecatory expert, with a view to the discomfiture of the foe—finds an interesting parallel among the Indian tribes of the western States of America. Before the time when, two generations ago, these peoples sunk from their independent position to that of wards of the American Government, it was their custom in war-time to hire the services of the most powerful "medicine men" of a neutral tribe, that through the instrumentality of their prayers and incantations the enemy might be put to confusion and rout.

The spoken curse seems also to have been much used, until recent times, by the Hawaiian folk. A romantic example of its operation occurs in the beautiful but tragic drama, *The Bird of Paradise*, which is still deservedly popular in the United States and in this country. The old priest, Hewahewa, exasperated at the lack of national pride manifested by the Princess Luana, secures by stealth the parings of her finger-nails and then, by means of the "Death Prayer," causes her body slowly to die, beginning with the fingers, until she finally forestalls death through the curse by offering herself a voluntary sacrifice to the volcano-goddess, Pelee.

The system of cursing an enemy by means of homoeopathic magic, so as to compass his illness or death, is doubtless the oldest form of the practice ever employed by mankind, and it is also the

one most frequently to be encountered among savage tribes today. A few concrete examples will serve to illustrate the methods commonly employed. Among the Ojibway Indians, it was until recently the custom, if one desired to work ill to another, to make a little wooden image of the object of dislike, and then, by pricking it with a sharp stick or shooting it with an arrow, cause a corresponding injury to the person represented. If the Indian wished to kill the foe outright, he would bury the image in the ground, uttering certain words of magical import while thus employed. Again, in the far-distant islands of the Pacific, we find a Malay charm working similarly, the formula being: Take a nail-paring or hair of your intended victim, and knead it into a little waxen image; then scorch the figure slowly by holding it over a lamp every night for seven nights, and say:

> It is not wax that I am scorching:
> It is the heart, liver and spleen of So-and-so that I scorch.—

After the seventh time, burn your figure and your victim will die.

The most far-reaching and thorough system of procedure of this sort with which I am familiar occurs among the head-hunters of Borneo. These amiable people, as is well known, have the pleasant custom of cutting off the heads of their enemies and preserving them, in a sort of embalmed state, over the doors of their huts. At certain seasons, also, they observe the custom of feeding these dried heads ceremonially by placing bits of fat in the mouth. What the specific intention of this is, may be hard to conjecture, but it is apparently done with the purpose that good may come of it. Now, when a head-hunter wishes to be revenged on a personal enemy who is not within his reach, he makes an image of the hated one, and retires with it in his hand to a secluded spot on the bank of a stream. There he seats himself and waits, watching the sky in a manner curiously reminiscent of ancient Roman augury, till a hawk appears in a certain quarter of the heavens. Then he kills a fowl, smears the blood on the image, and repeats the words, "May the fat be in your mouth!" The significance of this cryptic expression is: "May your head be cut off, hung on some roof-top, and fed with fat in the usual way!" Then he strikes the image on the breast with a miniature wooden spear, throws it into a pool of water reddened with earth to represent blood, finally takes it out, buries it in the ground and makes lamentation over it. If a process like this will not prove efficacious, surely nothing will.

Rossetti, in his *Sister Helen*, has painted a fine poetical picture of the operation of the curse which works through imitative magic. The nun, Sister Helen, whose heart has been broken through the perfidy of young Keith of Ewern, has fashioned a small waxen image which she is slowly burning over the flame as the poem begins:

Why did you melt your waxen man,
Sister Helen?
To-day is the third since you began.
The time was long, yet the time ran,
Little brother!
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Three days to-day, between Hell and Heaven!)

Oh the waxen knave was plump to-day,
Sister Helen;
How like dead folk he has dropped away!
Nay now, of the dead what can you say,
Little brother?
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
What of the dead, between Hell and Heaven?)

Three horsemen appear, each recounting in turn the miseries suffered by the curse-striken and dying Keith, who prays for deliverance. But the iron has entered too deeply into the soul of the nun, who remains inexorable. At length the curse is complete; "the wax has dropped from its place," and the traitor dies:

Ah! What white thing at the door has cross'd,
Sister Helen?
Ah! what is this that sighs in the frost?
A soul that's lost as mine is lost,
Little brother!
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Lost, lost, all lost, between Hell and Heaven!)

Even in the Old Testament do we find traces, and probably traces only, of this homoeopathic magic operating in association with an imprecation. In the *First Book of Kings*, e. g., and in the *Second Book of Chronicles*, we have an account of the doings of a certain Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, a false prophet and the deceitful and treacherous adviser of King Ahab. When the question of war with Syria is mooted, a complete victory is promised by Zedekiah who—to emphasize the positive nature of his prophecy, and also to lend strength to what is virtually a curse pronounced against the military efforts of the Syrians—"made his horns of

iron; and he said, Thus saith the Lord, with these shalt thou push the Syrians till thou hast consumed them." By these actions Zedekiah seems to stand forth as an older, and a more primitive, type of prophet than either Elijah or Elisha.

Although the verbal imprecation and the magical art were by no means unknown to the ancient Greeks and Romans, it must be acknowledged that it was their adroitness in the formal writing out of curses that particularly distinguished them. Their methods in this respect are curiously alike, though on the one hand are to be discerned, I think, the cunning and versatility of the Greek; on the other, the conservatism and thoroughness of the Roman. The great imprecatory medium of both peoples was the inscribed leaden tablet, though occasionally bronze plates and even marble slabs bore the inscription, which was usually scratched in, rather than engraved, with the point of some sharp instrument. The magic touch, handed down from Stone-Age ancestors, shows itself in a nail or spike which was often driven through the middle of the tablet after the inscription had been completed. The intent of this spike is obvious. As its point pierces the lead, so may the curse penetrate the soul of the victim! Hence we have in the imprecatory formulas frequent employment of the expressions, "I nail down," "I fasten down," "I hold down So-and-so." The curses are addressed also, as a rule, to one or another of the deities of the Lower World, who naturally may be supposed to take an interest in these hellish devices. The Greeks commonly devoted the victim to Proserpina, the Queen of Hades, while the Romans invoked Pluto, Hecate, Mercury, Mother Earth and other chthonic powers. Curiously enough, we find that in late times Jehovah, the God of the Jews, comes to be regarded as a malign deity, and to him are addressed at least five extant curses. Once even the wise King Solomon is invoked, apparently through a misunderstanding. To secure close and intimate contact with the Powers of Darkness, the tablet was ordinarily thrown into some opening in the ground, such as a well or spring, or was deposited in a tomb among the ashes of the dead, whose association with the chthonic deities is quite obvious.

I may now present in rough translation (the originals are themselves rough) a few characteristic Hellenic curses, culled for the most part from Wuensch's *Anthology*, but a few of them from the Greek Magical Papyri, a body of curious documents recently dug from out the sands of Egypt, that museum of things antique:

1. We fasten down Callistrate, the wife of Theophemos, and Theophilos, the father of Callistrate, and the children of Callistrate,

and I fasten down Theophemos and his brother Eustratos—their spirits and their works and themselves in their entirety, and all that belongs to them. I bind down also Cantharis and Dionysios the father of C., both their persons and their spirits and works and themselves in their entirety.

2. I fasten down Androkleides and his evil tongue and his sinful heart and his ungodly soul, and I bind down his workshop and his slaves. I fasten down Dionysios and his evil tongue and his sinful heart and his ungodly soul. I fasten down Tryphon to Hermes—himself and his words and deeds. I fasten down Demeus and son of Demaenetos.

3. If I have taken Mikion and bound his tongue and his spirit and his hands and his feet and any shameful word he has in mind to utter against Philon, may his tongue turn to lead, and do thou pierce his tongue. And let him have no part of lot in the possessions which he holds or is striving after. Directed against —Mikion.

With the author of the following brief, but pointed, curse one feels a certain sympathy:

4. I dedicate to Demeter and Kore and to the gods with Demeter those men who came to my house and bound and flogged me.

5. Just as these tablets are cold and ill-omened, so may the works of Krates prove cold and luckless, and those of all his informers and advocates.

6. (Probably directed by a divorced woman against her former husband) I curse Aristocydes and all the ladies with whom he is intimate. May he never marry another woman or girl.

Occasionally the writer—whether out of a sense of injured innocence or from pure bravado—calls down a curse on his own head in the event of his having sinned. This type of imprecation is frequently paralleled in history and in legend, as in the case of Earl Godwin who was accused of murdering the brother of Edward the Confessor. Taking a piece of bread in his hand—so runs the story—he pronounced the words: "If I am guilty, may this bread choke me when I eat it." And he put the bread in his mouth, swallowed it, choked and died. A Greek curse of analagous nature runs:

Antigone dedicated this tablet to Demeter, Kore, Pluto and to all the gods and goddesses with Demeter. If I have either given poison to Asclepiades, or ever thought in my heart of doing any wrong; or if I ever invited his wife into a shrine, bribing her with a mina and a half (about $30) to remove him out of the land of the living; then let Antigone go down to join Demeter, etc.

It appears that in many cases the imprecation is pronounced out of spite, where the author has been the victim of slander and backbiting. "Let Pherenicos....and Galene the wife of P. be fastened down to Hermas of the nether world and to Hecate of the nether world. And even as this leaden tablet is worthless and cold, so may they and everything that is theirs be worthless and cold, and so may it be in the case of their friends in all their talk and plots against me." Naturally, in this connection, references to the tongue—that organ which no man can tame—are common. "I fasten, I bind their tongues;" "Let the tongues of my enemies be rendered silent against me;" "I fasten, I tie their tongues at the middle, at the back, and at the front, so that they cannot answer a word;" "Muzzle the mouths of all of them;" "Check their utterance;" "Put a damper on his tongue." One is reminded of the Scriptural words: "And let their tongues be silent in the grave."

Frequently, too, we have the curse which inhibits sleep, of which there are occasional examples even in Greek literature, as in the *Clouds* of Aristophanes where the Chorus sings: "Let sweet and lovely sleep his eyes forsake." The amiable sentiment does not, indeed, appear to be found in the tablets, but often in the Magical Papyri already mentioned, as: "Rouse up So-and-so this night, and remove sweet slumber from her eyelids, and give to her instead a horrible nightmare and a dreadful pain," and another: "May So-and-so be kept awake both day and night till death claims her." The hate which must lie behind an imprecation of this sort must be, as everyone who has suffered from insomnia will readily grant, truly demoniacal.

Among the early Christians the curse was still in vogue; the ancient tree, which has struck its roots into the soil during the Stone Age, is not easily plucked up. But here—and one is glad to place it to the credit of human nature—the old, ferocious spirit of misanthropy is dead; the curse is directed against evil spirits and other malign powers. In some of these documents the traditional formulas are retained; in others we have a peculiar blending of various elements. One of the most interesting comes from a Magical Papyrus of the third century. It runs:

> A notable spell for driving out demons. Invocation to be uttered over the head of the possessed one. Place before him branches of olive, and standing behind him say: Hail, spirit of Abraham; hail, spirit of Isaac; hail, spirit of Jacob; Jesus the Christ, the holy one, the spirit....drive forth the devil from this man, until this unclean demon of Satan shall flee before thee.

I adjure thee, O demon, whoever thou art, by the god sabarbarbathioth. Come over, O demon, for I shall chain thee with adamantine chains not to be loosed, and I shall give thee over to black chaos in utter destruction.

Another incantation, in the form of an amulet, is still more extraordinary in its content:

Fly, hateful spirit! Christ pursues thee; the Son of God and the Holy Spirit have outstripped thee. O God of the sheep-pool, deliver from every evil thy handmaid Joannia whom Anastasia, also called Euphemia, bare. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God....O Lord Christ .... heal and regard thy handmaid Joannia whom Anastasia, also called Euphemia, bare; chase from her and put to flight all fevers, and every kind of chill, quotidian, tertian and quartan....

The intermixture of Jewish, Christian and pagan elements here portrayed is too obvious to need comment. St. Paul's judgment of the Athenians, "too superstitious," might be not inaptly applied.

The Roman curse-tablet has been picked up everywhere within the confines of the ancient Roman Empire—from England to Africa, and from Spain to Armenia. It manifests a high degree of care and an almost Teutonic thoroughness in execution, but is generally speaking altogether lacking in originality. The Roman is not content, like the Greek, with cursing a man together with all his works and activities. He must needs lay his ban on every member, every limb, and fairly exhausts the anatomical nomenclature of his day. The most complete Roman curse, or rather, set of curses, with which I am familiar is to be found in the museum of the Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, and has been recently deciphered and published by Professor W. S. Fox of Western University, London, Ont. It consists of five engraved tablets bearing curses, which are identical in formula, but are directed against five different individuals. The modern representative of the imprecator would have saved himself labour by making five carbon copies of the document with blank spaces for the personal names. One of these inscriptions may be rendered as follows:

Good Queen Proserpina, wife of Pluto—or perhaps I ought to call you Salvia (the Preserver)—snatch away the safety, the person, the complexion, the strength and the faculties of Plotius. Turn him over to your husband Pluto. Let him have no power to escape this curse by his devices! Hand him over to the influences of the quartan, the tertian and the quotidian fevers (malaria?), to struggle with him, to fight it out with him, to defeat him, to vanquish him, until they even snatch away his soul from him!

> And so I dedicate this victim to you, Proserpina—or perhaps, Proserpina, I ought to name you the Acheronian. Summon up and send to me the three-headed dog, that he may tear the heart out of Plotius. Promise Cerberus, in my name, that you will give him three offerings—dates, figs and a black boar—if he shall have his work completed before the month of March. These, Proserpina Salvia, I shall give to you as soon as you answer my prayer.
>
> I give to you the head of Plotius, the slave of Avonia. Proserpina Salvia, I give to you the forehead of Plotius. Proserpina Salvia, I give to you the eye-brows of Plotius. P. S., I give to you the eye-lids of P. P. S., I give to you the pupils of the eyes of P. P. S., I give to you the nostrils, the lips, the ears, the nose, the tongue, the teeth of P., so that P. may not have the power of saying what his ailments are. I give to you his neck, his shoulders, his arms, his fingers, so that he may not be able to help himself at all. I give you his breast, his liver, his heart, his lungs, so that he may not be able to conceive what is wrong with him. I give you his intestines, his stomach, his ribs, so that he may fail to sleep. I give you his shoulder-blades, so that he may be unable to get a sound sleep. I give to you his loins, his thighs, his knees, legs, shins, feet, ankles, the soles of his feet, so that he may not be able to stand by himself. If, in the meantime, a curse, great or small, be composed by Plotius against me, after the fashion that he has written any curse and entrusted it to a deity, so also do I turn over and commit Plotius to you, that you likewise may hand over and commit him to ruin during the month of February. In misery may he fall; in misery may he die; in misery may he be damned! Commit and hand him over to Ruin, so that he may nevermore have the power to look upon, see or behold any month of the year!

In that most humorous of classics, *Three Men in a Boat*, Mr. Jerome describes in one place how his heroes are sailing complacently up the Thames, contemplating the beauties of a cloudless sunset and imagining themselves knights of romance sailing into an enchanted realm, when suddenly they run with full force into a punt in which three old men are seated on chairs fishing. As they come back to their senses they see what has happened. "We had knocked," the narrative runs, "those three old gentlemen off their chairs into a general heap at the bottom of the boat, and they were now slowly and painfully sorting themselves out from one another, and picking fish off themselves, and as they worked they cursed us—not with a common cursory curse, but with long, carefully thought-out, comprehensive curses, that embraced the whole of our career, and went away into the distant future—good substantial curses." In other words, the old men appear to have been attempting to rival the efforts of the Roman imprecator mentioned above.

It is but seldom that the stodginess of the Roman curse is offset by a touch of the picturesque, but one or two examples may be noted in conclusion. The first was discovered in a tomb near Rome, and appears to be the work of a disappointed lover; at least, its tone of bitterness and at the same time its really harmless nature would seem to argue for such an interpretation. It is one of the very few curses of antiquity wherein mention is made of any localism:

> Just as the dead man who is buried here can neither talk or converse, so may Rhodine be dead in relation to Marcus Licinius Faustus (apparently the author), and be unable to talk and converse. And just as the corpse is not acceptable to either men or gods, to just the same extent may Rhodine be acceptable to M. Licinius and have just as much influence with him as that dead man who is buried here. Father Pluto, I commission you with the duty of always keeping Rhodine at enmity with M. Licinius Faustus....

We may pass over the imprecations of the African chariot-drivers which are somewhat numerous, and in which they curse the members of opposing factions together with their horses, praying that both may "come a cropper," to note a strikingly ingenious curse found some years ago in the Campanian town of Salernum. This is, as far as I am aware, the briefest example of a curse known to epigraphists, consisting of but six words, *Locus capillo ribus (rivus): expectat caput suum.* This can admit of no other interpretation than that supplied by rendering, literally, "The stream is the place for the hair: it awaits its own head;" or, more freely, "A hair (from the head of So-and-so) has been placed in a stream; and this hair is waiting for the head (of its owner) to follow it into the water." Using our imaginative powers, we readily conjecture that the author of the document has obtained by stealth a hair, or lock of hair, of his intended victim and has deposited it in a stream at the time that the curse is written down. The influence exerted by the latter will bring about the death of the unfortunate victim by drowning.

Here are manifested both subtle intelligence and true imagination! Here is a break with the hide-bound traditions of Roman formalism! The soul of the hater throws off the trammels of the ritual and rises to mystic heights. Nor is this all. The man (or is it a woman?) is likewise a poet. If we leave out of consideration the last word of the curse, we have left a perfect iambic-trimeter line. Thus the author is able not only to riddle darkly, but to garb his mysterious thought in the language of poetry as well.

Such then, in general, is the form and substance of the ancient and primitive curse. After reading a score or two of examples,

one begins to marvel at the vagaries of fate. Strange indeed it is that time, which has destroyed so much that is beautiful, so much that is fine and decent, so much that is noble and brave in ancient art and literature and philosophy, should have preserved to us so many of these "frail mementos of murderous hate." And we are reminded of the melancholy reflection of the apostle James: *Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.* But, notwithstanding, we may well adopt the more optimistic view of human nature throughout the ages, recalling that the mouth that is prone to curse is able also to bless.