

of soul and body. He who can school the tongue can school the hands and the feet, the heart and the brain. The tongue requires stronger self-government than any other avenue of the soul's expression. (Plummer).

3. Behold we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us, and we turn about their whole body—R. V. "Now if we put the horses' bridles into their mouths, that they may obey us, we turn about their whole body also." A man who can govern his tongue, can govern his whole nature, just as the bridle controls, not merely the horse's mouth, but the whole animal. If, as is certainly the case, we are able to govern irrational creatures with a small bit, how much more ourselves through the tongue; for just as he who has lost his hold of the reins has lost control over the horse, so he who has lost his hold on his tongue has lost control over himself. (Plummer). (Ps. 54: 13; Isa. 1: 26; 1 Pet. 3: 10; Matt. 12: 37). Note that the bridle is put in the horse's *mouth*.

4. Behold also the ships, which, though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about by a very small helm (R. V. rudder), whithersoever the governor (R. V. steersman) listeth—The point made by these two illustrations seems to be—Govern your tongue, it is a small member, but you may make it a bridle or a rudder for the guidance of your whole conduct. It is a mighty power for good or evil.

5. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth (R. V. Behold how much wood is kindled by how small a fire)—Although the tongue is small it puts on great airs. It has great power and knows it (Ps. 12: 3; 73: 8, 9). "Wood" here means "forest." The illustration is frequent in poetry. James had before his mind a vast forest fire caused by a single spark. So a slight cause may have a far reaching result (Prov. 12: 18; 15: 2).

6. And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, (R. V. a world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defileth the whole body) and setteth on fire the course (R. V. wheel) of nature; and it is set on fire of hell—The tongue is as fierce, and

cruel and unmanageable as fire when unrestrained. It is a little world of evil in itself, for what evil is there which may not be originated or fomented by the tongue (Ps. 120: 2, 4; Prov. 16: 27; Matt. 15: 11, 18-20). "The tongue has its place among our members as that which defileth (spotteth) the whole body." (Compare Jude 23; 2 Pet. 2: 13; Eph. 5: 27). It incites the body to every kind of sin. The "wheel of nature" has been variously interpreted. (1) It is literally "the wheel of birth" *i. e.* "the whole life from birth," the wheel which then begins to roll on its course, and continues rolling until death. From the beginning of life to its close the tongue is an ever-present, inflammatory element of evil. (2) Others understand here a reference to the potter's wheel (Jer. 18: 3). The tongue is the flame that by its untempered heat mars the vessel in the hands of the potter. (3) It means the whole orb of creation. It sets the world on fire. The whole circle of man's relations is influenced by the tongue, in every age, and every land, and at every period of his life. We prefer this last view. The word for "is set on fire" is in the present participle. The tongue that speaks evil is ever *being set on fire of Gehenna*. Sins of speech are traced to their true source. The fire of man's wrath is kindled from beneath, as the fire that cleanses is kindled from above. (Plumptre).

7. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents (R. V. creeping things), and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind—"Every kind" is literally "every nature," it is not asserted that every species has been tamed but every order of the animal creation has proved submission to man.

8. But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly (R. V. a restless) evil, full of deadly poison—Though no *man* can transform the tongue, yet God can. He at whose word the demoniac ceased his ravings can cause the lying tongue to speak verities, and the passionate tongue to be silent, and the tale-bearing tongue to be still (Illust. Notes). It is called a "restless mischief" from its fickleness, and its ceaseless activity. The diabolical nature, the death-bringing, serpent-virulence of the strife of tongues; contains substantially the same idea, as is expressed in the preceding verse, "inflamed by hell"