

greatest pleasure on painting and sculpture; so it is the wise man who puts highest valuation on wisdom. **Will increase learning.** Here, again, comparison with other activities may make plain the conditions of the study of wisdom. How does Faderewski acquire and develop facility as a pianist? By daily, hourly practice. Do you know what Sir John Millais gave as the secret of his success in art? "Constant study." What, then, will the "wise man" do to "increase learning?" He will "hear," which includes "heed;" study and practice. **Wise counsels.** Literally, "clever statesmanship." So the wisdom which Solomon desires his pupils to attain is not the useless learning of a bookworm; it is a practical, utilitarian, "up-to-date," wholesome shrewdness; but it begins (verse 7), not with selfish craft, but with "the fear of the Lord."

**6. To understand a proverb, and the interpretation.** Here we have another purpose of this collection. Ancient proverbs and parables usually needed interpretation; otherwise, why should the wise utter their wisdom in **dark sayings**? Much of the wisdom of the ancient world was recorded in terms intentionally obscure. Common people were not to be trusted with it. Solomon's teachings, carefully studied, furnished a key to unlock the enigmas of other sages.

**7. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.** This is the essence of Hebrew philosophy. (See Prov. 9. 10; Job 28. 28; Psalm 111. 10; Eccles. 12. 13; Prov. 16. 33.) "Fear" stands for loyal reverence. On such reverence all sound character and reason are founded. **Fools despise wisdom and instruction.** Better, "wisdom and instruction fools despise." He is a "fool" who is slack and easy in his moral activities.

**8. My son.** Words spoken by the teacher to the pupil; by the wise man to the world at large. **Hear. Heed. Instruction.** Disciplinary education. **Forsake not.** A negative, meaning the affirmative obey. **Law.** Preceptive teaching.

**9. An ornament of grace unto thy head.** Jewels upon the brow after the fashion of oriental women at least; probably kings and courtiers similarly ornamented themselves. **Chains about thy neck.** Golden necklaces. Better than all acquired graces, than all wealth or accomplishments, is that wholesome character which a pious mother and father seek to develop in their children.

**10. If sinners entice thee.** All sin, as well as all goodness, is infectious. **Consent thou not.** He who parleys with temptation doubles its danger.

**11. Come with us.** Nine tenths of the sins to which youths of both sexes are liable come forward at first under the guise of social and friendly enjoyment. **Let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily.** Such a temptation as this in modern life would be horrible, and would repel many even who are not pronouncedly virtuous, but in the life of the ancient Orient such sins were as much justified to the public conscience as "corners" in markets are to our modern public conscience. Honest and pure-minded people felt their exceeding sinfulness, but the multitude glorified the successful bandit, just as they now glorify more conventional but equally wicked men who achieve success over the innocent without cause, that is, those whose innocence does not protect them from evil.

**12. No violence was shrunk from by such determined sinners as these.** There is a claim to bravery which outlaws like Jesse James sometimes make, and which much of our "yellow-covered literature" maintains, which is itself an inducement to sin, and therefore sinful.

**13. We shall find.** Too suddenly acquired riches tempts most men and women from the middle of the king's highway. Not highway robbers alone do this; he who has accepted a bribe for his vote, he who has made an unjust bargain, is as corrupt a spoilsman as the bandit.

**14. Let us all have one purse.** An appeal to the romantic sentiment prevalent among the young; to admiration of frank and openhearted generosity.

**15. Walk not . . . refrain.** "Turn from it and pass away."

**16. For.** The simple reason for the wise man's injunction is that what he reproves is wicked! Avoid sin because it is sinful.

**17. In vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird.** Birds see the snare and fly away; so do you fly from temptation!

**18. They lay wait for their own blood.** A man who seeks to destroy others is really, though he thinks it not, seeking to destroy himself. He who plans the murder of a victim may be said to be planning his own gallows. He who seeks to ruin others is really ruining himself.

**19. Greedy of gain.** "The love of money is the root of all evil." Which taketh away the life of the owners thereof. Greed for gain ruins those who have it; they "pierce themselves through with many sorrows."

### CRITICAL NOTES.

**Verse 1. Proverb.** *Mashal*, derived from a verb of the same root, meaning "to put or tie together, or to compare," has been translated "similitude, parable, precept, maxim," etc. The word

"proverb," however, usually denotes a short, pithy saying, in which some great truth is couched in simple language. **Of Solomon.** We read in 1 Kings 4. 32, that Solomon spoke three thousand proverbs.