

rinciples of righteousness. He who walks in the light of these commands will tread a sure path, will inherit true riches, will be led into high knowledge. As Coleridge says: "The Book of Proverbs is the best statesman's manual ever written;" and we might add, that it is the best collection of counsels in political economy, in social science, and in practical ethics. One remarkable fact concerning it is, that its author lived to illustrate both its counsels and its warnings, the one in his brilliant earlier years, the other in his clouded later life. But not a sentence of the book is an excuse of its writer's sins. It deals truthfully, boldly, rebukingly with the very crimes which its author committed. As Dr. Arnot has said: "The glaring imperfections of the man's life have been used as a dark ground to set off the luster of that pure righteousness which the Spirit has spoken by his lips." Warned, then, by the fall of the writer, let us ponder well his utterances, that we may avoid his example while following his precepts.

Verse 1. The Proverbs of Solomon have not very close relationship to the proverbial lore of Gentile nations, to those pithy statements of homely truth which pass current in modern times such as, "Tis an ill wind blows nobody good," "Many a little makes a mickle," "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." The word "proverb," in its biblical use, includes parables and condensed wisdom in every form. While there are, doubtless, especially in the latter part of this book, "proverbs" in the modern sense of that term, most of its wise sayings show signs of having been laboriously condensed from long-continued individual thought—the very reverse of modern literary composition. If a modern poet, essayist, or painter has one clear-cut "original" conception, he has stock in trade for a life of activity. He presents his one thought in different forms, with different associations, and calls it by different names; and the most successful man is often he who can spread his thin thought farthest. Most men ring many changes on few bells. But the ambition of the ancient sage was to gather many harmonies of truth into one note. He sat down with the deliberate intention of condensing into one verse the findings of his whole life of wisdom; some of these sentences doubtless represent each the lifework of some good man. **Of Solomon.** Solomon was the master of proverbial wisdom among the Hebrews, as David was their master of song. Even after David's death the psalms of the nation were collectively called the "Psalms of David," because he set in motion the tide of song and gave tone and character to the singing of his people. In like manner the proverbs of the Hebrews were grouped together as "Proverbs of Solomon," because Solomon made proverbial literature a living fact among the Hebrews, though there were doubtless many "proverbs" in existence before his time, and many were added to the national collection after his death. There is little doubt that the first portion of the book comes direct from Solomon's pen or tongue. "When he set himself seriously to instruct his people, to train them in sound views of life, and in the practice of virtue and religion, he naturally embodied his views in terse and pithy sentences, charming the imagination and easy to be remembered."—*Deane*. But many minds and many ages were concerned in the entire collection.

It reflects the wisdom of Israel from the golden age of its monarchy to that decadence which Hezekiah sought to offset. There is in the Book of Proverbs a series of titles or superscriptions dividing it into several little books; for instance, "The Proverbs of Solomon," here and at chapter 10. 1; "The Words of the Wise" (22. 17); "These Things also Belong to the Wise" (24. 23); "Proverbs of Solomon, which the Men of Hezekiah Copied Out" (25. 1); "The Words of Agur" (30. 1); "The Words of Lemuel" (31. 1). It is well for the teacher to call attention to the "parallelism" of most of the proverbs; that is, the balancing of one thought against another, which sometimes affects the very sound of the verse.

2. Verse 1 may be regarded as a title, and verses 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 as a sort of preface or contents, a kind of epitome of the book. **Wisdom** throughout Proverbs may be defined almost as virtuous choice; **instruction** is literally "elastiment," moral training. **Understanding** stands for what we would now better express by the word "discernment," the power of distinction between right and wrong.

3. To receive. This is a part of the sentence begun with the beginning of the first verse: "The purpose of Solomon's proverbs is to enable him who studies them to receive" the four excellences mentioned here. **Wisdom.** Faithfulness. Not the same word in Hebrew as the "wisdom" of verse 2. **Justice.** Righteousness, uprightness. **Judgment.** Fairmindedness. **Equity.** Harmony with the law of God. The student of Proverbs, therefore, should acquire, by their help, habits of prudence in personal conduct, of morality among his fellows, and of reverence for God.

4. Subtily. Sharpness, shrewdness. **Simple.** Impressionable, susceptible, easily influenced. **Young man.** When these proverbs were coined it would have been thought fantastic to furnish similar helps to the young woman; she had neither mental ability (so it was believed) nor social opportunity to take advantage of them. But to-day these maxims of wisdom come to our young women with equal appositeness and force with our young men. **Discretion.** Discernment.

5. A wise man will hear. Of course. It is the musical man who most delights in concert of sweet sounds ; it is the artistic man who looks with

greatest pleasure
is the wise man's
dom. **Wise**
comparison
the condition
Paderewski
ist? By doing
what Sir John
ness in art? "I
"wise man"
"hear," which
justice. **Wise**
man'ship."
his pupils to
a bookworm
date," whole
7), not with
Lord."

6. To un-
terpretatio
this collectio
usually need
should the w
ings? Mue
was recorded
mon people w
mon's teachin
to unlock the

7. The fe
of knowled
philosophy. (3
10; Eccles. 12
for loyal reve
character and
wisdom and
and instruction
is slack and e

8. My son
the pupil; by
Hear. Heed
ucation. **For**
the affirmative

9. An ornament
Jewels upon the
women at least
specially ornament
thy neck. C
acquired graces
ments, is that w
mother and father

10. If sinn
as all goodness,
He who parleys

Verse 1. Pr
a verb of the same
gether, or to com
tude, parable, p