THE

# PULPIT COMMENTARY,

EDITED BY THE

VERY REV. H. D. M. SPENCE, D.D.,

DEAN OF GLOUCESTER;

AND BY THE

REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

WITH

## INTRODUCTIONS

BY THE

VERY REV. F. W. FARRAR, D.D., F.R.S., DEAN OF CANTERBURY.
RIGHT REV. H. COTTERILL, D.D., F.R.S.E.
VERY REV. PRINCIPAL J. TULLOCH, D.D.
REV. CANON G. RAWLINSON, M.A.
REV. A. PLUMMER, M.A., D.D.

*NEW EDITION.*

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY
LONDON AND NEW YORK
1906

PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED,
LONDON AND BECCLES.

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# PROVERBS.

Exposition

BY REV. W. J. DEANE, M.A.,

RECTOR OF ASHEN;

AND BY

REV. S. T. TAYLOR-TASWELL, M.A.,

RECTOR OF WITHERLEY.

Homiletics

BY REV. PROFESSOR W. F. ADENEY, M.A.

Homilies by Various Authors.

REV. PROF. E. JOHNSON, M.A. REV. W. CLARKSON, B.A.

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# THE PROVERBS.

## INTRODUCTION.

### § 1. Name of the Book.

The book which we are about to consider takes its general title from the words with which it opens in the Hebrew original, 'The Proverbs of Solomon'—*Mishle Shelomoh*. This name, or, in an abbreviated form, *Mishle*, has always been current in the Jewish Church. Later, in rabbinical writings, it was cited under the appellation of *Sepher Chocmah*, 'Book of Wisdom,' which title also included Ecclesiastes. In the Septuagint it is headed Παροιμίαι Σαλωμῶντος in some manuscripts, though in others, and those the earliest, the name of Solomon is omitted. St. Jerome, in the Latin Vulgate, gives a longer title: 'Liber Proverbiorum quem Hebræi *Misle* appellant.'

Among the early Christian writers, in addition to the name given in the Septuagint, it was called Σοφία, 'Wisdom,' or Ἡ Πανάρετος Σοφία, 'All-virtuous Wisdom,' though this last title was also applied to Ecclesiasticus and the Book of Wisdom. Clemens Romanus, in his 'Epistle to the Corinthians' (i. 57), heads a quotation from ch. i. 23—33 thus: Οὕτως γὰρ λέγει ἡ Πανάρετος Σοφία, "Thus saith All-virtuous Wisdom." That this was commonly received as the designation of our book is clear also from Eusebius, who writes ('Hist. Eccl.,' iv. 22), "Other passages also, as if from unwritten Jewish tradition, Hegesippus cites; and not only he, but Irenæus, and the whole band of ancient writers, called the 'Proverbs of Solomon' 'Panaretos Sophia.'" It is true that in the writings which are attributed to Irenæus still extant, quotations from the Proverbs are cited simply as Scripture without further definition, but we have no reason to discredit Eusebius's testimony concerning a matter with which he must have been well acquainted. Two other titles are found, viz. Ἡ Σοφὴ Βίβλος, 'The Wise Book,' so called by Dionysius of Alexandria; and Παιδαγωγικὴ Σοφία, 'Educational Wisdom,' by Gregory of Nazianzum. Melito of Sardis (according to Eusebius, 'Hist. Eccl.,' iv. 26) states, in giving a catalogue

of canonical Scriptures, that the book was known by the name of Σοφία, 'Wisdom,' as well as that of 'Proverbs of Solomon.' This title, which, better perhaps than that of Proverbs, expresses the chief subject of the work, seems not to have been invented by the primitive Christian writers, but to have been derived from still earlier times, and to have been handed down by that unwritten Jewish tradition of which Eusebius speaks.

In considering the appropriateness of the usual name of our book, we must see what is meant by the Jewish term *mishle*, "proverbs," as we translate it. The word *mashal* has a much wider significance than our word "proverb." It is derived from a root meaning "to be like," and therefore has primarily the meaning of comparison, similitude, and is applied to many discourses, sentences, and expressions which we should not class under the head of proverbs. Thus Balaam's prophecy is so called (Numb. xxii. 7, etc.); so too Job's didactic poem (Job xxvii. 1); the taunting satire in Isa. xiv. 4, etc.; the parables in Ezek. xvii. 2 and xx. 49, etc.; the song in Numb. xxi. 27, etc. It is often translated "parable" in the Authorized Version, even in the book itself (ch. xxvi. 7), and in the historical psalm (lxxviii.), the second verse of which St. Matthew (xiii. 35) tells us Christ fulfilled when he spake by parables. This would lead us to expect to find other meanings in the term and under the husk of the outward form. And, indeed, the Hebrew *mashal* is not confined to wise or pithy sayings, expressing in pointed terms the experience of men and ages; such an account would, as we see, be most inadequate to describe the various forms to which the term was applied. That there are in our book numerous apothegms and maxims, enforcing moral truths, explaining facts in men's lives and the course of society, which are proverbs in the strictest sense of the word, is obvious; but a very large proportion of the utterances therein are not covered by that designation. If the notion of comparison at first restricted the term to sayings containing a simile, it soon overstepped the bounds of such limitation, and comprehended such brief sentences as conveyed a popular truth under figures or metaphors. Of this sort is the pointed query, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" (1 Sam. x. 12); and, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Ezek. xviii. 2); and, "Physician, heal thyself" (Luke iv. 23). In many so-called proverbs the contrasted objects are placed side by side, leaving the hearer to draw his own deduction. In the longer pieces so-named a single idea is worked out at some length in rhythmical form. Further, under this general category are contained also dark sayings, riddles, intricate questions (*chidah*), which have always had great attraction for Oriental minds. The Queen of Sheba, we are told, came to try Solomon with hard questions (1 Kings x. 1); as the Septuagint renders it, "with enigmas." Probably such puzzles are found in ch. xxx., and in many of those passages which, according as they are pointed, are capable of very different interpretations. There is one other word used in this connection (ch. i. 6)—*melitsah*, which is rendered in the Authorized Version "interpretation," and in the Revised Version "a

figure;" it probably means a saying containing some obscure allusion, and usually of a sarcastic nature. There are very few examples of this form in our book.

The various kinds of proverbs have been divided by Hannebeerg ('Revel. Bibl.,' v. 41, quoted by Lesêtre) into five classes: 1. *Historical proverbs*, wherein an event of the past, or a word used on some momentous occasion, has passed into a popular saying, expressive of some general sentiment or idea. The saying about Saul mentioned just above is of this nature. Of the historical proverb there seems to be no instance in our book. 2. *Metaphorical proverbs.* These are what we should most appropriately call proverbs. They enunciate some moral truth under a figure drawn from nature or life. Such are these: "In vain is the net spread in the eyes of any bird" (ch. i. 17); "Go to the ant, thou sluggard" (ch. vi. 6); "Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly" (ch. xvii. 12); "The contentions of a wife are a continual dropping" (ch. xix. 13; xxvii. 15, 16). 3. *Enigmas.* These are either riddles like that of Samson (Judg. xiv. 14), or obscure questions which needed thought to elucidate them, and the kernel of which conveyed a moral truth. Such are the words of Agur, "Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended?" etc. (ch. xxx. 4); "The horseleech hath two daughters, Give, give" (ch. xxx. 15). 4. *Parabolic proverbs.* Herein are presented things and truths in allegorical shape. Our blessed Lord has used this mode of teaching most extensively, showing himself greater than Solomon. The best example of this class is the treatment of Wisdom, *e.g.* "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars" (ch. ix. 1). 5. *Didactical proverbs*, which give precise instruction on points of morals, religion, or behaviour, and of which the first nine chapters afford very perfect instances, and the rest of the book more concise and less developed examples.

## § 2. Contents.

The book is inscribed, "The Proverbs of Solomon, son of David, King of Israel." How this title is to be regarded, and to what portion or portions of the work it applies, we shall see further on. Then (ch. i. 1—6) follows a description of the writing and a recommendation of its importance and utility. Its object is partly moral and partly intellectual; it seeks to instruct in the way of wisdom, to edify those who have already made progress, and to discipline hearers to receive and assimilate the highest teaching. The wisdom (*chocmah*, and in the plural of "excellence," *chocmoth*) here first mentioned is no mere philosophical attainment, no merely secular advancement in the knowledge of things; it is this—it includes the knowledge of all that can be known; but it is much more. It is distinctly religious, and has for its object the directing man's life according to his highest interests, so that it is equivalent to "the fear of the Lord," that is, practical religion, and is often interchanged with that expression. It

teaches what God requires of man, how God would have man behave in all circumstances of life; it teaches piety, duty, justice. King and peasant, the old and the young, learned and ignorant, are hereby taught what is acceptable in their several stations, ages, stages of intellectual development. Later on, Wisdom is personified as a great teacher, as dwelling with God from all eternity, assisting at the creation of the world, the original of all authority on earth. We gather from various indications in our book that wisdom is regarded in a threefold respect: first, as an essential attribute of Almighty God; secondly, as revealed in creation; thirdly, as communicated to man. It is the mind or thought of God; it is that by which he created the world; it is that which regulates and informs the moral being of man. The language used in such passages as ch. viii. 23—31 adapts itself to the idea of a representation of the Son of God, an anticipation of the incarnation of Jesus our Lord; and though we cannot suppose that Solomon had any clear notion of the Divine personality of Wisdom (for which, indeed, the stern monotheism of the age was not ripe), yet we may believe that it was not alien from the mind of the Holy Spirit that the Christian Church should see in these Solomonic utterances prophecies and adumbrations of the nature and operations of the Son of God made man, of him whom St. John calls the Word. It is of Wisdom as communicated to man that the Book of Proverbs chiefly treats, indicating the only way of obtaining and securing possession of her, and the incalculable blessings that attend her acquisition and usance.

It must further be observed, in connection with this subject, that the Hebrew, in his pursuit of Wisdom, was not, like the heathen philosopher groping blindly after God, seeking to discover the great Unknown, and to form for himself a deity which should satisfy his moral instincts and solve the questions of the creation and government of the universe. The Hebrew started from the point where the heathen came to a pause. The Jew knew God already—knew him by revelation; his aim was to recognize him in all relations—in nature, in life, in morality, in religion; to see this overruling Providence in all things whatsoever; to make this great truth control private, public, social, and political circumstances and conduct. This profound conception of Divine superintendence dominates all the reflections of the thinking man, and makes him own in every occurrence, even in every natural phenomenon, an expression of the mind and will of God. Hence comes the absolute trust in the justice of the supreme Ruler, in the wise ordering of events, in the certain distribution of rewards and punishments, in the regulated dispensing of prosperity and adversity. In such ways Wisdom reveals itself, and the intelligent man recognized its presence; and idealizing and personifying it, learned to speak of it in those high terms which we read of with awe in this section, seeing therein him who is invisible.

After this introduction there follows the first part of the book (ch. i. 7—ix. 18), consisting of fifteen admonitory discourses, addressed to youth, with the view of exhibiting the excellence of wisdom, encouraging the

ardent pursuit thereof, and dissuading from folly, *i.e.* vice, which is its opposite. This is especially the hortatory or wisdom section of the book. It is usually regarded as a prelude to the collection of proverbs beginning at ch. x., and is compared to the proem of Elihu in Job xxxii. 6—22, before he addresses himself more particularly to the matter in hand. An analogous preface occurs in ch. xxii. 17—21 of our book, though this is short and intercalary. The section is divided by Delitzsch as above, though the portions are not very accurately defined by internal evidence. We have adopted this arrangement in the Commentary for convenience' sake. Commonly, each fresh warning or instruction is prefaced by the address, "My son" (*e.g.* ch. i. 8, 10, 15; ii. 1, etc.), but this is not universally the case, and no subdivisions can be accurately formed by attention to this peculiarity. The unity of the section consists in the subject and the mode of treatment, rather than in a regular course of instruction proceeding on definite lines, and leading to a climacteric conclusion. The motto of the whole is the noble maxim, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but the foolish despise wisdom and instruction." Taking this as the basis of his lecture, Solomon proceeds with his discourse. He warns against fellowship with those who entice to robbery and murder (ch. i. 8—19). Wisdom addresses those who despise her, showing them their folly in rejecting her offers, and the security of those who hearken to her counsels (ch. i. 20—33). The teacher points out the blessings arising from the sincere and earnest pursuit of Wisdom—it delivers from the path of evil, and leads to all moral and religious knowledge (ch. ii.). Now comes an exhortation to obedience and faithfulness, self-sacrificing devotion to God, perfect resignation to his will (ch. iii. 1—18). Wisdom is introduced as the creative energy of God, who becomes the Protector of all who hold fast to her (ch. iii. 19—26). One condition for the attainment of wisdom and happiness is the practice of benevolence and rectitude in dealing with others (ch. iii. 27—35). Having previously spoken in his own name, and having also brought forward Wisdom making her appeal, the teacher now gives some recollections of his own early home and his father's advice, especially on the subject of discipline and obedience (ch. iv.). He returns to a matter before glanced at as one of the chief temptations to which youth was exposed, and gives an emphatic warning against adultery and impurity, while he beautifully commends honourable marriage (ch. v.). Then he warns against suretyship (ch. vi. 1—5), sloth (vers. 6—11), deceit and malice (vers. 12—19), and adultery (vers. 20—35). Keeping to the theme of his last discourse, the moralist again denounces the detestable sin of adultery, and enforces his admonition by an example which he had himself witnessed (ch. vii.). Working round again to Wisdom, as the object of all his discourses, the author introduces her as inviting all to follow her, descanting on her excellence, her heavenly origin, her inestimable blessings. This is the most important section concerning Wisdom, which here appears as coeternal with God and

co-operating with him in creation. Thus her supreme excellence is an additional reason for hearkening to her instructions (ch. viii.). Summing up in brief the warnings which have preceded, Solomon introduces Wisdom and Folly, her rival, inviting severally to their companionship (ch. ix.).

The next part of our book contains the first great collection of Solomonic proverbs, some four hundred in number; or, as others say, three hundred and seventy-five (ch. x.—xxii. 16). They are introduced with the title, "The Proverbs of Solomon," and fully correspond to their description, being a series of apothegms, gnomes, and sentences, containing ideas moral, religious, social, political, introduced apparently without order, or with only some verbal connection or common characteristics, and certainly not arranged on any systematic scheme. Of the *form* of these maxims we shall speak later; we here only mention some of the subjects with which they are concerned. This part of the work begins by drawing comparisons between the righteous and sinners, in their general conduct, and the consequences that result therefrom (ch. x.).

"Treasures of wickedness profit nothing:
But righteousness delivereth from death" (ch. x. 2).

"He that gathereth in summer is a wise son:
But he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame" (ch. x. 5).

"The memory of the just is blessed:
But the name of the wicked shall rot" (ch. x. 7).

The same distinction is maintained in conduct to neighbours—

"A false balance is abomination to the Lord:
But a just weight is his delight" (ch. xi. 1).

"He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him:
But blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it" (ch. xi. 26).

Then we have maxims on social and domestic life—

"A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband:
But she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones" (ch. xii. 4).

"The righteous man regardeth the life of his beast:
But the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel" (ch. xii. 10).

The difference between the godly and sinners is seen in the use they respectively make of temporal goods—

"There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing:
There is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great wealth" (ch. xiii. 7).

"Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished:
But he that gathereth by labour shall have increase" (ch. xiii. 11).

The relations between rich and poor, wise and fools, exhibit the same rule—

"He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth:
But he that hath pity on the poor, happy is he!" (ch. xiv. 21).

"The foolish make a mock at guilt:
But among the upright there is favour" (ch. xiv. 9).

The state of the heart is that to which God looks—

"The Lord is far from the wicked:
But he heareth the prayer of the righteous" (ch xv. 29).

Trust in God is the only security in life—

"Commit thy works unto the Lord,
And thy purposes shall be established" (ch. xvi. 3).

"He that giveth heed unto the word shall find good:
And whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he!" (ch. xvi. 20).

Gentleness and long-suffering are recommended—

"A soft answer turneth away wrath:
But a grievous word stirreth up anger" (ch. xv. 1).

"The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water:
Therefore leave off contention, before there be quarrelling" (ch. xvii. 14).

Humility is strongly enjoined—

"Pride goeth before destruction,
And a haughty spirit before a fall" (ch. xvi. 18).

Sloth and intemperance and other vices are severely reprobated—

"Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep;
And the idle soul shall suffer hunger" (ch. xix. 15).

"Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty;
Open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread" (ch. xx. 13).

"He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man:
He that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich" (ch. xxi. 17).

A good reputation should be sought and retained—

"A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches,
And loving favour rather than silver and gold" (ch. xxii. 1).

The section ends with an apothegm about rich and poor which is capable of more than one interpretation—

"Whosoever oppresseth the poor, it is for his gain;
Whosoever giveth to the rich, it is for his loss" (ch. xxii. 16).

This is a religious statement concerning the moral government of God, affirming, on the one hand, that oppression and extortion inflicted on the poor man do in the end redound to his good; and, on the other hand, addition to the wealth of a rich man only injures him, leads him to indolence and extravagance, and sooner or later brings him to want.

There is much said in this part about the king's prerogative—

"The king's favour is toward a servant that dealeth wisely:
But his wrath shall be against him that causeth shame" (ch. xiv. 35).

"He that loveth pureness of heart,
For the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend" (ch. xxii. 11).

It is possible to take exception to the worldliness and low motives of

many of the maxims in this and other parts of the book. The wisdom often seems to be that of this world rather than of heavenly aspiration. And there have not been wanting persons who say such pronouncements cannot be deemed to be inspired, and that the work containing them was not dictated or controlled by the Holy Spirit. We will quote a few of those so-called worldly maxims. Obedience to the Law is enjoined in order to gain long life and prosperity (ch. iii. 1, 2), riches and honour (ch. viii. 18); diligence is to be desired with the view of obtaining a sufficiency, and averting poverty (ch. xx. 13); the great motive for charity and benevolence is the temporal reward and the favour of God which they secure (ch. xix. 17; xxi. 13); the same reason holds good for honouring God with our substance (ch. iii. 9, 10); humility is to be practised because it brings honour and life (ch. xxii. 4); self-control is a useful attainment because it preserves from many dangers (ch. xvi. 32; xxv. 28); a fine reputation is a worthy object of quest (ch. xxii. 1); sloth, drunkenness, and gluttony are to be avoided because they impoverish a man (ch. xxi. 17; xxiii. 20, 21; xxiv. 33, 34); we should avoid companionship with the evil because they will lead us into trouble (ch. xiii. 20; xxii. 24, etc.); it is unwise to retaliate lest we bring injury on ourselves in the end (ch. xvii. 13); we are not to exult over an enemy's fall lest we provoke Providence to punish us (ch. xxiv. 17, etc.), but rather to assist an adversary in order to secure a reward at the hands of the Lord (ch. xxv. 21, etc.); wisdom is to be sought for the temporal advantages which it brings (ch. xxiv. 3, etc.; xxi. 20).

Such are some of the maxims which confront us in this Scripture; and there can be no doubt that they seem at first sight to make virtue a matter of calculation; and though they are capable of being spiritualized and forced into a higher sphere, yet in their natural sense they do urge the pursuit of right on low grounds, and base their injunctions on selfish considerations. Is this what we should expect to find in a work confessedly appertaining to the sacred canon? Is this teaching such as tends to make a man wise unto salvation, to furnish the man of God unto good works? The whole question turns upon the due employment of secondary motives in the conduct of life. Is this method properly employed in education? Does God use it in his dealings with us? We must observe that 'Proverbs' is a book written chiefly for the edification of the young and inexperienced, the simple who were still in the early age of moral growth, those whose principles were as yet unsettled and needed direction and steadfastness. For such teaching of the highest character would be inappropriate; they could not at once appreciate more elevated doctrine; their power of assimilation was at present too feeble to admit the strong meat of heavenly lore; and they were to be led gradually to a higher stage by a slow and natural process which would make no great demand on their faith, nor conscious interruption in their daily life. It is thus that we educate children. We employ the motives

of shame and emulation, reward and punishment, pleasure and pain, as incentives to goodness and activity, or as deterrents from evil; and though the actions and habits fostered by these means cannot be regarded as perfect, and have in them an element of weakness, still they are helps on the way to virtue, and facilitate the course of higher training. By such means, imperfect as they are, the moral principle is not injured, and the pupil is placed in a position where he is open to the best influences, and prepared to receive them. We have learned thus to deal with children from God's dealings with ourselves. What are gratitude to parents, faith in teachers, love of friends, loyalty to a sovereign, but secondary motives which control our lives, and yet are not distinctly religious? We build on these feelings, we expect and cherish them, because they lead to worthy action, and without them we should be selfish, loveless, animals. They keep us in the path of duty; they take us out of ourselves, make us regard others' interests, preserve us from much that is evil. Men act on such motives; they do not generally set before themselves anything higher; and he who would teach them must take them as they are, stand on their platform, sympathize with their weakness, and, by putting himself in their position, gain their confidence, and lead them to trust his guidance when he tells them of heavenly things. On such principles much of our book is framed. The moralist knew and recognized the fact that the persons for whose benefit he wrote were not wont to act from the highest motives, that in their daily life they were influenced by selfish considerations—fear of loss, censure of neighbours, public opinion, expediency, revenge, custom, example; and, instead of declaiming against these principles and in austere virtue censuring their defects, he makes the best of them, selects such as may suit his purpose, and, while using them as supports for his warnings, he intersperses so much higher teaching that every one must see that morality has another side, and that the only real and true motive for virtue is the love of God. Such teaching loses its apparently anomalous character when we consider that it is addressed to a people who were living under a temporal dispensation, who were told to expect blessings and punishments in their present life, and who saw in all that befell them providential interferences, tokens of the moral government of their Lord and King. It is consistent with the educational object of our book, and with the gradual development of doctrine observed in the Old Testament, wherein is seen that the Law was a tutor to bring men to Christ.

The first collection of proverbs is followed by two appendices enunciating "the words of the wise"—the first contained in ch. xxii. 17—xxiv. 22; the second, introduced by the words, "These things also belong to the wise," in ch. xxiv. 23—34. The former of these commences with a personal address to the pupil, recommending these sayings to his serious attention, and then proceeds to give various precepts concerning duty to the poor, anger, suretyship, cupidity, intemperance, impurity, and to urge the young

to avoid evil men and those who would lead them astray. It ends with the weighty saying of moral and political importance—

> "My son, fear thou the Lord and the king:
> And meddle not with them that are given to change" (ch. xxiv. 21).

The second little appendix consists also of proverbial sayings, but is enlivened by a personal reminiscence of the writer, who in his walk passed by the field of the sluggard, noted its miserable condition, and drew a lesson therefrom (ch. xxiv. 30, etc.). This section also contains the almost evangelical precept—

> "Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me:
> I will render to the man according to his work."

We now arrive at the second great collection of Solomonic proverbs, "which the men of Hezekiah copied out" (ch. xxv.—xxix.). This is a series of some hundred and twenty gnomic sayings collected from previous writings, by certain scribes and historiographers, in the reign and under the superintendence of the good King Hezekiah, and intended as a supplement to the former collection, to which it bears a very marked similarity, and many sentences of which it repeats with no or very slight variations. Hezekiah, devoted to the moral and religious improvement of his people, seems to have commissioned his secretaries to examine again the works of his predecessor, and to cull from them, and from similar compilations, such maxims as would further his great purpose. Hence we do not find in this section, as in former parts, much instruction for the young, but sentences concerning government, ideas on social subjects, on behaviour, on moral restraint, and kindred topics that have to do with private and public life. There are in it some noteworthy utterances concerning the office of king—

> "The heaven for height, and the earth for depth,
> But the heart of kings is unsearchable.
> Take away dross from the silver,
> And there cometh forth a vessel for the finer;
> Take away the wicked from before the king,
> And his throne shall be established in righteousness" (ch. xxv. 3, etc.).

> "The king by judgment establisheth the land:
> But he that exacteth gifts overthroweth it" (ch. xxix. 4).

There is also a *mashal* hymn in praise of agriculture, which looks like a protest against the growing luxury of the age, and a call to the simpler, purer life of earlier days—

> "Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks,
> And look well to thy herds.
> For riches are not for ever:
> And doth the crown endure unto all generations?
> The hay is carried, and the tender grass showeth itself,

And the herbs of the mountains are gathered in.
The lambs are for thy clothing,
And the goats are the price of the field:
And there will be goats' milk enough for thy food,
For the food of thy household,
And maintenance for thy maidens" (ch. xxvii. 23, etc.).

There follow three appendices of various origin and authorship. The first contains "The words of Agur, the son of Jakeh, the oracle," addressed by him to two of his disciples (according to one interpretation of the words, "The man spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal"), and containing proverbial and enigmatical sayings (ch. xxx.). This unknown author begins with a confession of his faith, a humble depreciation of his own acquirements, and an acknowledgment of the fruitlessness of endeavouring to comprehend the nature of God. There is much here and in other parts of the section to remind us of the musings of Job, who felt and expressed the same perplexity. The poet then utters two prayers to God, that he may be delivered from vanity and lies, and may be supplied with daily food—

"Give me neither poverty nor riches;
Feed me with the food that is needful for me" (ch. xxx. 8).

Then succeeds a curious collection of pictures, grouped into three or four sentences each, each stich having a certain connection in language and idea. Thus we have four wicked generations, denoting the universal prevalence of the sins therein denounced; four things insatiable; four things inscrutable; four intolerable; four exceeding wise; four of stately presence. If these utterances mean no more than what at first sight they seem to imply, they merely express the feelings of one who was a keen observer of man and nature, and took a peculiar method of enforcing his remarks: "There are three things, yea, four," etc. But if under these apparently simple statements of fact there are hidden great spiritual verities, then we have here examples of dark sayings, enigmas, difficulties, in the solution of which the opening of the Book promised assistance. That such is the case many early commentators, followed by some modern writers, have stated without hesitation; and much labour has been expended in spiritualizing the dicta of the text. Certainly in their literal shape these sentences are not of the highest type, nor distinctly religious; and it is but natural that, feeling this, expositors should endeavour to raise these commonplace and secular allusions to a more exalted sphere.

The second appendix (ch. xxxi. 1—9) is entitled, "The words of King Lemuel, the oracle which his mother taught him." The chief interest lies in the question—Who is Lemuel? (see § 3). The section is a brief lesson addressed to kings, chiefly on the subjects of impurity and drunkenness.

The third appendix, which forms the conclusion of the book (ch. xxxi. 10—31), consists of the celebrated description of the virtuous woman, the type of the ideal wife, mother, and mistress. It is what is called an

acrostic *mashal*, i.e. each verse commences with one of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, in the usual alphabetical order. Taking the manners and customs of his age and country as the basis of his pictures, the author delineates a woman of the highest attainments, strong-minded yet feminine, active, practical, prudent, economical. Her husband trusts her wholly; she manages the household, keeps her servants to their work, and herself sets an example of diligence; she always has funds in hand to make purchases at the right moment, and to provide for the needs of her household. She is as wise as she is beautiful, as generous and charitable as she is just; her virtue redounds to the credit of husband and children, and all connected with her.

"Her children rise up, and call her blessed;
Her husband also, and he praiseth her, saying,
Many daughters have done virtuously,
But thou excellest them all.
Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain:
But a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.
Give her of the fruit of her hands;
And let her works praise her in the gates."

After the many passages which speak of the degradation of woman, which introduce her in the most odious light, as the temptress of youth, and the very road to death; in contrast, too, to numerous paragraphs and allusions which represent home-life as spoiled by a contentious, jealous, and extravagant wife,—it is soothing to come upon this noble description, and to close the volume with this picture of what a woman is when she is animated by love of God and duty.

We may add a slight sketch of the theology and ethics which meet us in this book. There is little distinctive Judaism. In this respect the similarity to the Book of Job is remarkable. The name of Israel is not once mentioned; there is no allusion to the Passover or the other great festivals; there is not a word about idolatry, not a warning against the worship of false gods; the observation of the sabbath is not referred to, nor the payment of tithes. At the same time, the Law is often mentioned, and the ceremonies enjoined therein are tacitly regarded as being in full use and practice (see ch. xxviii. 4, 9; xiv. 9; vii. 14, etc.). It is doubtless a providential arrangement that so little prominence is given to the external obligations of the Hebrew religion; by this reticence the book was better adapted to become a world-wide teacher; it spoke to Jew and Gentile alike; it taught a morality with which all good men could sympathize; it penetrated wherever Greek literature was understood and valued. Of its wide influence the Book of Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus are special proofs.

The dogmatic statements of "the Proverbs" are in complete accord with the religion of Israel as we know it from other sources. The special name of God in the form Jehovah occurs everywhere throughout the

book, and is used more often than Elohim, thus emphasizing the great truth of which the incommunicable name was the symbol. God is incomprehensible (ch. xxx. 4), infinitely wise (ch. iii. 19, etc.; viii.), omniscient, omnipresent (ch. xv. 3). He created all things out of nothing (ch. viii. 22, etc.); he governs and preserves them by his providence (ch. xvi. 4); he teaches men by chastening and affliction (ch. iii. 11, 12); his care watches over and rewards the good, while he punishes the evil (ch. xii. 2); the poor and the lowly are special objects of his love (ch. xxii. 4; xvi. 19; xxiii. 11); allowing to man the exercise of free-will (ch. i. 24), God helps him by his grace to make a right choice (ch. xvi. 1, 3, 9; xx. 24), because he loves him (ch. viii. 17, 31), and wills his happiness (ch. viii. 35). Of the doctrine concerning wisdom in this book we have spoken above. Of Messianic hopes no distinct trace is found. Whether the future life is asserted has often been questioned; but it is difficult to believe that this great truth is wholly neglected in this book, as we know that long before Solomon's time it was generally admitted, and we should confidently expect traces of its influence in the treatment of man's destiny.

> "In the way of righteousness is life;
> And in the pathway thereof there is no death" (ch. xii. 28).
>
> "The wicked is thrust down in his evil-doing:
> But the righteous hath hope in his death" (ch. xiv. 32).

These are not dogmatic assertions of future rewards and punishments, but they are consistent with such a belief, and may well imply it. In the same light we may consider the many passages which speak of the recompense that awaits actions good or evil. The retribution promised is not fully satisfied by anything that befalls a man in this life as the result of his conduct; both the reward and the punishment are spoken of in terms which seem to look to something beyond the grave—something which death did not end, and which nothing here was adequate to fulfil. If it is said that impurity plunges a man into the depths of hell (ch. ii. 18; vii. 11), that sinners remain in the congregation of the dead (ch. xxi. 16), and that their expectation perishes when they die (ch. xi. 7), it is also announced that righteousness delivereth from death (ch. xi. 4), that there is a sure reward for the godly (ch. xi. 18), and that the righteous hath hope in his death (ch. xiv. 32).

The moral teaching of our book may be grouped under various heads—the result of experience, the outcome of thought, controlled by the strongest sense of religion and an overruling Providence.

1. *Duty to God.* The first of all duties, the foundation of all morality and religion, is the fear of God (ch. i. 7). This must be followed by perfect trust in him and distrust of self (ch. iii. 5, etc.). The externals of religious worship are not to be neglected (ch. xiv. 9; xx. 25), but God looks chiefly to the heart (ch. xvii. 3); it is this which makes men acceptable or abominable in his sight (ch. xi. 20; xv. 8). If we sin, we must confess

our guilt (ch. xxviii. 13), meekly submit to his chastisement (ch. iii. 11, etc.).

2. *Duty to ourselves.* The first and chief lesson enforced is the utter necessity of avoiding fleshly lusts and evil companionship (ch. i. 10, etc.; xiii. 20). Among deadly sins to be avoided special mention is made of pride, the enemy of wisdom and hateful to God (ch. xvi. 5, 18, 19); avarice and cupidity, which lead to fraud and wrong (ch. xxviii. 20), and produce only a transitory profit (ch. xxiii. 4, 5); envy, which is as rottenness in the bones (ch. xiv. 30); luxury and intemperance, which, as prevalent in the more artificial state of society, induced by wealth and contact with other nations, are most strongly reprobated and shown to ensure most fatal consequences (ch. ii. 18; xxiii. 1, etc., 20, etc., 29, etc.); anger, which leads to folly, causes and embitters quarrels, makes a man detestable (ch. xiv. 17; xv. 1; xx. 3); idleness, which ruins equally a man's character and property (ch. xiii. 4; vi. 6, etc.). Then much is said about the necessity of guarding the tongue, in the power of which are death and life (ch. xii. 13, etc.; xviii. 21), and avoiding self-praise (ch. xii. 9; xxvii. 2).

3. *Duty to our neighbours.* We should sympathize with the afflicted, and try to cheer them (ch. xii. 25; xvi. 24); help the poor in their need because they are brethren, children of the All-Father (ch. iii. 27, etc.; xiv. 31). A neighbour should be judged honestly and truthfully (ch. xvii. 15; xxiv. 23, etc.); with him we are to live in peace (ch. iii. 29, etc.; xvii. 13, etc.), never slandering him (ch. x. 10, etc.; xi. 12, etc.), hiding his faults if possible (ch. x. 12), encouraging sincere friendship (ch. xviii. 24), and being strictly honest in all transactions with him (ch. xi. 1; xx. 14; xxii. 28).

4. *Domestic duties.* Pious parents are a blessing to children (ch. xx. 7), and should teach them holy lessons from their earliest years (ch. i. 8; iv. 1, etc.), training them in the right way (ch. xxii. 6), correcting them when they do wrong (ch. xxiii. 13, etc.). Children for their part should attend to the instruction of elders, and gladden their parents' hearts by prompt obedience and strict life (ch. x. 1; xxiii. 15, etc.). Let the mother of the family realize her high position, and be the crown of her husband (ch. xii. 4), and build up her house (ch. xiv. 1). If she needs a model, let her endeavour to emulate the strong-minded virtuous woman (ch. xxxi. 10, etc.). Be it far from her to imitate the contentious wife, whose peevish ill temper is like the continuous dropping of a leaky roof, and renders family life insupportable (ch. xix. 13; xxv. 24). Servants should be carefully selected (ch. xvii. 2) and wisely treated, that they may not rise beyond their station and prove arrogant and assuming (ch. xix. 10; xxix. 21).

5. *Maxims relating to civil life and political economy.* The king's throne is established by righteousness, mercy, and truth (ch. xvi. 12; xx. 28); his sentence is regarded as indefeasible (ch. xvi. 10); he pursues the godless with righteous punishment (ch. xx. 8, 26), protects the weak (ch. xxxi. 7, etc.), favours the pious and obedient (ch. xvi. 15; xix. 12). He

is no oppressor, nor covetous (ch. xxviii. 16); and he gathers round him faithful counsellors (ch. xiv. 35), whose advice he takes in all important matters (ch. xxiv. 6). By such means he increases the stability of his throne; he enables his subjects to advance in prosperity and virtue, and finds his honour in the multitude of his people (ch. xi. 14; xiv. 28). It is the duty of men to render obedience to the powers that be; punishment speedily overtakes the rebellious (ch. xvi. 14, etc.; xix. 12; xx. 2). God has ordained that there shall be rich and poor in the land (ch. xxii. 2); the rich ought to help the poor (ch. iii. 27, etc.; xiv. 21), and not treat them roughly (ch. xviii. 23). All commercial transactions should be conducted with the strictest honesty; the withholding of corn is specially denounced (ch. xi. 26). It is a foolish act to stand security for another's debt; you are sure to smart for it, and then you can blame only yourself (ch. vi. 1, etc.; xxii. 26, etc.).

Among miscellaneous sayings we may note the following:—

"Who can say, I have made my heart clean,
I am pure from my sin?" (ch. xx. 9).

"It is as sport to a fool to do wickedness;
And so is wisdom to a man of understanding" (ch. x. 23).

"A wise man is strong;
Yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength" (ch. xxiv. 5).

"The wicked flee when no man pursueth:
But the righteous are bold as a lion" (ch. xxviii. 1).

"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick:
But when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life" (ch. xiii. 12).

"The path of the righteous is as the shining light,
That shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (ch. iv. 18).

"The wicked earneth deceitful wages:
But he that soweth righteousness hath a sure reward" (ch. xi. 18).

"The hoary head is a crown of glory;
It shall be found in the way of righteousness" (ch. xvi. 31).

## § 3. Authorship and Date.

Uncritical antiquity, followed in modern times by undiscriminating conservatism, had no hesitation in ascribing the whole Book of Proverbs to one author, Solomon, King of Israel. It is true that three portions of the work are prefaced with his name (ch. i. 1; x. 1; xxv. 1); but two other sections are attributed respectively to Agur (ch. xxx. 1) and Lemuel (ch. xxxi. 1); so that apparently the volume itself professes to be composed by three authors; and besides this, there are two appendices containing "the words of the wise" (ch. xxii. 17, etc.; xxiv. 23, etc.), which must be distinguished from those of Solomon. It was natural indeed for the Jews to affix their great king's name to the whole collection. He is said to have

spoken three thousand proverbs (*mashal*, 1 Kings iv. 32), a statement which implies that they had been collected into a volume, and the present work was reasonably supposed to form part of this surprisingly large storehouse of wisdom. But a more careful examination of the book necessitates the opinion of divided authorship; contents and language point to differences of date and composition; the repetition of the same proverb in identical or almost identical language, the recurrence of the same thought varied only in actual wording, the adoption of one member of an old maxim with the attachment of a different hemistich,—these blemishes could hardly have been allowed to remain in the work of a single author. There are also variations in the language, which in a marked manner differentiate the several parts, so that we are forced to allow a composite character to the work; and the difficult task is imposed of endeavouring to find some certainty on the question of its origin.

In one place alone does the book itself afford direct help towards determining the date of any portion. The section copied by Hezekiah's friends from previous records must have been put together in that monarch's reign, between two and three hundred years after the time of Solomon, who was regarded as the author of those sayings. The persons engaged in the compilation may have been those mentioned in 2 Kings xviii. 18—Shebna the secretary, and Joah, son of Asaph, the chronicler, and very possibly the Prophet Isaiah himself, as a Jewish tradition relates. Whether after so long an interval they simply reproduced his utterances, unadulterated and unaugmented, might *primâ facie* be doubted; a careful examination of the section shows that this doubt is well founded. If there are many sentences therein which in form and substance have a flavour of high antiquity, and may well have flowed from Solomon's lips and have been current in his age, there are also many which exhibit the artificiality of a later period, and presuppose a condition of things far removed from the palmy era of the Hebrew monarchy. Most critics have come to the conclusion that the earliest portion is that which is called the first great collection, contained in ch. xi.—xxii. 16. The style throughout is simple and chaste, the maxims are mostly comprised in antithetical distichs, each verse being complete in itself. This, according to Ewald, is the oldest form of the technical proverb. It is noticed that there are many phrases and expressions which are peculiar to this section, *e.g.* "fountain of life," "tree of life," "snares of death," "hand in hand," "whisperer, tale-bearer," "shall not go unpunished," "but for a moment," etc. But arguments derived from peculiarities of structure and language are generally uncertain, and strike readers in different ways. A surer criterion is found in the contents of a composition, in the references which it contains, in the circumstances which it mentions, or the environments which it implies. Now, if we compare this first collection with that of Hezekiah's "men," we shall note some very marked differences, which have been observed by many critics. There is evidently a change in the political situation. In the former section the monarchy is

at its best. It is deemed "an abomination to kings to commit wickedness" (ch. xvi. 12); their "throne is established by righteousness," they "delight in righteous lips, and love him that speaketh right;" there is "life in the king's countenance, and his favour is like the latter rain" (ch. xvi. 13, etc.); mercy and truth are his safeguard, and uphold his throne (ch. xx. 28). A changed picture is presented in the Hezekiah collection. Here we have a people oppressed by a prince wanting in understanding (ch. xxviii. 19), mourning under the rule of a wicked king (ch. xxix. 2), who is likened to a roaring lion and a ranging bear (ch. xxviii. 15). There is reference to bribery and extortion in high places (ch. xxix. 4), change of dynasties (ch. xxviii. 2), unworthy favourites (ch. xxv. 5; xxix. 12)—all of which circumstances point to a political situation other than that in the former part; a period, in fact, when experience had brought knowledge of evil, and rulers had been found to be antagonistic to the interests of their subjects, liable to the worst vices, open to corrupting influences. It is impossible to suppose that many of the maxims, even in the former collection, were spoken by Solomon. What experience would make him say that the king's honour lay in the multitude of his people, and his destruction in their paucity (ch. xiv. 28)? Or, again, that a pious wife is the best of blessings (ch. xii. 4; xviii. 22), while a contentious one is a torment (ch. xix. 13, 14; xxi. 9, 19)? Such statements as these last presuppose a monogamous man, not one notorious for polygamy. Then, would Solomon have discoursed thus about himself, asserting that a Divine sentence is his word, and that his judgments are irrefragable (ch. xvi. 10), that his wrath is as messengers of death, that his favour is light and life (ch. xvi. 14, 15), that his anger is like the roaring of a lion, and he puts to the torture those who offend him, while his only claim to support at God's hands is the mercy and truth which his life exhibits (ch. xx. 2, 26, 28)? However cast in Solomonic mould, these sentences cannot have had Solomon for their author; so we must conclude that, together with his genuine sayings, a multitude of gnomes were extant, of various ages and origins, which were attributed popularly to the great king, as the founder of that kind of gnomic poetry, the great master of proverbial philosophy. That both sections contain very many sayings which had him for their author, it is reasonable to suppose, and there is nothing to discredit this notion. From what is said of his remarkable wisdom, and regarding the form which philosophy assumes in the East, we might expect such productions from his mind. If he had for his object the instruction of his people, the training of them in sound views of life and in the practice of virtue and religion, he would embody his views in terse and pithy sentences, charming the imagination and easy to be remembered; he would thus apply Divine truths to the conduct and regulation of daily life. This precedent was doubtless followed by other sages, and thus in addition to and in connection with the proverbial lore which is accumulated in every nation by the experience of ages, there grew up a gradually increasing store of maxims and apothegms, of a higher order than the

vulgar sort, which was enshrined in carefully balanced sentences, and handed down as a precious heirloom to succeeding generations.

These considerations, which seem well grounded, account for the composite character of the Book of Proverbs. Many minds and many ages have been concerned in the collection; it has suffered from interpolation, transposition, addition; various editors have arranged and rearranged the materials before them; passages reflect the golden age of Israel's monarchy; passages belong to such times as those of Jeroboam II. and his successors. It has become impossible to assign assured dates to the several parts, and the attempt has led critics to ludicrous conclusions, some from the same data attributing to Solomon compositions which others affix to post-exilian times. Out of the medley of varying opinions we gather the following conclusions. When the men of Hezekiah made their collection, which is headed with the words, "These are also proverbs of Solomon," there existed already a body of maxims known as Solomon's, to which they were minded to make an addition from sources open to them. This previously existing collection we may reasonably suppose to be that which at present stands immediately before theirs, viz. ch. x. 1—xxii. 16, and which would thus be the older portion. It is expressly called "the proverbs of Solomon;" and there can be no reasonable doubt that the traditional account which assigned it to the son of David was in the main correct. Knowing the facts of Solomon's later career, no collector would have had the hardihood to attribute many of the utterances therein to him, had they not been universally recognized as his. They are doubtless the effusion of earlier days, the collected outpouring of the happy time when his heart was whole and his faith unimpaired; but who arranged it, or when it received its present shape, can only be conjectured. It is not to be supposed that Solomon sat down and deliberately composed a book of proverbs such as we now possess. It is said that he *spake* three thousand proverbs. He must have had scribes and secretaries who collected the wisdom that flowed from his lips during the various circumstances of his life and in the various stages of his career (1 Kings iv. 3). This formed the nucleus round which accretions gathered in the course of time, the acumen of Hebrew critics failing to distinguish the genuine from the spurious. From the great mass of proverbial literature thus formed Hezekiah's friends made a new selection. What became of the rest of the older collection, which is not comprised in our present volume, cannot be known. It was evidently preserved among the archives of the kingdom which contained accounts, not only of the monarch's acts, but also of his wisdom (1 Kings xi. 41). As we have said above, the repetitions of the same proverb in different places indicate a change of authors or editors, deriving their materials from the same source, oral or documentary, but writing independently.

The two appendices to this section containing the "words of the wise" (ch. xxii. 17—xxiv.) exhibit repetitions which again would indicate a variety of authors, or a lack of care in selection. Some passages found in

other parts of the book occur also in these two sections. Thus ch. xxiv. 20 (as we shall notice directly) appears at ch. xiii. 9; ch. xxiv. 23, "To have respect of persons is not good," at ch. xxviii. 21; and ch. xxiv. 33, 34 at ch. vi. 10, 11. The first of the appendices is evidently later than the first collection; the structure of the verses is less terse, the parallelism is not so strongly marked, sometimes entirely wanting, and the sense is often not completed under three or even five verses. A comparison of the way in which the repetitions above indicated are introduced would lead to the impression that the former was the earlier, and that the appendix-writer derived certain sentences from that. Thus in ch. xxii. 14 we have the statement, "The mouth of strange women is a deep pit;" but in ch. xxiii. 27 this is introduced as a reason for the advice in the previous verse, and amplified thus: "For a whore is a deep ditch, and a strange woman is a narrow pit." So the verse, ch. xi. 14, is enlarged into two in ch. xxiv. 5, 6; and the unvarnished gnome (ch. xiii. 9), "The light of the righteous rejoiceth, but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out," becomes, under the manipulation of the transcriber, a warning in quite a different direction: "Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious at the wicked; for there will be no reward to the evil man; the lamp of the wicked shall be put out" (ch. xxiv. 19, 20). Who can doubt that the simpler form of these sayings is the original? Hitzig claims an exilian date for this section on the strength of an Aramaic colouring which other critics deny, and a supposed borrowing of passages or phrases from Jeremiah which seems to be wholly imaginary. How could a poet, banished from his own country, make a point of not removing the ancient landmark (ch. xxii. 28; xxiii. 10), or enjoin his hearers to serve their king and avoid innovators (ch. xxiv. 21)? There is, indeed, nothing to guide us to any certainty in the question, but the style and language reflect those of the first portion of our book, and it may possibly have been written about the same period. As in ch. iii. 31, so often in this section (*e.g.* ch. xxii. 22; xxiv. 15, etc.), there are hints of oppressive rulers and iniquitous governors, which would lead us to think of Manasseh and his like. It is reasonable to conclude that this appendix was added after Hezekiah's time by an editor who had before him the first great collection. The same holds good concerning the second little appendix (ch. xxiv. 23—34), which seems to be of contemporaneous origin. Nowack, by comparing the two similar passages in ch. vi. 10, 11 and xxiv. 33, 34, concludes that the former is original, and that the appendix-writer has somewhat altered the sentence in transferring it to his own repertory.

We have in some degree indicated what may be reasonably determined about the date and authorship of the central portions of our book. It remains to investigate the beginning and the closing sections. The introduction (ch. i. 1—6), describing the character and intent of the work, applies virtually not only to the collection immediately succeeding (ch. i. 7—ix.), but to other parts of the book, whether the writer had these parts

before him or not. Who is the author of this first section, the proem, as it has been called, is a matter of much dispute. There is some difficulty in attributing it to Solomon himself. The opening words do not necessarily imply that Solomon wrote all that follows. "The Proverbs of Solomon" may be introduced as a formal heading of what may be a gathering of fragments from many quarters, composed in Solomon's spirit and instinct with his wisdom, but not actually received from his lips or writings. There are passages which seem to be derived from Isaiah's prophecy; *e.g.* ch. ii. 15, "Whose ways are crooked, and they froward in their paths," is parallel to Isa. lix. 8; ch. i. 24, 26, 27, to Isa. lxv. 12 and lxvi. 4. But the language is not identical, and the prophet may have been indebted to the moralist. More to the purpose is the fact that the second part (ch. x. 1—xxii. 16) is superscribed "The Proverbs of Solomon," which would be unnecessary and misleading if the first part was also his composition. To this it may be answered that this title is more especially appropriate to the section as containing proverbs rather than hortatory addresses; and if introduced by a different editor the discrepancy is easily accounted for. Others insist that the religious ideas and the form in which they are expressed are quite foreign to Solomon's time and standpoint. If the technical form of the *mashal*, consisting of distichs displaying well-balanced and antithetical clauses, be the form which alone appertains to Solomon's age, then it must be allowed that the introductory section contains very few proper *mashals*, but rather is composed of odes of varying length, in which, as it were incidentally, a few *mashals* are inserted. The terse single proverb is remarkably absent, and descriptive poems, lengthy exhortations, and developments of a given truth, are the common characteristics of the piece. Here again, however, there is no certainty that Solomon regarded himself as bound to keep to one law in the composition of proverbs, or that he did not employ other and more elaborate methods of expressing his sentiments. The presumption is certainly against the two parts having the same author, but the idea is not irrational. Delitzsch has produced another argument. He dwells upon the different idea of Wisdom afforded by the two sections. In the former, Wisdom appears as an independent personality, dwelling with God before all creation, and operating in the production of the visible world, and busying itself with the affairs of men; in the latter, Wisdom is a moral quality, which is grounded in the fear of God, teaches men to recognize the truth, and to regulate their lives according to the rules of religion. Doubtless the view of Wisdom in the proem is an advance on and a development of the conception in the other section. Speculation had progressed, schools of wise men had been formed, preceptors addressed their pupils as "son," and Wisdom was regarded as the chief motor of moral and religious action. The *chokma* is no longer an idea, a code, or a subjective thought; it has an objective existence, carried back to eternity, fellow-worker with God. This consideration is decisive against the identity of authorship in the two

parts, and disposes one to allow more weight to the undecisive arguments mentioned above. The parænetical form adopted in the introduction, so different from the proverb proper, points to the influence of the prophetic element, hardly arrived at public utterances and documentary testimony in Solomon's time, but afterwards the great power in the state and the common support of the religious life. Many passages breathe the spirit of Deuteronomy, which in the minds of some critics would at once be a proof of very late origin, but of course have no such look for those who hold the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Others are remarkably similar to parts of the Book of Job, and are evidently more or less borrowed from that source; but as the date of that writing is still undecided, nothing can be deduced from this fact. Taking all that has been said into consideration, and carefully weighing the opinions which have been put forth on the question, we regard this section as the composition of one author, and *that* not Solomon, except in so far as it breathes his spirit and possibly embodies many of his sayings. It is no argument against this last suggestion, that Solomon would not be found discoursing against unchastity of which his own later life was a flagrant example. There is no reason why this wisest of men should not have uttered such warnings in the earlier and purer part of his career. It was probably arranged in its present shape by the editor of the first great collection of Solomonic proverbs, and placed by him as an introduction to this work. The eloquence of the piece is of the very highest order, and exhibits the inspiration of a true prophet, but the writer must remain unknown. It is only natural to consider that such magnificent passages as those contained in ch. vii. and ix. were composed by a man of no mean attainments, and one can think of no one able to write them but Solomon himself, especially inspired by God with wisdom beyond all men; but this impression does not vanquish opposing criticism, and we can only concede that the section is worthy of Solomon, and probably contains some of his lore, garnered and lovingly reproduced by a kindred spirit.

The last two chapters (xxx. and xxxi.) present some difficult questions, which have always exercised the ingenuity of critics, and which cannot even now be determined with any certainty. Ch. xxx. opens (according to the Authorized Version) thus: "The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, even the prophecy: the man spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal." Nothing whatever is known about any of the persons here supposed to be mentioned. The name Ithiel, indeed, occurs once in Nehemiah (xi. 7); but the Benjamite thus called can have nothing to do with the person in our verse. It is conjectured that Agur was some well-known sage, Hebrew or foreign, whose sayings were thought by some late editor to be worthy of a place beside the proverbs of Solomon. Jewish interpreters have explained the names symbolically of Solomon himself. Agur may mean "Gatherer," "Convener," from *agar*, "to collect," and is applied to the wise king, either as "master of assemblies" (Eccles. xii. 11), or collector of wisdom and maxims, elsewhere called *koheleth* (Eccles. i. 1), though

this interpretation of the latter word is very questionable. *Jakeh* is rendered "Obedient" or "Pious," so "the Gatherer, son of the Obedient," would designate Solomon, son of David. St. Jerome countenances the allegorical interpretation by rendering, "Verba Congregantis filii Vomentis." But one sees no reason why the king, whose name has been freely used in the previous sections, should now be introduced under an allegorical appellation. Certainly, much that is contained in the chapter may be regarded as symbolical, but that is scarcely sufficient reason for making the teacher also symbolical. Why, again, should this section be separated from the rest of Solomon's words, and not incorporated with the great body of his collection? What object could there be in introducing another batch of the king's proverbs after the "words of the wise"? If this piece had been in existence in early times, Hezekiah would surely not have omitted placing it in its proper position in his own repertory. The contents, however, leave no doubt on the subject. Solomon never could have uttered what follows:—

> "Surely I am more brutish than any man,
> And have not the understanding of a man;
> And I have not learned wisdom" (ch. xxx. 2, 3).

Nor could he be blindly groping in darkness after the Creator (ch. xxx. 4); nor pray that he might have neither poverty nor riches (ch. xxx. 8). The notion, therefore, that Solomon himself is here intended must be surrendered as wholly unfounded. Some have attempted to find Agur's nationality in the word translated "the prophecy" (*hamassa*). *Massa*, "burden," is the word generally used to denote a prophet's message, either from its being borne by him to the appointed place, or expressive of its grievous nature and awful importance. The term does not seem altogether appropriate to the utterances that follow, and Hitzig has started a theory which makes the word denote the country from which Agur came. The old Venetian Version had given: Λόγοι Ἀγούρου υἱέως Ἰακέως τοῦ Μασάου, "the words of Agur son of Jakeh the Masaite." Now, there was a son of Ishmael named Massa (Gen. xxv. 14; 1 Chron. i. 30), who may have given his name to a tribe and a district, as did his brothers Duma and Tema (Isa. xxi. 11, 14). It is mentioned in 1 Chron. iv. 38, etc., that certain Simeonites in the days of Hezekiah made a raid into the country of Edom, and established themselves in Mount Seir, driving out the Amalekites whom they found settled there. Starting from this locality and moving northwards towards Damascus, according to Hitzig, they set up the kingdom of Massa, and hence issued this piece of poetry not long after the first establishment. This, in his view, would account for the peculiarities of dialect found in the composition. Others have found a Massa in the town Mismije, on the north of the Hauran; others place it on the north of the Persian Gulf. In fact, nothing is known with certainty about the country; its very existence is problematical. The most likely supposition is that Agur was an Edomite, a worshipper of Jehovah, and well acquainted with

Israelitish literature, being one of the sages for whom Edom was celebrated (1 Kings iv. 30), a man whose sayings were deemed of sufficient value and inspiration to insert in the sacred canon, though he, like Job, was not one of the chosen people. The more probable rendering of the second hemistich of ver. 1 of this chapter, which is given in the margin of the Revised Version, is noted in the Exposition.

As Agur is considered a symbolical name of Solomon, so is Lemuel in the next chapter, which opens thus: "The words of King Lemuel, the burden which his mother taught him." Lemuel (or Lemoel, as ver. 4) means "Unto God," equivalent to "Dedicated to God;" and it is supposed to be applied to Solomon, who from infancy was dedicated to God, and called by him Jedidiah, "Beloved of the Lord" (2 Sam. xii. 25). But there is no good reason for supposing Solomon to be designated Lemuel. If Agur meant Solomon, why is the name now suddenly changed? And how can we suppose the following address to have been spoken by Bathsheba, the adulteress and virtual murderess? This is a difficulty not resolved by regarding "the mother" as a personification of the Hebrew Church, which is an arbitrary assumption invented to meet an objection, rather than necessitated by an observation of evidence. Those who saw in Massa the country of Agur's residence, would here likewise translate, "the words of Lemuel, King of Massa," and weave a pleasing fiction whereby Agur and Lemuel become the sons of a Queen of Massa, who is supposed to have been, like the Queen of Sheba, a diligent seeker of wisdom. This may be true, but it is a mere conjecture, which cannot be verified. If it is accepted, Lemuel would be an Ishmaelite, whose home was in North Arabia, and who belonged to the company of the wise men for whom Arabia was proverbial. At the same time, it is unlikely that the production of an alien, particularly of a jealously regarded Ishmaelite, should be admitted to the sacred canon. Of course, there is the difficulty concerning the origin of the Book of Job, but as that controversy is not settled, we cannot regard this as an objection. Laying aside the theory of Lemuel being a non-Israelite, we must regard the word as the appellation of an ideal king, whether the poet looked back to Solomon or Hezekiah, whom he represents as taught by a careful mother in the way of piety and justice. Concerning the date of these appendices there is little to guide us in our determination, except that the language points to composition at a later period than the former portions of the book. We have many dialectical variations, Aramaic and Arabic expressions, which do not occur in the earlier sections, and which were not, as far as we know, current in Southern Israel before Hezekiah's reign, nor probably for some long time after. The free, terse proverb is now wholly wanting, a strained, mechanical composition taking its place; we have enigmas instead of maxims, laboured odelets instead of neat distichs—productions in quite different style from those hitherto handled, and showing a decline of creative power and a tendency to make artificiality and mechanical skill take the place of thought and novelty. The passages which are similar to,

and may have been derived from, Job cannot be used in proof of the late date of these sections, as the era of that work is undetermined; but the painful consciousness of man's ignorance in the presence of the great Creator, which meets us, as in Job, so in this appendix (ch. xxx. 2, etc.), implies a speculative activity very foreign to the earlier Hebrew mind, and indicative of contact with other elements, and acquaintance with philosophical questions far removed from the times of the primordial monarchy. Some, accordingly, have attributed the pieces to post-exilian days; but there is not a shadow of proof for this, not an expression or an allusion which confirms such a notion; and Delitzsch is probably correct when he dates their production at the end of the seventh or the beginning of the sixth century B.C.

The closing poem, the praise of the virtuous woman, is probably still later, and certainly by a different hand. The alphabetical ode is not found till the very latest period of Hebrew poetry, though it is impossible to affix any definite date for its production.

## § 4. General Character.

The whole Book of the Proverbs is rhythmical in construction, and it is rightly so printed in the Revised Version as to exhibit this characteristic. The great feature of Hebrew poetry, as every one knows, is parallelism, the balancing of thought against thought, corresponding in form and often in sound, so that one line is an echo of the other. The second member is either equivalent to the first, or contrasted with it or similar to it in construction; the whole may consist of only two lines forming a distich, which is the normal type of proverb, or of three or four or more; but all contain one thought expanded on parallel lines. The various shapes which are thus assumed by the sentences in our book are thus noted.

The simplest and earliest form is the *distich*, a sentence consisting of two lines balanced one with the other, like—

> "A wise son maketh a glad father:
> But a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother" (ch. x. 1).

The second part of our book (ch. x. 1—xxii. 16) consists mainly of such sentences. Sometimes the sense extends over three lines, forming a *tristich*, when the thought in the first line is repeated in the second before the conclusion is reached. Thus—

> "Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar
> With a pestle among bruised corn,
> Yet will not his foolishness depart from him" (ch. xxvii. 22).

Or the idea in the second line is developed by a contrast in the third—

> "Whoso causeth the upright to go astray in an evil way,
> He shall fall himself into his own pit:
> But the perfect shall inherit good" (ch. xxviii. 10).

Or the additional line produces a proof in confirmation—

"Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not;
And go not to thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity:
Better is a neighbour that is near than a brother that is far off" (ch. xxvii. 10).

Of *tetrastichs* we find some instances, where the last two lines make the application of the others—

"Take away the dross from the silver,
And there cometh forth a vessel for the finer:
Take away the wicked from before the king,
And his throne shall be established in righteousness" (ch. xxv. 4, 5).

In the maxims consisting of five lines, *pentastichs*, the last two or three generally supply or develop the reason of the preceding—

"Weary not thyself to be rich:
Cease from thine own wisdom.
Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?
For riches certainly make themselves wings,
Like an eagle that flieth toward heaven" (ch. xxiii. 4, 5).

Of a proverb in six lines, *hexastich*, we have a few instances—

"Deliver them that are carried away unto death,
And those that are ready to be slain see that thou hold back.
If thou sayest, Behold, we knew not this;
Doth not he that weigheth the hearts consider it?
And he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it?
And shall not he render to every man according to his work?" (ch. xxiv. 11, 12).

Of the *heptastich* there is only one example, viz. ch. xxiii. 6—8.

The connected verses in ch. xxiii. 22—25 may be regarded as an *octastich*, but when thus extended the proverb becomes a *mashal* ode, like Ps. xxv., xxxiv., xxxvii. Of this character are the introductory part, which consists of fifteen didactic poems, the hortatory address (ch. xxii. 17—21), the warning against drunkenness (ch. xxiii. 29—35), and many other passages, especially the praise of the virtuous woman (ch. xxxi. 10, etc.), written in the form of an alphabetical acrostic.

The form of the proverb being such as we have described, it remains to distinguish the different kinds of parallelisms employed which have led to their being arranged into various classes.

1. The simplest species is the *synonymous*, where the second hemistich merely repeats the first, with some little alteration of words, in order to enforce the truth presented in the former; *e.g.*—

"The liberal soul shall be made fat;
And he that watereth shall be watered also himself" (ch. xi. 25).

"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty;
And he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city" (ch. xvi. 32).

2. The *antithetic* presents in the second member a contrast to the first, bringing forward a fact or an idea which offers the other side of the picture—

"The labour of the righteous tendeth to life:
The increase of the wicked to sin" (ch. x. 16).

"The thoughts of the righteous are judgment:
But the counsels of the wicked are deceit" (ch. xii. 5).

These are, perhaps, of more frequent occurrence than any. Sometimes the form is interrogative—

"The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity:
But a broken spirit who can bear?" (ch. xviii. 14).

3. Synthesis in logic is an argument advancing regularly from principles conceded to a conclusion founded thereon. The term has been loosely applied to our subject, and *synthetical* proverbs are such as contain two different truths embodied in the distich, and not necessarily dependent one upon another, but connected by some feature common to both.

"The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him;
And the desire of the righteous shall be granted" (ch. x. 24).

The idea of the future is here the connecting link. In the following distich the misery which results in both cases is the point:—

"He that is slack in his work
Is brother to him that is a destroyer" (ch. xviii. 9).

4. This last example introduces us to what Delitzsch terms the *integral* proverb, where the second line completes the thought which is only begun in the first—

"The law of the wise is a fountain of life,
To depart from the snares of death" (ch. xiii. 14).

"The eyes of the Lord are in every place,
Keeping watch upon the evil and the good" (ch. xv. 3).

This is called also *progressive*, a gradation being presented from the less to the greater, or the greater to the less, as—

"Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth:
How much more the wicked and the sinner!" (ch. xi. 31).

"Sheol and Abaddon are before the Lord:
How much more then the hearts of the children of men!" (ch. xv. 11).

5. The fifth sort of proverb is named the *parabolic*, which is, perhaps, the most striking and significant of all, and capable of manifold expression. Herein a fact in nature or in common life is stated, and an ethical lesson grounded upon it. The comparison is sometimes introduced by particles—

"As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes,
So is the sluggard to them that send him" (ch. x. 26).

Sometimes it is suggested by mere juxtaposition—

"A jewel of gold in a swine's snout,
A fair woman which is without discretion" (ch. xi. 22).

Or it is introduced by "and," the so-called *vav adæquationis*—

"Cold water to a thirsty soul,
And good news from a far country" (ch. xxv. 25).

"For lack of wood the fire goeth out,
And where there is no whisperer, contention ceaseth" (ch. xxvi. 20).

To the forms here specified must be added the *numerical* proverb (*middah*, "measure"), where a certain number is stated in the first line, which is usually increased by one in the second, and thus a kind of climax is formed which gives force and piquancy to the sentence. Familiar examples occur in Amos i., where we find a series of propositions commencing with the words, "For three, . . . yea, for four," etc. There is only one of these in our book from ch. i. to xxix., and that is the *octastich*, ch. vi. 16—19, beginning—

"There be six things which the Lord hateth,
Yea, seven which are an abomination unto him."

But there are many in ch. xxx., viz. vers. 15, 18, 21, 29. These are all in the form mentioned above, the first-named number being augmented by one. Two more are of simpler form, being not climacteric, viz. vers. 7—9, 24—28. The latter, *e.g.*, says—

"There are four things which are little upon the earth,
But they are exceeding wise;"

and then proceeds to specify the ants, conies, locusts, and lizards.

The last two chapters possess a character of their own, quite distinct from the rest of the work; ch. xxx. being for the most part destitute of parallelism, Lemuel's words forming a continuous instruction in which the second member of each verse repeats the idea and almost the very words of the first, and the eulogium of the virtuous woman taking the shape of an acrostic ode.

Of the principles which guided the editors in their arrangement of the material before them, it is impossible to give any satisfactory account. Sometimes the proverbs are loosely connected by certain catchwords which occur in a series. Thus in ch. xii. 5—7 the link is found in the recurrence of the words "righteous" (*tsaddik*) and "wicked" (*rasha*); in ch. x. 8, 13, 20, 21, we have in the Hebrew continually the word *leb*, "heart;" so in ch. xii. 8, 11, 20, 23, 25, and elsewhere. Sometimes the subject supplies the connection, as in ch. xviii. 10, 11, where the fortress of faith and that of presumption are contrasted; ch. xxii. 30, 31, where the overruling of God's providence is the theme. But generally the grouping is arbitrary, and the attempt, like that of Zöckler, to give a synoptical account of the contents is far from satisfactory.

Such, then, is the *mashal* collection in this book regarded in its mechanical aspect. Viewed as poetry, it offers the greatest contrasts, ranging from the bald and commonplace to the heights of the sublime. If we meet with vulgar truisms in one place, in another we are sitting at the feet of a bard who discourses of heavenly things with pure and fervid eloquence. If in one place we find only maxims of secular tendency, to be taken as the outcome of worldly experience in matters of daily life, in another we are dealing with parables of things Divine, which need and are intended to receive spiritual handling, and cannot be thoroughly understood under any other treatment. The portrait of Wisdom is an adumbration of the eternal Son of God, who invites all to share his bounty and enrich themselves from his boundless store. The "strange woman" is not merely a representation of vice; she is a type of the great opponent of Christ, the antichrist, the false doctrine, the harlotry of the intellect, which opposes the truth as it is in Jesus. And the virtuous woman is not merely an example of the perfect woman, wife, and mother; but also a figure of the Church of God, with all its ennobling influence, its vivifying ordinances, its supernatural graces.

The book reflects the circumstances of the times in which its various parts were composed. There are pictures of savage rapine and plunder, insecurity of life and property, and the evils that attend days of anarchy and confusion. There are pictures of peace and prosperity, quiet home-life, agriculture, grazing, farming, with its pleasures and profit. There are signs of luxury, bringing in its train excess, profligacy, fraud, covetousness. There is the ideal king, upright, discerning, pious, the enemy of all that is base, dishonourable, or vicious, the rewarder of the just and God-fearing. There is the ruler, tyrannical, oppressive, iniquitous, hated by his subjects, and caring nothing for their best interests. Here we have the judge whose verdict is as God's own judgment, pure and equitable; there the judge venal, corrupt, selling the truth, perverting the right, and making the tribunal a mart for the gain of filthy lucre. On these and such-like circumstances the Proverbs offer warnings and instructions; antidotes against evil influences; encouragements to perseverance in the right way. Much may have originally been written by Solomon for the benefit of his son Rehoboam, who in that age was exposed to peculiar temptations; but thereby the Holy Spirit has produced a manual fitted for the use of all who in active life are open to the seductions of their time and country and society. We have spoken above of the use of secondary motives in the teaching of our book; but we must not omit to observe that, under the earthly and secular element, there is present a vein of heavenly wealth. The consciousness of a Divine presence, of a moral Governor, of an exterior Lawgiver, dominates every lesson. The heart is to be guarded whose secrets are known only to God; the tongue is to be diligently watched, though human law punishes not its transgressions. All actions are to be referred to God's will and Word, and are only right when conformed to these.

The absence of all mention of polytheism, which some have used as a reason for assigning a post-exilian date to the book, may be otherwise accounted for. If the Proverbs reflect the earlier days of Solomon's reign, before his great decline and apostasy, the days when the temple had newly been built and consecrated, and men's minds were filled with the grand ceremonies of its opening services and the marvels which attended its dedication, there would be then no tendency to idolatry, the evil propensity for unlawful worship would at any rate for a time have been checked, and the moralist would have had no reason for warning against this particular offence.

## § 5. History of the Text.

The Book of Proverbs has always been enumerated by the Jews among the twenty-two books into which they divided their canon. Thus it was found to be by Melito of Sardis, when he personally investigated the matter during his journey in the East, as mentioned by Eusebius ('Hist. Eccl.,' iv. 26). To the same effect is the testimony of Origen, adduced also by Eusebius (ibid., vi. 25). In the Christian Church the catalogues of Holy Scripture drawn up by councils and private persons never fail to include Proverbs in the canon. The frequent quotation of the work by the writers of the New Testament (*e.g.* Rom. xii. 16, 17; 2 Cor. ix. 7, Septuagint, etc.) placed it at once beyond the pale of doubt, and lent indisputable confirmation to its claims. The inspiration of the works attributed to Solomon was indeed denied by Theodore of Mopsuestia at the end of the fourth century, but his opinions found no support among the orthodox, and were condemned by the Fifth Œcumenical Council. Since that time no doubt has ever been thrown by Christians upon the claim of our book to its place in the sacred volume. But the settlement of the original text is quite a different matter from establishing the canonicity of the work as a whole. To compare with the existing Masoretic text we have the Targum, the Syriac, Greek, and Latin versions, all of which present variations from the original which we possess.

The Targum, which usually takes the form of a Chaldee Paraphrase, is in the present case a tolerably close version without much comment or additional matter. It is plainly dependent upon the Syriac in a great degree, though it varies from it occasionally, the translator having other sources to appeal to. In many passages the Peshito and the Targum agree in receding from the Masoretic reading, in these often coinciding with the Septuagint, which version it is most unlikely that the Targumist himself consulted, the strictest of Hebrews holding that translation in abhorrence. Nöldeke concludes that a Jew took the Syriac as the foundation of a Targum, but also consulted the Masoretic text, correcting from it certain prominent errors, but for the most part leaving the rest unaltered.

The Syriac itself offers many remarkable deviations from our text, not

only affording interpretations which denote different wording and pointing, but often introducing whole verses or clauses which have no representative in the Hebrew. It is evident that when this version was made, the Hebrew text was still unsettled, and what we now receive was not universally recognized. Very probably under these variations are concealed genuine readings which would otherwise be lost. Many of these are noticed in the Exposition. The Syriac translator has made free use of the Septuagint, and laid great weight on its renderings, often endorsing its mistakes and paraphrastic explanations.

The Latin Vulgate, the work of St. Jerome, is also greatly indebted to the LXX., though he has not always slavishly followed it against the authority of the present Hebrew; when he does do so, it is in cases where the text seemed unintelligible without the help of the Greek, or where the pointing was not determined by any traditional decision. What use he made of the old Itala cannot be determined, though it seems to be assured that many of the additions found in his version occur also in the more ancient.

Of the Septuagint Version, as the most important of all, there is more to be said. When it was made it is impossible to say, though it must have been in existence before Ecclesiasticus was written, as it seems clear that Ben-Sira had it before him when he translated his senior's work. The translator was well acquainted with Greek literature, and aimed rather at producing a respectable literary work than offering a simple representation of the original. He renders freely, paraphrasing where he thought it necessary, and even, as it seems, altering words or phrases to make his meaning clearer, or his sentence more flowing. The version shows traces of more than one hand being concerned in arranging the present text, as we find sometimes double renderings of the same passage, and sometimes two incompatible translations blended confusingly into one. Thus, ch. i. 27, after, "When affliction and siege come upon you," is added, "*or when destruction shall come upon you;*" ch. ii. 2, "Thine ear shall listen to wisdom, thou shalt also apply thine heart to understanding, *and thou shalt apply it to the instruction of thy son;*" ch. vi. 25, "Let not the desire of beauty overcome thee, *neither be thou captured with thine eyes*, neither be thou caught with her eyelids;" ch. iii. 15, "She is more valuable than precious stones, *no evil thing shall oppose her; she is well known to all who approach her*, and no precious thing is worthy of her." There is also evidence of carelessness and want of precision here as in other portions of the Greek Version. But there can be no doubt that many of the variations are owed to a different original. That the LXX. had not our Masoretic text before them is proved by more than one consideration. In the first place, the order of chapter and verse, so to speak, was not the same as in our present book. Up to ch. xxiv. 22 the two for the most part coincide, though there is some variation in ch. xv. and xvi.; and again in ch. xvii. and xx. single verses are dislocated and inserted elsewhere. But at ch. xxiv. 23 a notable change occurs. Here is

introduced ch. xxix. 27; then follow four distichs not found in the Hebrew; then ch. xxx. 1—14, succeeded by ch. xxiv. 23—34; then comes the rest of ch. xxx., viz. from ver. 15 up to ch. xxxi. 9. Thus the words of Agur are divided into two sections; and the superscriptions there and at the beginning of ch. xxx. being removed, the proverbs of Agur and Lemuel are joined without reserve to those of Solomon. The praise of the virtuous woman closes the book, as in the Hebrew. What led the translator to make these changes is a difficult question. Hitzig considers that the writer confounded the columns of the manuscript before him, two being on each page, and the proverbs of Agur and Lemuel being ranked before ch. xxv., and understood traditionally as Solomon's. That this was the translator's idea we see from the inscription which he has inserted at ch. xxiv. 23, "These things I say to you who are wise," where the speaker must necessarily be Solomon. Instead of "The words of Agur" (ch. xxx. 1), he writes, "Fear my words, my son, and receiving them repent;" and in ch. xxxi. 1, again, he finds no proper name in Lemuel, but renders, "My words have been spoken by God the King." Another circumstance which shows that the Greek translator had before him a different text from ours is that he presents us with many passages which are not found in the Hebrew, and omits many which now have a place therein.

The list of such variations would be very large. Among the additions we may notice the following: At the end of ch. iv., which seems to close somewhat abruptly, we have two verses, "For the ways which are on the right hand God knoweth, but those on the left are crooked; and he it is who will make thy tracks straight, and will guide thy goings in peace." In ch. ix. there are two great additions: after ver. 12, "He that stays himself upon lies, he shepherdeth winds, and he will pursue birds as they fly; for he has forsaken the ways of his own vineyard, and has caused the axles of his own field to go astray, and he passeth through a waterless desert, and a land established in drought, and gathers with his hands fruitlessness;" and at ver. 18, "But hasten thou away, delay not in the place, neither fix thine eye upon her, for then shalt thou go through strange water; but from strange water abstain thou, and of a strange fountain drink not, that thou mayest live long, and years of life may be added to thee." Whether these and such-like sentences are genuine or not cannot be determined. They look very commonly like explanations or amplifications of the original which have crept from the margin into the text. Thus ch. xi. 16, "A gracious woman raiseth glory for her husband, *but a seat of dishonour is a woman hating righteousness; the slothful come to lack wealth*, but the brave are supported by wealth." Here the Syriac gives, "The slothful shall be poor even with their riches; but the spirited shall sustain wisdom." The words in italics seem to be mere glosses. So ch. xviii. 22, "He who finds a good wife finds favours; and receives gladness from God. He who putteth away a good wife putteth away good things, and he that keepeth an adulteress is foolish and ungodly." Of the longer intercalations the

most celebrated is that concerning the bee (ch. vi. 8), which follows the lesson on the ant: "Or go to the bee, and learn how diligent she is, and how noble a work she performeth; whose labours kings and private persons use for health, and she is desired by all and of good repute; and although she is weak in strength, yet because she regardeth wisdom she is highly honoured." There is another long interpolation respecting the king and his power which succeeds ch. xxiv. 22: "A son that keepeth the word shall be far from destruction. Receiving he receiveth it. Let no falsehood be spoken by the mouth of a king, and let no falsehood proceed from his tongue. The king's tongue is a sword, and not one of flesh; whosoever shall be delivered over to it shall be utterly crushed. For if his anger be provoked, he consumes men together with their sinews, and devoureth men's bones, and burneth them as a flame, so that they cannot be eaten by the young of eagles." The last clause seems to refer to the opinion that birds of prey will not touch carcases struck by lightning. After ch. xix. 7, which is given thus: "Every one who hates a poor brother shall also be far from friendship," we have, "Good understanding will draw near to them that know it; and a prudent man will find it. He that doth much evil perfects mischief, and he that useth provoking words shall not be saved." An additional illustration is sometimes added. Thus, in ch. xxv. 20, omitting the reference to leaving off a garment in cold weather, the LXX. give, "As vinegar is inexpedient for a sore, so suffering falling on the body afflicts the heart. As moth in a garment and worm in wood, so a man's grief injures the heart." In ch. xxvii. 20 we have, "An abomination to the Lord is he who fixeth his eye, and the uninstructed are incontinent in tongue." And in the next verse, "The heart of the lawless seeketh evils, but an upright heart seeketh knowledge." The addition in ch. xxvi. 11 occurs in Ecclus. iv. 21, "There is a shame that bringeth sin, and there is a shame that is glory and grace." The Greek origin of the translation appears plainly in some of the interpolations. Thus in ch. xvii. 4, "To the faithful belongeth the whole world of riches, but to the unfaithful not even an obole."

The minor interpolations are too numerous to specify. They are for the most part noticed as they occur in the Exposition, in which also the many deviations from the received Hebrew text in words and clauses are mentioned. The additions are not of much value morally or religiously, and cannot bear comparison with the genuine proverbs. Whether they are corruptions of the Hebrew text, or corrections and additions made by the translators themselves, cannot be decided. It must be noted, in conclusion, that the Greek Version omits many passages which are now found in our Hebrew Bibles; *e.g.* ch. i. 16; viii. 32, 33; xi. 3, 4; xv. 31; xvi. 1, 3; xviii. 23, 24; xix. 1, 2; xx. 14—19; xxi. 5; xxii. 6; xxiii. 23.

Of the versions of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, fragments have been transmitted in Origen's great work, which sometimes afford light in the rendering of difficult words. There is also another translation known

as Veneta, very literal, and made about the ninth century of our era. It belongs to St. Mark's Library at Venice, and has been published, first in 1784, and again of late years.

## § 6. Arrangement in Sections.

The various superscriptions in the book for the most part divide it into its several parts. There is one at the very beginning, "The Proverbs of Solomon;" the same words are repeated at ch. x. 1; at ch. xxii. 17 a new section is commenced with the words, "Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise;" another at ch. xxiv. 23 with the remark, "These things also belong to the wise." Then at ch. xxv. 1 we have, "These are also the Proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah copied out;" at ch. xxx. 1, "the words of Agur;" at ch. xxxi. 1, "the words of Lemuel," followed by the acrostic ode of the virtuous woman.

Thus the book may conveniently be divided into nine parts.

Part I. Title and superscription. Ch. i. 1—6.

Part II. Fifteen hortatory discourses, exhibiting the excellence of wisdom and encouraging the pursuit thereof. Ch. i. 7—ix. 18.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | First hortatory discourse. | | Ch. i. 7—19. |
| 2. | Second | „ „ | Ch. i. 20—33. |
| 3. | Third | „ „ | Ch. ii. |
| 4. | Fourth | „ „ | Ch. iii. 1—18. |
| 5. | Fifth | „ „ | Ch. iii. 19—26. |
| 6. | Sixth | „ „ | Ch. iii. 27—35. |
| 7. | Seventh | „ „ | Ch. iv. |
| 8. | Eighth | „ „ | Ch. v. |
| 9. | Ninth | „ „ | Ch. vi. 1—5. |
| 10. | Tenth | „ „ | Ch. vi. 6—11. |
| 11. | Eleventh | „ „ | Ch. vi. 12—19. |
| 12. | Twelfth | „ „ | Ch. vi. 20—35. |
| 13. | Thirteenth | „ „ | Ch. vii. |
| 14. | Fourteenth | „ „ | Ch. viii. |
| 15. | Fifteenth | „ „ | Ch. ix. |

Part III. First great collection of (375) Solomonic proverbs, mostly unconnected. Ch. x. 1—xxii. 16,—divided into four sections, viz. ch. x. 1—xii. 28; xiii. 1—xv. 19; xv. 20—xix. 25; xix. 26—xxii. 16.

Part IV. First appendix to first collection, containing "words of the wise." Ch. xxii. 17—xxiv. 22.

Part V. Second appendix to first collection, containing further "words of the wise." Ch. xxiv. 23—34.

Part VI. Second great collection of Solomonic proverbs gathered by "men of Hezekiah." Ch. xxv.—xxix.

Part VII. First appendix to second collection: "words of Agur." Ch. xxx.

Part VIII. Second appendix to second collection: "words of Lemuel." Ch. xxxi. 1—9.

Part IX. Third appendix to second collection: acrostic ode in praise of the virtuous woman. Ch. xxxi. 10—31.

## § 7. Literature.

The Fathers have for the most part not formally commented on this book. Origen and Basil have commentaries hereon: 'Ex Commentariis in Proverbia,' Orig., 'Op.,' iii.; 'In Principium Prov.,' Basil., ii. Besides these there is Bede, 'Exposit. Allegor.'

Among the numerous expositions of later date the most useful are the following: Salazar, 1619; Cornelius à Lapide, 1635, etc.; Melancthon, 'Op.,' ii.; Bossuet, 'Notæ,' 1673; Hammond, 'Paraphrase,' iv.; Michaelis, 'Adnotationes,' 1720; Aben Ezra, 1620, and edit. by Horowitz, 1884; Schulteus, 1748; Umbreit, 1826; Rosenmüller, 1829; Löwenstein, 1838; Maurer, 1838; Bertheau, 1847; re-edited by Nowack, 1883; Stuart, 1852; Ewald, 'Sprüche Sal.,' 1837, 1867; Hitzig, 1858; Zöckler, in Lange's 'Bibelwerk,' 1867; Vaihinger, 1857; Delitzsch, in Clarke's 'For. Libr.;' Reuss, Paris, 1878; Plumptre, in the 'Speaker's Commentary;' Bishop Wordsworth; Nutt, in Bishop Ellicott's Commentary; Strack, in 'Kurzgef. Kommentar,' 1889. The 'Topical Arrangement' of Dr. Stock will be found useful; also the Introductions of Eichhorn, De Wette, Bertholdt, Keil, and Bleek.

# THE PROVERBS.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER I.

Vers. 1—6.—Part I. The Title and Superscription. The superscription of the Proverbs, which extends from ver. 1 to ver. 6, furnishes us with an epitome in short and concise language of the general scope and bearing of the book, and points out its specific utility, both to the inexperienced and to those already wise. Thus (1) in ver. 1 it gives the name of the author to whom the proverbs are attributed; (2) in vers. 2 and 3 it declares the aim, object, or design of the collection, which is to lead to the acquirement of wisdom generally; and (3) in vers. 4—6 it proceeds to indicate the special utility the collection will be to two main classes—to the simple and immature, on the one hand, in opening and enlarging their understanding, and so providing them with prudent rules of conduct by which they may regulate the course of life; and, on the other, to the wise and intelligent, in further increasing their knowledge or learning, and thus rendering them competent to comprehend, and also to explain to others less favourably situated than themselves, other proverbs, or enigmas, or sayings, of a like recondite nature to those now to be brought before them.

The *title* of the book embodied in the text is, 'The Proverbs of Solomon the son of David, King of Israel,' but the shorter designation by which it was and is known among the Jews is *Mishle* (מִשְׁלֵי), taken from the word with which the book begins. Analogously, in the Authorized Version it is styled 'The Proverbs,' and the heading in the LXX. is Παροιμίαι Σολομῶντος. The outside title in the Vulgate is more elaborately given as, 'Liber Proverbiorum, quem Hebræi *Misle* appellant' ('The Book of the Proverbs, which the Hebrews call *Misle*'). In the Talmud it is called the 'Book of Wisdom' (סֵפֶר חָכְמָה, *Sepher Khokhmah*); and Origen (Eusebius, 'Hist. Eccl.,' vi. 25) designates it Μισλώθ, the Greek form of the Hebrew *M'shaloth* (מְשָׁלוֹת). Among the ancient Greek Fathers, *e.g.* Clement, Hegesippus, Irenæus, the book was known by a variety of titles, all more or less descriptive of its contents as a repository of wisdom.

Ver. 1.—**The proverbs of Solomon.** The word which is here translated "proverbs" is the original *mishle* (מִשְׁלֵי), the construct case of *mashâl* (מָשָׁל), which, again, is derived from the verb *mashal* (מָשַׁל), signifying (1) "to make like," "to assimilate," and (2) "to have dominion" (Gesenius). The radical signification of *mashal* is "comparison" or "similitude," and in this sense it is applied generally to the utterances of the wise. In Numb. xxiii. 7, 8 it is used of the prophetic predictions of Balaam; certain didactic psalms, *e.g.* Ps. xlix. 5 and lxxviii. 2, are so designated, and in Job (xxvii. 1 and xxix. 1) it describes the sententious discourses of wise men. While all these come under the generic term of *m'shalim*, though few or no comparisons are found in them, we find the term *mashal* sometimes used of what are proverbs in the sense of popular sayings. Compare "Therefore it became a proverb (מָשָׁל), Is Saul also among the prophets?" (1 Sam. x. 12); and see also other instances in Ezek. xvi. 4 and xviii. 2. In this sense it is also found in the collection before us. The predominant idea of the term, however, is that of comparison or similitude, and as such it is better represented by the Greek παραβολή (from παρα-

βάλλω, "to set or place side by side"), literally, a placing beside, or comparison, than by παροιμία, "a byword," or "a trite wayside saying," though in the Greek of the synoptic Gospels παροιμία is equivalent to παραβολή. The English word "proverb" insufficiently renders the wider scope of meaning conveyed in the Hebrew *mashâl*, and is not quite accurately rendered here, since of proverbs in our ordinary signification of that word there are comparatively few in this collection. The Hebrew word here means "maxims," "aphorisms," "wise counsels." *Of Solomon.* Most modern commentators (Delitzsch, Zöckler, Fuerst, Stuart, Plumptre, etc.), while attributing, in a greater or less degree, the authorship of the book to Solomon, regard the insertion of his name in the title as indicating rather that he is the dominant spirit among those wise men of his age, some of whose sayings are here incorporated with his own. **King of Israel**, as forming the second hemistich of the verse, goes with "Solomon," and not "David." This is indicated in the Authorized Version by the position of the comma. The Arabic Version omits allusion to David, and reads, "Proverbia, nempe documenta Salomonis sapientis, qui regnavit super filios Israel." The proverbial or parabolic form of teaching was a recognized mode of instruction among the Hebrews, and in the Christian Church is recommended by St. Clement of Alexandria ('Strom.,' lib. 11, *init.*).

Ver. 2.—**To know wisdom and instruction.** In this verse we have a statement of the first general aim or object of the Proverbs. "To know" (לָדַעַת, *ladaath*) is somewhat indefinite in the Authorized Version, and might be more accurately rendered, "from which men may know" (De Wette, Noyes); cf. *unde scias* (Munsterus). The ל which is here prefixed to the infinitive, as in vers. 2, 3, and 6, gives the clause a final character, and thus points out the object which the teaching of the Proverbs has in view. The teaching is viewed from the standpoint of the learner, and hence what is indicated here is not the imparting of knowledge, but the reception or appropriation thereof on the part of the learner. Schultens states that the radical meaning of דַּעַת (*daath*) is the reception of knowledge into one's self. *Wisdom.* It will be necessary to go rather fully into this word here on its first appearance in the text. The Hebrew is חָכְמָה (*khokhmah*). Wisdom is mentioned first, because it is the end to which all knowledge and instruction tend. The fundamental conception of the word is variously represented as either (1) the "power of judging," derived from חָכַם, "to be wise," from the Arabic, "to judge" (Gesenius); or (2) "the fixing of a thing for cognition," derived from the Arabic equivalent of the Hebrew חָכַם, as before, which signifies "to fasten" (Zöckler), or "compactness," from the same root as before, "to be firm, or closed." It is also variously defined (1) as "*insight* into that upright dealing which pleases God—a *knowledge* of the right way which is to be followed before God, and of the wrong one which is to be shunned" (Zöckler); (2) as "piety towards God," as in Job xxviii. 28 (Gesenius); (3) as "the knowledge of things in their being and in the reality of their existence" (Delitzsch). The word is translated in the LXX. by σοφία, and in the Vulgate by *sapientia*. The Hebrew *khokhmah* and the Greek σοφία so far agree as philosophical terms in that the end of each is the same, viz. the striving after objective wisdom, the moral fitness of things; but the character of the former differs from that of the latter in being distinctly religious. The beginning and the end of the *khokhmah*, wisdom, is God (cf. ver. 7). Wisdom, then, is not the merely scientific knowledge, or moral philosophy, but knowledge κατ' ἐξοχήν, *i.e.* religious knowledge or piety towards God; *i.e.* an appreciation of what God requires of us and what we conversely owe to God. "Sapientia est de divinis" (Lyra). Wisdom will, of course, carry with it the notions of knowledge and insight. *Instruction.* As the preceding word represents wisdom in its intellectual conception, and has rather a theoretical character, so "instruction," Hebrew, מוּסָר (*musar*), represents it on its practical side, and as such is its practical complement. The Hebrew *musar* signifies properly "chastisement," from the root *yasar* (יָסַר), "to correct," or "chastise," and hence education, moral training; and hence in the LXX. it is rendered by παιδεία, which means both the process of education (cf. Plato, 'Repub.,' 376, E.; Arist., 'Pol.,' 8. 3) and its result as learning (Plato, 'Prob.,' 327, D.). The Vulgate has *disciplina*. In relation to wisdom, it is antecedent to it; *i.e.* to know wisdom truly we must first become acquainted with instruction, and hence it is a preparatory step to the knowledge of wisdom, though here it is stated rather objectively. The words, "wisdom and instruction," are found in exactly the same collocation in ch. iv. 13 and xxiii. 23. In its strictly disciplinary sense, "instruction" occurs in ch. iii. 11, with which comp. Heb. xii. 5. Holden takes this word as "moral discipline" in the highest sense. **To perceive the words of understanding**; literally, *to discern the words of discernment*; i.e. "to comprehend the utterances which proceed from intelligence, and give expression to

it" (Delitzsch). *Understanding;* Hebrew, *vinah* (בִּינָה), connected with the hiph. (לְהָבִין *l'havin*), properly "to distinguish," hence "to discern," of the same clause, signifies the capability of discerning the true from the false, good from bad, etc. With this agrees Cornelius à Lapide, who says, "Unde prudenter discernas inter bonum et malum, licitum et illicitum, utile et noxium, verum et falsum," and from which you are enabled to know what to do in any circumstances, and what not to do. The LXX. renders the word by *φρόνησις*, the Vulgate by *prudentia*. *Φρόνησις*, in Plato and Aristotle, is the virtuo concerned in the government of men, management of affairs, and the like (see Plato, 'Sym.,' 209, A.; Arist., 'Eth.,' N. 6. 5 and 8), and means practical wisdom, prudence, or moral wisdom. Van Ess, Allioli, Holden, translate "prudence."

Ver. 3.—**To receive the instruction of wisdom.** This verse carries on the statement of the design of the Proverbs. *To receive;* Hebrew, לָקַחַת (*lakakhath*), not the same word as "to know" (לָדַעַת), in ver. 2, though regarded as synonymous with it by Delitzsch. Its meaning is well represented by the LXX. *δέξασθαι*, and the Authorized Version "to receive." The Hebrew, לָקַחַת, is infinitive, and means properly "to take, or lay hold of," hence "to receive," Greek, *δέχομαι*. No doubt it conveys the idea of intellectual reception (cf. ch. ii. 1). *The instruction of wisdom;* Hebrew, מוּסַר הַשְׂכֵּל (*musar has'kel*); *i.e.* the discipline or moral training which leads on to reason, intelligence, or wisdom (as Hitzig, Fuerst, Zöckler); or discipline full of insight, discernment, or thoughtfulness (as Umbreit, Ewald, Delitzsch). The phrase does not mean the wisdom which instruction imparts. The word *musar* occurs here in a slightly different sense from its use in ver. 2; there it is objective, here its meaning as a medium for the attainment of wisdom is more distinctly brought out. *Wisdom (has'kel)* is properly "thoughtfulness" (so Umbreit, Ewald, Delitzsch, Plumptre). It is strictly the infinitive absolute of שָׂכַל (*sakal*), "to entwine or involve," and as a substantive it stands for the thinking through of a subject, so "thoughtfulness." The LXX. renders this sentence, *δέξασθαι τε στροφὰς λόγων*, which St. Jerome understands as "versutias sermonum et solutiones ænigmatum" ("the cunning or craftiness of words and the explication of enigmas"). **Justice, and judgment, and equity.** These words seem to be the unfolding of the meaning contained in the expression, "the instruction of wisdom." Holden regards the last four words as objective genitives dependent on "instruction," but wrongly. Cornelius à Lapide states that "justice and judgment and equity" indicate the same thing in different aspects. "*Justice* stands for the thing itself—that which is *just; judgment* in respect of right reason, which says it is just; and *equity* in respect of its being agreeable to the Law of God." *Justice;* Hebrew, צֶדֶק (*tsedek*), from the root צָדַק (*tsadak*), "to be right, or straight;" in a moral sense it means "rectitude," "right," as in Isa. xv. 2 (Gesenius). The underlying idea is that of straightness. Heidenheim, quoted by Delitzsch, maintains that in *tsedek* the conception of the *justum* prevails; but the latter enlarges its meaning, and holds that it also has the idea of a mode of thought and action regulated, not by the letter of the Law, but by love, as in Isa. xli. 2; xlii. 6. Plumptre thinks "righteousness" would be a better translation of the word, on the ground that the Hebrew includes the ideas of truth and beneficence. Compare with this the LXX. *δικαιοσύνη ἀληθής*. Zöckler also renders "righteousness," *i.e.* "that which is in accord with the will and ordinances of God as Supreme Judge." In the Authorized Version, in ch. ii. 9, where we have the same collocation of words, *tsedek* is translated "righteousness;" cf. ch. xii. 17, "He who utters truth shows forth righteousness (*tsedek*)." *Judgment;* Hebrew, מִשְׁפָּט (*mish'pat*), from the root שָׁפַט (*shapat*), "to adjust, judge," corresponds with the Hebrew in meaning; it is the delivery of a correct judgment on human actions. Compare the LXX. *κρίμα κατευθύνειν*. *Equity;* i.e. rectitude in thought and action (Delitzsch), or integrity (Zöckler). This quality expresses upright demeanour or honourable action on one's own part individually, while "judgment" has regard both to our own and the actions of others. The Hebrew, *mesharim* (מֵישָׁרִים), used only in the plural, is from the root יָשַׁר (*yashar*), "to be straight or even," and is equal to "uprightness." The plural form is reproduced in the marginal reading "equities;" comp. Ps. xvii. 2, "Let thine eyes behold the things that are equal (*mesharim*)." The Vulgate reads *æquitas*, and the Syriac *rectitudo*. The two ideas in judgment and equity appear to be expressed in the LXX. by the phrase, *κρίμα κατευθύνειν*.

Ver. 4.—**To give subtilty to the simple.** In this verse and the following we are introduced to the classes of persons to whom the proverbs will be beneficial. The ל with the infinitive, לָתֵת (*latheth*), shows that in construction this proposition is co-ordinate with those in vers. 2 and 3, and not dependent as represented by *ἵνα δῷ* (LXX.) and *ut detur* (Vulgate). *Subtilty;* Hebrew, עָרְמָה (*ar'mah*),

from the root עָרַם (*aram*), "to be crafty or wily," properly means "nakedness" or "smoothness;" hence in a metaphorical sense it expresses "the capacity for escaping from the wiles of others" (Umbreit). We have this idea expressed as follows in ch. xxii. 3, "The prudent man (עָרוּם, *arum*) foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself." In the Arabic Version it is rendered by *callidităs*, "shrewdness," in a good sense. The Hebrew *ar'mah*, like the Latin *calliditas*, also means "craftiness," as appears in the use of the cognate adjective *arum* in Gen. iii. 1, where we read, "The serpent was more subtle," etc. For "subtilty" the LXX. has *πανουργία*, a Greek word which appears to be employed altogether in a bad sense, as "trickery," "villainy," "knavery;" but that scarcely appears to be the meaning of the Hebrew here, since the aim of the Proverbs is ethical and beneficial in the highest degree. The Vulgate *astutia*, the quality of the *astutus*, beside the bad sense of craftiness, also bears the good sense of *shrewdness*, sagacity, and so better represents the Hebrew. "Subtilty may turn to evil, but it also takes its place among the highest moral gifts" (Plumptre). *The simple;* Hebrew, פְּתָאִים (*ph'thaim*), plural of פֶּתִי (*p'ti*) from the root פָּתַח (*pathakh*), "to be open," properly means the open-hearted, *i.e.* those who are susceptible to external impressions (Zöckler), and so easily misled. The word occurs in ch. vii. 7; viii. 5; ix. 6; xiv. 18; and xxvii. 12. The LXX. properly renders the word ἄκακοι, "unknowing of evil." The same idea is indirectly expressed in the Vulgate *parvuli*, "the very young;" and the term is paraphrased in the Arabic Version, *iis in quibus non est malitia* ("those who are without malice"). The Hebrew here means "simple" in the sense of inexperienced. **To the young man knowledge and discretion.** The Hebrew *naar* (נַעַר) is here used representatively for "youth" (cf. LXX., *παῖς νέος*; Vulgate, *adolescens*) in general, which stands in need of the qualities here mentioned. It advances in idea beyond "the simple." *Knowledge;* Hebrew, דַּעַת (*daath*), *i.e.* experimental knowledge (Delitzsch); insight (Gesenius); knowledge of good and evil (Plumptre). The LXX. has *αἴσθησις*, which classically means perception by the senses and also by the mind. *Discretion;* Hebrew, מְזִמָּה (*m'zimmah*), properly "thoughtfulness," and hence "circumspection" or "caution" (Zöckler), or "discernment," that which sets a man on his guard and prevents him being duped by others (Plumptre). Ἔννοια was probably adopted by the LXX. in its primary sense as representing the act of thinking; *intellectus* (Vulgate), equivalent to "a discerning" (see the margiual "*advisement*").

Ver. 5.—**A wise man will hear, and will increase learning.** The change of construction in the original is reproduced in the Authorized Version, but has been rendered variously. Thus Umbreit and Elster, regarding the verb יִשְׁמַע (*yish'ma*) as conditional, translate, "if the wise man hear;" on the other hand, Delitzsch and Zöckler take it as voluntative, "let the wise man hear," etc. The principle here enunciated is again stated in ch. ix. 9, "Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser," and finds expression under the gospel economy in the words of our Lord, "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance" (Matt. xiii. 12; cf. xxv. 29; Mark iv. 25; Luke viii. 18 and xiv. 26). *Learning;* Hebrew, לֶקַח (*lekakh*), in the sense of being transmitted or received (Gesenius, Delitzsch, Dunn). **And a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels.** A man of understanding (LXX., ὁ νοήμων; Vulgate, *intelligens*) is a person of intelligence who lays himself open to be instructed. *Wise counsels;* Hebrew, תַּחְבֻּלוֹת (*takh'buloth*). This word is derived from חֶבֶל (*khevel*), a ship-rope, a denominative of חֹבֶל (*khovel*), and only occurs in the plural. It signifies those maxims of prudence by which a man may direct his course aright through life (cf. *regimen*, Arabic). The imagery is taken from the management of a vessel, and is reproduced in the LXX. κυβέρνησις, and the Vulgate *gubernatio*. "Navigationi vitam comparat" (Mariana). The word is almost exclusively confined to the Proverbs, and occurs in ch. xi. 14; xii. 5; xx. 18; and xxiv. 6, usually in a good sense, though it has the meaning of "stratagem" in ch. xii. 5. In the only other passage where it is found it is used of God's power in turning about the clouds; cf. Job xxxvii. 12, "And it [*i.e.* the bright cloud] is turned round about by his counsels (בְּתַחְבֻּלֹתָיו, *b'thakh'bulothau*)." It is the practical correlative of "learning," in the first part of the verse.

Ver. 6.—**To understand a proverb.** This verse carries on the idea which is stated in ver. 5. The end of the wise and intelligent man's increase in learning and prudence is that he may be thus enabled to understand other proverbs. Schultens, followed by Holden, takes the verb לְהָבִין (*l'havin*) as a gerund, *intelligendo sententias*. This rendering does not represent the end, but points to the proverbs, etc., as means by which the wise generally attain to learning and prudence. **And the interpretation;** Hebrew, מְלִיצָה (*m'litsah*). It is difficult to determine the exact meaning of this word. By Gesenius it is rendered "enigma, riddle;" by Bertheau and Hitzig, "discourse requiring

interpretation;" by Delitzsch, "symbol;" by Haverniok and Keil, "brilliant and pleasing discourse;" and by Fuerst, "figurative and involved discourse." By comparing it with the corresponding words, "dark sayings," it may be regarded as designating that which is obscure and involved in meaning; compare σκοτεινὸς λόγος (LXX.). It only occurs here and in Hab. ii. 6, where it is rendered "taunting proverb." The marginal reading is "an eloquent speech," equivalent to *facundia*, "eloquence." Vatablus says that the Hebrews understood it as "mensúram et pondus verbi." **The words of the wise**; *i.e.* the utterances of the *khakhamim* (חֲכָמִים). This expression occurs again in ch. xxii. 17, and also in Eccles. ix. 19 and xii. 11. In the latter they are described as "goads and as nails fastened by the ministers of assemblies" (*i.e.* "authors of compilations," as Mendelssohn), because they cannot fail to make an impression on everybody good or bad. The expression, as used in ch. xxii. 17, implies that other than Solomonic proverbs are included in this collection. **And their dark sayings**; Hebrew, וְחִידֹתָם (*v'khidotham*). The Hebrew *khidah* (חִידָה), as *m'litsah* (מְלִיצָה), its parallel in the preceding hemistich, designates obscure, involved utterances. It plainly has the sense of "enigma" (Fleischer, apud Delitzsch). Compare *αἰνίγματα* (LXX.), and *ænigmata* (Vulgate), which latter is followed by the Chaldee Paraphrase and Syriac (see also Ps. lxxviii. 2, "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter *dark sayings* of old"). Gesenius derives it from the root חוּד (*khud*), "to tie knots," and hence arrives at its meaning as an involved or twisted sententious expression, an *enigma*.

Ver. 7—ch. ix. 18.—Part II. INTRODUCTORY SECTION. The first main section of the book begins here and ends at ch. ix. 18. It consists of a series of fifteen admonitory discourses addressed to youth by the Teacher and Wisdom personified, with the view to exhibit the excellence of wisdom, and generally to illustrate the motto, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge," or wisdom. It urges strong encouragements to virtue, and equally strong dissuasives from vice, and shows that the attainment of wisdom in its true sense is the aim of all moral effort.

Ver. 7.—**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.** This proposition is by some commentators regarded as the motto, symbol, or device of the book (Delitzsch, Umbreit, Zöckler, Plumptre). Others, following the Masoretic arrangement of the Hebrew text, consider it as forming part of the superscription (Ewald, Bertheau, Elster, Keil). As a general proposition expressing the essence of the philosophy of the Israelites, and from its relation to the rest of the contents of this book, it seems rightly to occupy a special and individual position. The proposition occurs again in the Proverbs in ch. ix. 10, and it is met with in similar or slightly modified forms in other books which belong to the same group of sacred writings, that is, those which treat of religious philosophy—the Khokhmah; *e.g.* Job xxviii. 28; Ps. cxi. 10; Eccles. xii. 13; Ecclus. i. 16, 25. With this maxim we may compare "The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom" (ch. xv. 33). *The fear of the Lord* (יִרְאַת יְהוָה, *yir'ath y'hovah*); literally, *the fear of Jehovah*. The expression describes that reverential attitude or holy fear which man, when his heart is set aright, observes towards God. The original word, יִרְאַת (*yir'ath*) for "fear," is properly the infinitive of יָרֵא (*yare*), "to fear or reverence," and as a substantive means "reverence or holy fear" (Gesenius). *Servile* or abject fear (as Jerome, Beda, Estius) is not to be understood, but *filial* fear (as Gejerus, Mercerus, Cornelius à Lapide, Cartwright), by which we fear to offend God—that fear of Jehovah which is elsewhere described as "to hate evil" (ch. viii. 13), and in which a predominating element is love. Wardlaw remarks that the "fear of the Lord" is in invariable union with love and in invariable proportion to it. We truly fear God just in proportion as we truly love him. The fear of the Lord also carries with it the whole worship of God. It is observable that the word *Jehovah* (יְהוָה) is used in the Hebrew, and not *Elohim* (אֱלֹהִים), a peculiarity which is invariably marked in the Authorized Version by small capitals. *The beginning*; Hebrew, רֵאשִׁית (*reshith*). This word has been understood in three different senses: (1) As *initium*, the beginning; *i.e.* the initial step or starting-point at which every one who wishes to follow true wisdom must begin (Gejerus, Zöckler, Plumptre). (2) As *caput*; i.e. the most excellent or principal part, the noblest or best wisdom. This sense is adopted in the marginal reading (comp. also ch. iv. 7) (Holden, Trapp). (3) As the *principium* (Vulgate); *i.e.* the origin, or basis, as in Micah i. 13, "She is the origin, or basis (*reshith*) of the sin of the daughter of Zion." Delitzsch regards the original, *reshith*, as embracing the two ideas of commencement and origin, in the same way as the Greek ἀρχή. Wisdom has its origin in God, and

whoever fears him receives it if he prays in faith (cf. Jas. i. 5, *sqq.*) (Vatablus, Mercerus, Delitzsch). That the first sense, viz. that of beginning, is to be understood here appears from the parallel passage in ch. x. 10, where the corresponding word is תְּחִלַּת (*t'khillath*), "beginning," from the root חָלַל (*khalal*), "to begin;" cf. also the LXX. ἀρχή, in this sense, and the *initium* of the Syriac and Arabic Versions. All previous knowledge to "the fear of the Lord" is comparative folly. He who would advance in knowledge must first be imbued with a reverence or holy fear of God. But **fools despise wisdom and instruction**; or, according to the inverted order of the words in the original, *wisdom and instruction fools despise*, the association of ideas in the three words, "knowledge," "wisdom," and "instruction," thus being more continuously sustained. This arrangement links on the two latter words with "the fear of the Lord," and so helps towards the elucidation of the sense in which "fools" is to be understood. *Fools;* אֱוִילִים (*evilim*), plural of אֱוִיל (*evil*), from the root אָוַל (*aval*), "to be perverse," here properly designates the incorrigible, as in ch. xxvii. 22, and those who are unwilling to know God (Jer. iv. 22), and hence refuse and despise wisdom and salutary discipline, those "who set at nought all his counsel, and will none of his reproof." The word is opposed to the "prudent" (ch. xii. 16) and to the "wise" (ch. x. 14). Delitzsch understands it as "thick, hard, stupid," from the root *aval, coalescere, incrassari.* Schultens uses παχεῖς, equivalent to *crassi pro stupidis*, to represent the original. Dunn takes it in the same sense as "gross or dull of understanding." Fuerst, adopted by Wordsworth, regards it in the sense of having no moral stamina, from the root meaning "to be slack, weak, lax, or lazy." But none of these explanations seems, in my opinion, to coincide sufficiently with the evil and depraved activity expressed in the verb "despise," which follows, and which describes the conduct of this class. The LXX. renders the word or action by ἀσεβεῖς, equivalent to *impii*, "godless," "profane," and the Vulgate by *stulti. Despise;* בָּזוּ (*bazu*) is perfect, but is properly translated by the present, because the perfect here represents a condition long continued and still existing (Gesenius, § 126); cf. the Latin *odi, memini*, etc. The LXX. uses the future ἐξουθενήσουσιν, *i.e.* they will set at nought; the Vulgate, the present (*despiciunt*). The radical meaning is most probably contemptuous trampling under the feet (Gesenius). *Wisdom and instruction* (see ver. 2). The latter clause of this verse is antithetical to the former, but the antithesis is obscurely expressed. In the Authorized Version it is marked by the adversative conjunction "but," which, however, is not in the original. The LXX. has a striking interpolation in this verse between the first and second clauses, which is partly taken from Ps. cxi. 10 (Σύνεσις δὲ ἀγαθὴ πᾶσι τοῖς ποιοῦσιν αὐτήν· εὐσέβεια δὲ εἰς Θεὸν ἀρχὴ αἰσθήσεως, "And a good understanding have all they that do it: and reverence towards God is the beginning of knowledge"). Compare the Arabic Version, which has the same interpolation: *Et intellectus bonus omnibus facientibus eam. Sana religio in Deum est initium prudentiæ.*

Vers. 8—19.—1. *First admonitory discourse. Warning against enticements to robbery and bloodshed.*

Ver. 8.—**My son, hear the instruction of thy father.** The transition in this verse from what may be regarded as filial obedience towards God to filial obedience towards parents is suggestive of the moral Law. The same admonition, in a slightly altered form, occurs again in ch. vi., "My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother" (cf. also ch. iv. 1). *My son;* בְּנִי (*b'ni*) from בֵּן (*ben*), "a son." The form of address here adopted was that in common use by teachers towards their pupils, and marks that superintending, loving, and fatherly care and interest which the former felt in and towards the latter. It occurs frequently in the introductory section (ch. ii. 1; iii. 1, 21; iv. 10, 20; v. 1; vi. 1; vii. 1), and reappears again towards the close (ch. xxiii. 15, 19, 26; xxiv. 13, 21; xxvii. 11) in the teacher's address. The mother of Lemuel uses it (ch. xxxi. 2) in the strictly parental sense. In other passages of the Old Testament the teacher, on the other hand, is represented as a "father" (Judg. xvii. 10; Isa. x. 12; 2 Kings ii. 21). We find the same relation assumed in the New Testament, both by St. Paul (1 Cor. iv. 15; Philem. 10; Gal. iv. 19) and by St. John (1 John ii. 1; v. 2); but under the economy of the gospel it has a deeper significance than here, as pointing to the "new birth," which, being a later revelation, lies outside the scope of the moral teaching of the Old Testament dispensation. *The instruction* (מוּסַר, *musar*); as carrying with it the sense of disciplinary education (cf. LXX., παιδεία; Vulgate, *disciplina;* see also ver. 2), and of the correction with which it may be enforced (cf. ch. xiii. 24; xxii. 15; xxiii. 13, 14), the writer attributes appropriately to the father, while the milder *torah*, "law," he uses of the mother (Delitzsch). *Father.* The nature of the exhortation conveyed in this verse requires that we should understand the terms "father" and "mother" in their natural sense as designating the parents of the persons addressed,

though a symbolical meaning has been attached to them by the rabbis (see Rabbi Salomon, *in loc.*), "father" being understood as representing God, and "mother," the people. But the terms are more than merely figurative expressions (Stuart). Those who look upon the Proverbs as the address of Solomon to his son Rehoboam naturally take "father" as standing for the former. Naamah, in this case must be the mother (1 Kings xiv. 31). It is almost unnecessary to state that pious parents are presupposed, and that only that instruction and law can be meant which is not inconsistent with the higher and more perfect Law of God (Gejerus, Wardlaw). **And forsake not the law of thy mother.** *Forsake.* The radical meaning of תִּטֹּשׁ (*tittosh*) is that of "spreading," then of "scattering" (Aiken), and so the word comes to mean "forsake, reject, or neglect." The LXX. reads *ἀπώσῃ*, from *ἀποθέω*, *abjicere*, "to push away, reject." Cf. *abjicias* (Arabic). The Vulgate has *dimittas*, i.e. "abandon," and the Syriac, *obliviscaris*, i.e. "forget." *The law;* תּוֹרַת (*torath*), construct case of תּוֹרָה (*torah*), from the root יָרָה (*yarah*), "to teach," hence here equivalent to "a law" in the sense of that which teaches—a precept (*doctrina*, Jun. et Tremell., Piscat., Castal., Versions). With one exception (ch. viii. 10), it is the term which always expresses the instruction given by Wisdom (Delitzsch). The law (*torah*) of the mother is that preceptive teaching which she imparts orally to her son, but *torah* is also used in a technical sense as *lex*, *νόμος δέσμος*, that which is laid down and established, a *decretum* or *institutum*, and designates some distinct provision or ordinance, as the law of sacrifice (Lev. vi. 7). In Josh. i. 8 we find it employed to signify the whole body of the Mosaic Law (*sepher hatorah*). *Mother.* Not inserted here as a natural expansion of the idea of the figure required by the laws of poetic parallelism (as Zöckler), since this weakens the force of the passage. Mothers are mentioned because of their sedulousness in imparting instruction (Bayne).

Ver. 9.—**For they** (shall be) **an ornament of grace unto thy head.** The sentiment here expressed is put forward as an inducement to youth to observe obedience towards the instruction of the father and the law of the mother, and the meaning is that, just as in popular opinion ornaments and jewels are supposed to set off the personal form, so obedience towards parents in the ways of virtue embellishes the moral character (Bayne, Cartwright, Holden). *An ornament of grace;* Hebrew, לִוְיַת חֵן (*liv'yath khen*); literally, *a wreath or garland of grace.* We meet with the same expression in ch. iv. 9, "She [*i.e.* wisdom] shall give to thine head an ornament of grace." The Hebrew לִוְיָה (*liv'yah*) is derived from the root לָוָה (*lavah*), "to wind a roll" (Delitzsch) or "to be joined closely with" (Gesenius), and hence signifies an ornament that is twisted, and so a wreath or garland. Gejerus and Schultens translate the phrase by *corolla gratiosa*, i.e. "a crown full of grace," and so meaning conferring or producing grace, just as the expression, "the chastisement of our peace" (Isa. liii. 5), means the chastisement bringing or procuring our peace. So again a "precious stone," in ch. xvii. 8, margin, "a stone of grace," is one conferring gracefulness. The marginal reading, "an adding" (*additamentum*, Vatablus), conveys, though obscurely, the same idea; and this sense is again reproduced in the Vulgate, *ut addatur gratia capitiſsuo* ("in order that grace may be added to thy head"). The LXX. reads, *στέφανος χαρίτων*. **And chains about thy neck.** *Chains;* properly, *necklaces;* עֲנָקִים (*anakim*), plural of עָנָק (*anak*), "a collar or necklace;" the *κλοιός χρύσεος*, or "golden collar," of the LXX., and *torques* (*i.e.* twisted neckchain) of the Vulgate. There is a very apposite parallel to this verse in ch. vi. 20, 21 (cf. ch. iii. 3; see also Judg. viii. 26). The gold chain round the neck was a mark of distinction, and was conferred on Joseph by Pharaoh when investing him with authority and dignity (Gen. xli. 42), and on Daniel by Belshazzar in the same way (Dan. v. 29; see Song of Solomon iv. 9). The mere adornment of the person with gold and pearls, without the further adornment of the moral character with Christian graces, is deprecated both by St. Paul and St. Peter (see 1 Tim. ii. 9, 10, and 1 Pet. iii. 3, 4). *Neck,* גַּרְגְּרוֹת (*gar'g'roth*) only occurs in the plural (Gesenius). (See ch. iii. 3, 22; vi. 21.)

Ver. 10.—**My son, if sinners entice thee.** (As to the form of address, see ver. 8.) It is here used because the writer is passing to a warning against bad company, and hence the term is emphatic, and intended to call especial attention to what is said. It is repeated again in ver. 15, at a further stage in this address, with the same view. *Sinners;* חַטָּאִים (*khottaim*), the plural of חַטָּא (*khatta*), from the root חָטָא (*khata*), properly "to miss the mark, to err;" cf. Greek, *ἁμαρτάνω*, "to sin" (Gesenius), here equivalent to "habitual, abandoned sinners," and those especially who make robbery and bloodshed a profession. Not simply *peccantes*, i.e. sinners as a generic designation of the human race, for "*All* have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. iii. 23), but *peccatores* (Chaldee, Syriac, Pagin., Tigur., Versions and Vulgate), "sinners," *i.e.* those who sin habitually, knowingly, wilfully, and maliciously

(Gejerus), or those who give themselves up to iniquity, and persuade others to follow their example (Cartwright). In the New Testament they are styled ἁμαρτωλοί. They are those of whom David speaks in strikingly parallel language in Ps. xxvi. 9, "Gather not my soul with sinners (*khattaim*), nor my life with bloody men" (cf. Ps. i. 1). The LXX. has ἄνδρες ἀσεβεῖς (*i.e.* ungodly, unholy men). *Entice thee;* יְפַתֶּךָּ (*y'phattukha*); the piel form, פָּתָה (*pitah*), of the kal פָּתָה (*patah*), "to open," and hence to make accessible to persuasion, akin to the Greek πείθειν, "to persuade." The noun פֶּתִי (*p'thi*), is "one easily enticed or persuaded" (Gesenius). The LXX. reads μὴ πλανήσωσιν, "let them not lead thee astray." The idea is expressed in the Vulgate by *lactaverint;* i.e. "if sinners allure or deceive thee with fair words." The Syriac, Montan., Jun. et Tremell., Versions read *pellexerint*, from *pellicio*, "to entice." **Consent thou not.** (אַל־תֹּאבֶא, *al-tovex*). The Masoretic text here has been emended by Kennicott and De Rossi, who, on the joint authority of fifty-eight manuscripts, maintain that תֹּאבֶא (*tovex*) should be written תֹּאשֶׁא (*tovshex*). Others read תָּבֹא (*tavox*), *i.e.* "thou shalt not go," which, though good sense, is incorrect. אַל־ (*al*) is the adverb of negation, *i.q.* μή, *ne*. The Hebrew תֹּאבֶא (*tovex*) is derived from אָבָה (*avah*), "to agree to, to be willing" (Gesenius, Delitzsch), the preformative א being omitted, and is accurately rendered by the LXX., μὴ βουληθῇς, and the Vulgate, *ne acquiescas*. The warning is especially brief and striking. The only answer to all enticements of evil is a decided negative (Plumptre). Compare St. Paul's advice to the Ephesians (Eph. v. 11, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them").

Ver. 11.—**If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood.** The teacher here puts into the mouth of the sinners, for the sake of vivid representation, the first inducement with which they seek to allure youth from the paths of rectitude, viz. privacy and concealment (Cartwright, Wardlaw). Both the verbs אָרַב (*arav*) and צָפַן (*tzaphan*) mean "to lay in wait" (Zöckler). The radical meaning of *arav*, from which אֹרְבָה (*neer'vah*), "let us lay in wait" (Authorized Version) is taken, is "to knot, to weave, to intertwine." Verbs of this class are often applied to snares and craftiness (cf. the Greek δόλον ὑφαίνειν, and the Latin *insidias nectere*, "to weave plots, or lay snares"). Generally, *arav* is equivalent to "to watch in ambush" (Gesenius); cf. the Vulgate, *insidiemur sanguini;* i.e. "let us lay wait for blood." The LXX. paraphrases the expression, κοινώνησον αἵματος, *i.e.* "let us share in blood." On the other hand, צָפַן (*tzaphan*), from which נִצְפְּנָה (*nitz'p'nah*), translated in the Authorized Version, "let us lurk privily," is "to hide or conceal," and intrans. "to hide one's self," or ellipt., "to hide nets, snares" (Gesenius, Holden). This sense agrees with the Vulgate *abscondamus tendiculas;* i.e. "let us conceal snares." Delitzsch, however, holds that no word is to be understood with this verb, and traces the radical meaning to that of restraining one's self, watching, lurking, in the sense of *speculari*, "to watch for," *insidiari*, "to lay wait for." The two verbs combine what may be termed the apparatus, the arrangement of the plot and their lurking in ambush, by which they will await their victims. *For blood* (לָדָם, *l'dam*). The context (see vers. 12 and 16), bearing as it does upon bloodshed accompanying robbery, requires that the Hebrew לָדָם (*l'dam*) should be understood here, as Fleischer remarks, either elliptically, for "the blood of men," as the Jewish interpreters explain, or synedochically, for the person, with especial reference to his blood being shed, as in Ps. xciv. 21. Vatablus, Cornelius à Lapide, and Gesenius support the latter view (cf. Micah vii. 2, "They all lie in wait for blood," *i.e.* for bloodshed, or murder. דָּם (*dam*) may be also taken for life in the sense that "the blood is the life" (Deut. xii. 23). **Let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause.** The relation of the phrase, "without cause" (חִנָּם, *khinnam*), in this sentence is a matter of much dispute. It may be taken either with (1) the *verb* (as in the Authorized Version, Wordsworth, Luther, Van Ess, Noyes, Zöckler, Delitzsch, Hitzig, LXX., Syriac, Rashi, Ralbac), and then "lurk privily without cause" is equivalent to (*a*) without having any reason for revenge and enmity (Zöckler), *i.e.* though they have not provoked us, nor done us any injury, yet let us hurt them, in the sense of *absque causâ* (Munsterus, Paganini Version, Piscatoris Version, Mercerus), *δικῶς* (LXX.), *inique* (Arabic); (*b*) with impunity, since none will avenge them in the sense of Job ix. 12 (this is the view of Löwestein, but it is rejected by Delitzsch); or (2) it may be taken with the *adjective* "innocent," in which case it means (*a*) him that is innocent in vain; *i.e.* the man whose innocence will in vain protect (Zöckler, Holden), who gets nothing by it (Plumptre), or, innocent in vain, since God does not vindicate him (Cornelius à Lapide). On the analogy of 1 Sam. xix. 5; xxv. 31; Ps. xxxv. 19; lxix. 4; Lam. iii. 52, it seems preferable to adopt the first connection, and to take the adverb with the verb. In the whole of the passage there is an evident allusion to an evil preva-

lent in the age of Solomon, viz. the presence of bands of robbers, or banditti, who disturbed the security and internal peace of the country. In the New Testament the same state of things continued, and is alluded to by our Lord in the parable of the man who fell among thieves.

Ver. 12.—**Let us swallow them up alive as the grave.** A continuation of ver. 11, expanding the idea of bloodshed ending in murder, and showing the determination of the sinners to proceed to the most violent means to effect their covetous ends. The enticement here put before youth is the courage and boldness of their exploits (Wardlaw). The order of the words in the original is, "Let us swallow them up, as the grave, living," which sufficiently indicates the meaning of the passage. *Alive;* חַיִּים (*khayyim*), *i.e.* "the living," refers to the pronominal suffix in נְבַלְּעֵם (*niv'laem*), as in the Authorized Version and Zöckler (cf. Ps. lv. 15; cxxiv. 3). Umbreit and Hitzig are grammatically incorrect in connecting כִּשְׁאוֹל (*kish'ol*) "as the grave," with "the living," and translating "like the pit (swallows) that which lives." The כְּ (*ki*) with a substantive, as here in *kish'ol*, is a preposition, and not a conjunction (see Gesenius, 'Lexicon'). It denotes a kind of resemblance, but does not introduce a co-ordinate sentence. The allusion is undoubtedly in the teacher's mind to the fate of Korah and his company (Numb. xvi. 30—33), and as in that case "the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up" in the flush of life, so here the robbers say that they will as suddenly and effectively destroy their victims. בָּלַע (*dala*); from which *niv'laem*, in a figurative sense, means "to destroy utterly" (Gesenius). The change from the singular, "the innocent" (לָנָקִי, *l'naki*), to the plural in "let us swallow *them* up," is noticeable. *Like the pit* (כִּשְׁאוֹל, *kish'ol*); literally, *like Sheol*, or *Hades*, the great subterranean cavity or world of the dead. The all-devouring and insatiable character of sheol is described in ch. xxvii. 20, where the Authorized Version translates "Hell (*sheol*) and destruction are never full," and again in ch. xxx. 15, where it (*sheol*, Authorized Version, "the grave") is classed with the four things that are never satisfied. Vulgate, *infernus;* LXX., ᾅδης. **And whole, as those that go down into the pit.** The parallelism of ideas requires that the word "whole" (תְּמִימִים, *t'mimim*) should be understood of those physically whole (see Mercerus, Delitzsch), and not in a moral sense, as the *upright* (Luther, Grier, Holden, Plumptre). The word is used in an ethical signification in ch. ii. 21. Gesenius gives it the meaning of "safe, secure." *Those that go down into the pit* (יוֹרְדֵי בוֹר, *yorde vor*); *i.e.* the dead. The phrase also occurs in Ps. xxviii. 1; xxx. 4; lxxxviii. 4; cxliii. 7; Isa. xxxviii. 18). *The pit* (בּוֹר, *vor*); or, *the sepulchre*, the receptacle of the dead, is here synonymous with *sheol*. The LXX. substitutes for the latter part of the verse, Καὶ ἄρωμεν αὐτοῦ τὴν μνήμην ἐκ γῆς, "And let us remove his memory from the earth." The robbers, by drawing a comparison between themselves and Hades and the grave, which consign to silence all who are put therein, imply their own security against detection. They will so utterly destroy their victims that none will be left to tell the tale (see Musset, *in loc.*). This, we know, is a fancied, and at the best only a temporary, security.

Ver. 13.—**We shall find all precious substance.** This verse carries on the proposal of the sinners one step further, and puts forward a third enticement, viz. that of the profit of crime, or the prospect of immediate riches, before youth to join in crime. A short cut to wealth, and to the acquirement of that which costs others long years of steady application and carefulness, is a strong inducement (Wardlaw). *We shall find;* נִמְצָא (*nim'tza*), from מָצָא (*matza*), properly "to reach to," and "to find," in the sense of "to come upon;" cf. Latin *invenio*. *Substance* (הוֹן, *hon*); *i.e.* substance in the sense of riches. The radical meaning of הוֹן (*hun*), from which it is derived, is the same as in the Arabic word, "to be light, easy, to be in easy circumstances, and so to be rich" (Gesenius). In its abstract sense, *hon*, "substance," means ease, comfort, and concretely riches which bring about that result (see also Fleischer, as quoted by Delitzsch); cf. the LXX. κτῆσις, *i.e.* collectively, possessions, property. The Piscatoris Version, for "precious substance," reads *divitias*, "riches." *Precious;* יָקָר (*yakar*), properly "heavy," is found with הוֹן (*hon*), "substance," in ch. xii. 27 and xxiv. 4. The collocation of the ideas of lightness and heaviness in these two words is striking, but we need not necessarily suppose that any oxymoron is intended, as Schultens. Such combinations occur in other languages, and reside more in the radical meanings of the words than in the mind or intention of the writer or speaker. **We shall fill our houses with spoil;** *i.e.* they promise not only finding, but full possession (Gejerus, Muffet). *Spoil;* שָׁלָל (*shalal*), from שָׁלַל (*shalal*), same as the Arabic verb "to draw," and hence "to strip off" (Gesenius); and equivalent to the Greek σκῦλα (LXX.), the arms stripped off a slain enemy, spoils, and the Latin *spolia* (Vulgate). *Shalal* is used generally, as here, for "prey," "booty" (Gen. xlix. 27; Exod. xv. 9). Our gains, say

the robbers, will not only be valuable, but numerous and plentiful.

Ver. 14.—**Cast in thy lot among us.** The fourth and last enticement put forward, viz. *honourable union* and *frank and open-hearted generosity*. It has distinct reference to the preceding verse, and shows how the prospect of immediate wealth is to be realized (see Delitzsch, Wardlaw). *Cast in thy lot* cannot mean, as Mercerus, "cast in your inheritance with us, so that we all may use it in common," though גּוֹרָל (*goral*) does mean "inheritance" in the sense of that which comes to any one by lot (Judg. i. 3) (Gesenius), since that would be no inducement to youth to join the robbers. *Goral* properly is "a little stone or pebble," κλῆρος, especially such as were used in casting lots, and so equivalent to a "lot" here—that with which the distribution was made, as in Lev. xvi. 8; Neh. x. 34; and the custom of freebooters dividing the spoil by lot is here alluded to (Holden); comp. Ps. xxii. 18 in illustration of the practice of casting lots, "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." The sense is, "you shall equally with the others cast lots for your share of the spoil" (Zöckler, Delitzsch). **Let us all have one purse.** *Purse;* כִּיס (*kis*), the βαλάντιον of the LXX., the *marsupium* of the Vulgate, is the receptacle in which money is placed for security. In ch. xv. 11 it is used for the bag in which traders kept their weights, "the weights of the bag;" and in ch. xxiii. 31 it is translated "cup," the wine-cup. It here signifies the common stock, the aggregate of the gains of the robbers contributed to a common fund. The booty captured by each or any is to be thrown into one common stock, to form one purse, to be divided by lot among all the members of the band. On this community of goods among robbers, compare the Hebrew proverb, *In loculis, in poculis, in ira.* Community of goods among the wicked carries with it community in crime, just as the community of goods among the early Christians implied community in good works and in the religious sentiments of the Christian body or Church. The Rabbi Salomon Isacides offers another explanation (which leaves the choice open to youth either to share in the spoil by lot, or to live at the expense of a common fund, as he may prefer): "Si voles, nobiscum spolia partieris, si etiam magis placebit, sociali communique marsupio nobiscum vives"—"If thou wilt, thou shalt share with us the booty; ay, if it like thee more, thou shalt live with us on a confederate and common purse" (see Cornelius à Lapide).

Ver. 15.—**My son, walk not thou in the way with them.** The admonitory strain of ver. 10 is again resumed, and in vers. 16—19 the teacher states the reasons which should dissuade youth from listening to the temptations of sinners. *My son.* The recurrence of these words for the third time in this address marks the affectionate interest, the loving solicitude, in which the admonition is addressed. *Walk not thou.* Immediate and entire abandonment is counselled. The warning is practically a repetition of ver. 10, and is given again in ch. iv. 14, "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men." *Way;* דֶּרֶךְ (*derek*) means, figuratively, the way of living and acting (Gesenius). "Mores et consuetudines" (Bayne); cf. ch. xii. 15, "the fool's way;" xxii. 25; and Ps. i. 1. The meaning is "associate not with them, have no dealings whatever with them." **Refrain thy foot from their path;** *i.e.* keep back thy foot, or make not one step in compliance, resist the very first solicitations to evil. Compare the legal maxim, *Initiis obsta. Refrain;* מְנַע (*m'na*) is from מָנַע (*mana*), "to keep back, restrain;" LXX., ἔκκλινον (cf. Ps. cxix. 101, "I have refrained my feet from every evil way;" Jer. xiv. 10, "Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet"). Restraining the foot carries with it indirectly the natural inclination or propensity of the heart, even of the good, towards evil (Cartwright). *Foot* (רֶגֶל, *regel*) is, of course, used metaphorically, and means less the member of the body than the idea suggested by it; hence the use of the singular (Gejerus, Delitzsch). Bayne remarks that the Hebrews understood this passage as meaning "neither in public nor private life have any dealings with sinners." *Path* (נָתִיב, *nathiv*) is a beaten path, a pathway, a byway; from the unused root נָתַב (*nathav*), "to tread, trample;" and hence, while "way" may mean the great public high-road, "path" may stand for the bypath, less frequented or public. The same distinction probably occurs in Ps. xxv. 4, "Show me thy ways, O Lord; and teach me thy paths."

Ver. 16.—**For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood.** This is the first dissuasive urged to enforce the warning against evil companionship, as showing the extremes to which entering upon the ways of the wicked lead ultimately. At once the youth who listens will be hurried along impetuously to the two crimes of robbery and murder, which God has expressly forbidden in the eighth and sixth commandments respectively of the moral code. *Evil* (רַע, *ra*) is "wickedness," τὸ κακόν, generally, but here more specifically highway robbery, latrocinium (Cornelius à Lapide), as appears from vers. 11—13, where also murder, the laying in wait for blood, is proposed. The Rabbis Salomon and Salazar understand the evil to refer to the evil or destruction

which sinners bring upon themselves, and the shedding of blood to the fact that they lay themselves open to have their own blood shed by judicial process (see also Holden). The former explanation seems preferable to this, as putting a higher law than that of self-preservation before youth. The fear of judges who can condemn to death is nothing comparatively to the fear of him "who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell." This verse is wanting in the Vatican LXX., and Arabic, and hence Hitzig has concluded that it is an interpolation made from Isa. lix. 7, but upon insufficient evidence, as it is found in the Alexandrian LXX., Chaldee Paraphrase, Vulgate, and Syriac Versions, all which follow the Hebrew text. The latter part of the verse is quoted by St. Paul in Rom. iii. 15.

Ver. 17.—**Surely in vain the net is spread in the face of any bird.** The teacher here advances a *second* reason in support of his warning in ver. 15, under the form of a proverb in its strict sense. It is based on the ill-advised audacity of sinners in flying in the face of God's judgments. *In vain* (חִנָּם, *khinnam*), see ver. 11, may be taken in two senses. (1) *I.e.* to no purpose, *gratis, frustra* (Vulgate, Chaldee Paraphrase, Arabic). The meaning of the proverb here used then is, "to no purpose is the net spread before birds," *i.e.* though they see the net spread before them, they nevertheless fly into it (comp. ch. vii. 23, "As a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life"). So sinners, when they are plotting for others, plunge into their own destruction with their eyes open. Therefore do not associate with them, do not imitate their crass folly, be warned by their example, or you will share their fate. This view is supported by the LXX. reading, Οὐ γὰρ ἀδίκως ἐκτείνεται δίκτυα πτερωτοῖς, "For not unreasonably is the net spread before birds;" *i.e.* they fall into the snare (see Luther, Patrick, Umbreit, Ewald, Hitzig, Zöckler, Plumptre). (2) Others, as Delitzsch, Ziegler, Beda, Döderlein, Bertheau, Wardlaw, take *khinnam* in a different sense, as indicating the escape of the birds—the birds see the snare and fly away, and so in vain the net is spread in their sight. This explanation is in agreement with Ovid's statement, "Quæ nimis apparent retia vitat avis." The moral motive put before youth in this case is the aggravation of his guilt if he listens to the enticements of sinners. The teacher seems to say, "Imitate the birds, flee from temptation; if you listen to sinners, you will sin with your eyes open." *Is spread;* מְזֹרָה (*m'zorah*), *expansum*, not *conspersum est*, i.e. besprinkled or strewn with corn as a bait, as Rashi. *M'zorah* is the participle passive of pual, זֹרָה (*zorah*), "to be strewn," from kal זָרָה (*zarah*), "to scatter, or disperse" (Gesenius), and means *expansum*, because when a net is scattered or dispersed it is spread out (see Delitzsch). *Of any bird* (כָּל־בַּעַל כָּנָף, *khal-baal khanaph*); literally, *of every possessor of a wing*, or, as margin, *of everything that hath a wing*, i.e. of every bird. Compare the same expression in Eccles. x. 20, בַּעַל הַכְּנָפַיִם (*baal hach'naphayim*); *i.e.* "that which hath wings" (Authorized Version).

Ver. 18.—**And they lay wait for their** own **blood,** etc. The *third* reason or argument why the teacher's warning should be followed, drawn from the *destruction* which overtakes the sinners themselves. "Lay wait," and "lurk privily," as in ver. 11, from which this verse is evidently borrowed. They propose, as they say, to lay wait for the blood of others; but it is, says the teacher, for their own blood. לְדָמָם (*l'dhamam*), *contra sanguinem suum;* they lurk privily, as they say, for the innocent, but in reality it is for their own lives; לְנַפְשֹׁתָם (*l'naph'shotham*); *contra animas suas* (Vulgate); or, as the LXX. puts it, Αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἱ φόνου μετέχοντες, θησαυρίζουσιν ἑαυτοῖς κακά, "For they who take part in murder treasure up evils for themselves;" that is, they are bringing a heavier and surer destruction upon themselves than they can ever inflict upon others (Wardlaw). The LXX. adds, at the close of the verse, Ἡ δὲ καταστροφὴ ἀνδρῶν παρανόμων κακή, "And the overthrowing or destruction of transgressors is great, or evil." The Arabic Version has a similar addition.

Ver. 19.—**So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain.** The epiphonema or moral of the preceding address. *So are the ways*, or such is the lot (as Delitzsch), or such are the paths (as Zöckler), *i.e.* so deceitful, so ruinous, are the ways. כֵּן (*chen*) is here used as a qualitative adverb. *Ways;* אָרְחוֹת (*ar'khoth*), the plural of אֹרַח (*orakh*), a poët. word, equivalent in the first instance to "way," *i.q.* דֶּרֶךְ (*derekh*), and metaphorically applied to any one's ways, his manner of life and its result, and hence lot, as in Job viii. 12, and hence the expression covers the three preceding verses. *That is greedy of gain* (בֹּצֵעַ בָּצַע, *botsea batsa*); literally, *concupiscentis concupiscentiam lucri;* i.e. eagerly longing after gain; he who greedily desires riches (*avari*, Vulgate). *Gain; batsa* in pause, from בָּצַע (*betsa*), which takes its meaning from the verb בָּצַע (*batsa*), "to cut in pieces, to break," and hence means properly that which is cut or broken off and taken by any one for himself, and so *unjust gain*—anything whatever fraudulently

acquired, as in ch. xxviii. 16, where it is translated "covetousness" (Authorized Version); cf. Isa. xxxiii. 15; ch. xv. 27. The idea of greed and covetousness enters largely into the word. Which **taketh away the life of the owners thereof.** The pronoun "which" does not occur in the original. The nominative to "taketh away" (יִקַּח, *yikkath*) is "gain;" the "unjust gain" (*betsa*) takes away the life of its owners, *i.e.* of those who are under its power. *Owners thereof* (בְּעָלָיו, *b'alayo*) does not necessarily imply that they are in actual possession of the unjust gain, but rather refers to the influence which the lust for gain exercises over them. The expression in this second hemistich does not mean that the rapacious take the life of their comrades who possess the gain, as Rabbi Salomon; nor, as the Vulgate, "the ways of the avaricious man take away the lives of those who possess them." For the phrase, "taketh away the life," as importing a violent taking away, cf. Ps. xxxi. 13; 1 Kings xix. 10. The sentiment of the verse is well expressed in 1 Tim. vi. 10, "For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

Vers. 20—33.—2. *Second admonitory discourse. Address of Wisdom personified, exhibiting the folly of those who wilfully reject, and the security of those who hearken to, her counsels.* The sacred writer, in this section, as also in h. viii., uses the rhetorical figure of prosopopœia, or impersonation. Wisdom is represented as speaking and as addressing the simple, scorners, and fools. The address itself is one of the noblest specimens of sacred eloquence, expressing in rapid succession the strongest phases of feeling—pathetic solicitude with abundant promise, indignant scorn at the rejection of her appeal, the judicial severity of offended majesty upon offenders, and lastly the judicial complacency which delights in mercy towards the obedient. The imagery in part is taken from the forces of nature in their irresistible and overwhelming violence and destructive potency.

Ver. 20.—**Wisdom crieth without.** *Wisdom.* The Hebrew word (*khochmoth*) here used to designate Wisdom seems to be an abstract derivation from the ordinary *khochmah*. The form is peculiar to the Proverbs and Psalms, in the former occurring four times (ch. i. 22; ix. 1; xiv. 1; xxiv. 7), and in the latter twice only (viz. Ps. xlix. 4; lxxviii. 15). As in ch. ix. 1 and xxiv. 7, it is [a *pluralis excellentiæ* of the feminine gender, a variety of the *pluralis extensivus*, as Böttcher prefers to denominate it. The feminine form may be determined by the general law which associates purity and serenity with womanhood (Plumptre). The idea of plurality, however, is not that of extension, but of comprehension, *i.e.* it is not so much all kinds of wisdom which is presented to us, as all the varieties under which wisdom *par excellence* may be regarded and is comprehended. The plural form of the word denotes the highest character or excellence in which wisdom can be conceived; or, as the marginal reading expresses it, wisdoms, *i.e.* excellent wisdom. Other instances of the *pluralis excellentiæ* are met with in Holy Writ, *e.g. Elohim*, God, *i.e.* "God of Gods," either from the polytheistic view, or from the monotheistic view as expressive of God's might in manifestation, *passim; k'doshim*, "the Holy (God)," ch. ix. 10; xxx. 3; *adonim*, for *adon*, "lord" (Gesenius, 'Gram.,' § 108. 2 *b*). In the conception of Wisdom here presented to us in the text we have the germ of an idea which, on the principles of expansion, developed subsequently in the consciousness of the Christian Church into a definite identification of Wisdom with the Second Person of the blessed Trinity. There is a striking parallel to this passage in Luke xi. 49, where Christ speaks of himself as ἡ Σοφία τοῦ Θεοῦ, "the Wisdom of God," that shall send prophets and apostles into the world, and thereby identifies himself with Wisdom (cf. this with vers. 20, 21; ch. vii.). Again, a striking similarity is observable between the teaching of Divine Wisdom and that of the Incarnate Word, as much in their promises as in their threats and warnings. But it is difficult to determine with accuracy to what extent the Messianic import of the personification was present to the consciousness of the sacred writers, and whether Wisdom as here presented to us is simply a poetic and abstract personification or a distinct hypostatizing of the Word. Dorner ('Pers. of Christ,' Introd., p. 16), with reference to ch. viii. 22, etc., says that though Wisdom is introduced speaking as a personality distinct from God, still the passage does not lead clearly to an hypostatizing of the Khochmah. Döllinger ('Heidenthum und Judenthum,' bk. x. pt. iii. sec. 2 *a*, and ch. viii. 22, etc.) maintains that Wisdom is "the personified idea of the mind of God in creation," rather than the presence of "a distinct hypostasis." Lücke (see references in Liddon, 'Bampton Lects.') holds that in Proverbs Wisdom is merely a personification. It is clear that whatever is predicated

of Wisdom in ch. viii. must be also predicated of her in the passage before us, in reference either to the hypostatic or opposite view. On the other hand, a large number of expositors, dating from the earliest periods of the Christian Church down to the present time, see in Wisdom a distinct hypostasis, or person—the Lord Jesus Christ. A fuller investigation of this subject will be seen in our remarks on ch. viii. For the present we observe that Wisdom is essentially Divine. Her authority, her utterances, whether of promise, threat, scorn, or vengeance, are the authority, the utterances, of God. *Crieth;* rather, *crieth loudly*, or *aloud*. The Hebrew verb *ranan* (רָנַן) is "to vibrate the voice," and conveys the idea of the clear loud ringing tones with which proclamations were made; cf. the Vulgate *prædicare*, and the Arabic *clamitate*, "to cry with a loud voice." Fleischer remarks that the Arabic *rannan*, which is allied to the Hebrew verb, is used of a speaker who has a clear piercing voice. In such a way does Wisdom cry without when making her address. She elevates her voice that all may hear. The verb in the original is *tazonnah*, the feminine singular of *ranan*, and predicate to "Wisdom," according to the rule that verbs in the singular are construed with plural nouns having a singular signification, especially the *pluralis excellentiæ* (see Gesenius, 'Gram.,' § 146. 2). *Without.* בַּחוּץ (*bakhuts*) is here used adverbially, as in Gen. ix. 22, and signifies "in the open places," *i.e.* abroad, without, as opposed to the space within the walls. The writer here begins his enumeration of the five places wherein Wisdom preaches, viz. (1) without, (2) in the streets, (3) in chief places of concourse, (4) in the opening of the gates, (5) in the city, all of which are public, and thus indicate the publicity of her announcements (with these comp. ch. viii. 1; ix. 3). **She uttereth her voice**; or, *causeth her voice to be heard;* represented in the Vulgate by *dat vocem suam*, and in the LXX. by παῤῥησίαν ἄγει (equivalent to "she observes free-spokenness"). The instrumentality which Wisdom uses in her public preaching are the prophets and teachers (Ecclus. xxiv. 33; Zöckler, Vatablus, Mercerus). **In the streets**; literally, *in the wide spaces;* the Hebrew, רְחֹבוֹת (*r'khovoth*), being, as in Gen. xxvi. 22, "wide spaces," and corresponding to the πλατεῖα of the LXX.; *plateæ*, Vulgate. The same places are indicated in Luke xiv. 21, where, in the parable of the marriage supper, the servants are bidden to go out into the *streets* (πλατεῖαι) and lanes of the city. The word is connected with the adjective *rakhav* (רָחָב), "broad," "wide;" and in 2 Chron. xxxii. 6 is used to designate the ample space at the gates of Oriental cities (Gesenius), though here it seems to refer rather to "squares," large open spaces, not uncommon in Oriental cities—I saw one such at Aden—or it may refer to the broad crowded thoroughfares. The Syriac reading, *in compitis*, gives a different sense, as *compitum*, equivalent to "cross-roads."

Ver. 21.—**She crieth in the chief place of concourse.** The *chief place* is literally the *head* (רֹאשׁ, *rosh*); here used figuratively for the place where streets or roads branch off in different directions, as in Ezek. xvi. 25, "the beginning of streets," or "the head of the way;" comp. Gen. ii. 10, where it is used of the point at which the four streams branched off; and the corresponding expression in ch. viii. 2, "She standeth in the top (*rosh*) of high places." *Of concourse;* הֲמִיּוֹת (*homiyyoth*) is the plural of the adjective, הוֹמִי (*homi*); literally, "those who are making a noise," or "the tumultuous;" here, as in Isa. xxii. 2 and 1 Kings i. 41, used substantively for "boisterous, noisy places" (compare the Vulgate, *in capite turbarum*). The variation in the LXX., "on high walls," or "on the tops of the walls" (ἐπ' ἄκρων δὲ τειχέων, *super summos muros*), which is adopted also in the Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic Versions, arises from reading חוֹמוֹת (*khomoth*), "walls," for the Masoretic *homiyyoth*. **In the openings of the gates.** The *opening* (פֶּתַח, *pethakh*) is the opening of the gate, or the entrance by the gate (שַׁעַר, *shaar*), *i.e.* of the city, the *introitus portæ* of the Chaldee and Syriac Versions. The openings of the gates would be thronged, as courts of justice were held at the gates (Deut. xvi. 18; 2 Sam. xv. 2); business was carried on there, as the selling and redemption of land (Gen. xxiii. 10—16; Ruth iv. 1); markets were also held there (2 Kings vii. 1—18); and the same localities were used for the councils of the state and conferences (Gen. xxxiv. 20; 2 Sam. iii. 27; 2 Chron. xviii. 9; Jer. xvii. 19; comp. ch. xxxi. 33, "Her husband is known in the *gates*"). In place of the expression, "in the openings of the gates," the LXX. reads, Ἐπὶ δὲ πύλαις δυναστῶν παρεδρεύει, "And at the gates of the mighty she sits"—an interpolation which only partially represents the sense of the original, and which is adopted in the Arabic. In the next clause, for "in the city" is substituted ἐπὶ δὲ πύλαις πόλεως, "at the gates of the city." The Vulgate combines the separate clauses of the original in one—*in foribus portarum urbis*, "in the entrances and openings of the gates of the city." **In the city** (עִיר, *bair*); *i.e.* in the city itself (so Aben Ezra, ap. Gejerus), as opposed to the entrance by

the gates, and so used antithetically (as Umbreit, Bertheau, Hitzig). The publicity of the teaching of Wisdom, observable in the places she selects for that purpose, also marked the public ministry of our Lord and his disciples, and finds an illustration in his command, "What ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops" (Matt. x. 27); *i.e.* give it all the publicity possible. The spirit of Wisdom, like that of Christianity, is aggressive (see Wardlaw, 'Lectures on Proverbs iv.,' vol. i. pp. 40, 41).

Ver. 22.—**How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?** etc. From this verse to the end of the chapter the sacred writer puts before us the words of Wisdom herself. The discourse begins in the same way as in Ps. iv. 2 (Zöckler), and the classification of the persons addressed—the simple, the scorners, and the sinners—closely resembles that of Ps. i. 1. In the order there is a progression from the least to the most culpable. *The simple* (פְּתָיִם, *p'thayim*), as in ver. 4, those who are indifferent through thoughtlessness and inconsiderateness, and are thereby open to evil. **The scorners** (לֵצִים, *letsim*); or, *mockers*, the same as the (לָצוֹן, *latson*) "scornful men" of ch. xxix. 8, derived from the root לוּץ (*luts*), "to deride, mock," probably by imitating the voice in derision. The mockers are those who hold all things in derision, both human and Divine, who contemn God's admonitions, and treat with ridicule both threatenings and promises alike. **Fools**; כְּסִילִים (*ch'silim*), a different word from the *evilim* of ver. 7, but signifying much the same, *i.e.* the obdurate, the hardened, *stolidi*, those who walk after the sight of their eyes and the imagination of their hearts—a class not ignorant of knowledge, but hating it because of the restraint it puts them under. The word occurs in ch. xvii. 10, in the sense of the incorrigible; in ch. xxvi. 3, 4 as a term of the greatest contempt. The *enallage*, or interchange of tenses in the original—the verbs "love" and "hate" being future, and "delight" being perfect—is not reproducible in English. The perfect is used interchangeably with the future where the action or state is represented as first coming to pass or in progress, and, as Zöckler remarks, may be inchoative, and so be rendered "become fond of," instead of "be fond of." But it appears to represent not so much a state or action first coming to pass as in progress (see Gesenius, 'Gram.,' § 126. 3). Böttcher (§ 948. 2) translates it by *concupiverint*, i.e. "How long shall ye have delighted in scorning?" The futures express "love" and "hate" as habitual sentiments (Delitzsch). It is to be noted that the language of Wisdom, in vers. 22 and 23, is expressive of the most tender and earnest solicitude.

Ver. 23.—**Turn you at my reproof.** A call is here made to repentance. The meaning seems to be "return to my reproof," *i.e.* place yourselves under my reproof (as Gejerus, Delitzsch), the ל being represented by *ad*, as in the Vulgate: *convertimini ad correptionem meam.* It is susceptible, however, of a different reading, *i.e.* "in consequence of, or because of (*propter*), my reproof," the prefix ל being found in Numb. xvi. 34, "They fled at the cry," *i.e.* because of the cry. *Reproof* (תּוֹכַחַת, *thochakhath*); *i.e.* rebuke, or correction, by words. The LXX. ἔλεγχος conveys the argumentative conviction which will be present in the reproof. The word occurs again in vers. 23, 25, and 30 of this chapter, and also in ch. iii. 11; v. 12; vi. 23; xxvii. 5; xxix. 15. **Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you.** The promise consequent upon, and the encouragement to, repentance. The promise is conditioned—if those addressed will heed the reproof of Wisdom, then she will pour forth her Spirit upon them, and cause them to know her words. The verb *hibbia* (הַבִּיעַ), "to stream forth, or gush out," is here used figuratively. The outflow of the Spirit of Wisdom will be like the abundant and continuous gushing forth of water from the spring or fountain. The verb unites in it the figures of abundant fulness and refreshing invigoration (Umbreit, Elster); comp. ch. xv. 2, 28; Ps. lix. 7; cxix. 171; Eccles. x. 1. We have here a striking anticipation of the prophecy of Joel (ii. 28). The Spirit is that of Wisdom "and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and godly strength, the Spirit of knowledge and true godliness" (see Confirmation Office). The explanation of Beda, that it signifies her anger, is clearly inadmissible. **I will make known my words unto you**; *i.e.* as the LXX., "I will teach you my word" (διδάξω), or as the Vulgate "show" (*ostendam*), "expound, or make clear." *My words* (*d'vari*); *i.e.* precepts, or doctrine, or secrets. An intimate relation subsists between the "Spirit" of Wisdom and her "words," with which it is parallel. The former is the illuminating, invigorating principle which infuses life and power into the "words" of Wisdom, which she has already given, and which are already in our possession. Wisdom stands in the same relation to her words as the Divine Logos does to his utterances, into which he infuses himself. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John vi. 63. See Delitzsch, Wardlaw, *in loc.*).

Ver. 24.—**Because I have called, and ye refused.** A pause may be imagined, and

seems to be implied, between this and the preceding verses (22 and 23), when the address passes into a new phase—from that of invitation and promise to that of judgment and stern denunciation (vers. 24—27). In the subsection thó antecedent clauses are vers. 24, 25, introduced by the conjunction "because" (יַעַן, *yaan; quia*, Vulgate), which expresses the reason or cause for the conclusion in vers. 26 and 27, introduced by "I also," to which the "because" answers. A similar grammatical construction and judgment is to be found in Isaiah: "I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear" (Isa. lxvi. 4; see also Jer. vii. 13). *Refused;* i.e. refused to hearken, as signified in the LXX. *ὑπακούσατε.* **I have stretched out my hand.** A forensic gesture to arrest attention. The expression is equivalent to "I have spread out my hands" (Isa. lxv. 2); cf. "Then Paul stretched forth the hand (*ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα*)" (Acts xxvi. 1). **Regarded** (מָקְשִׁיב, *mak'shiv*). The original idea of the verb קָשַׁב (*kashav*), used here, is that of erecting or pricking up the ear, like the Latin *arrigere*, sc. *aures*, in Plaut., 'Rud.,' 5. 2. 6; and cf. "arrectisque auribus adstant" (Virgil, 'Æneid,' i. 153).

Ver. 25.—**Ye have set at nought**; rather, *rejected* (Umbreit, Ewald, *et alii*). The Authorized Version rendering here is equivocal, inasmuch as it is capable of meaning "despised," whereas פָּרַע (*para*) signifies "to let loose," "to let go" (cf. the German *fahren lassen*), and hence "to overlook, or reject." Its force is fairly represented in the LXX., Ἀκύρους ἐποιεῖτε ἐμὰς βουλάς, "Ye rendered my counsel of no effect." **Counsel** (עֵצָה, *etsah*); *i.e.* advice, in the sense of recommendations for doing good, as opposed to *reproofs* for the avoidance of evil (see vers. 23 and 30). **Would none.** The same verb, אָבָה (*avah*), occurs in vers. 10 and 30, hence used with the negative לֹא (*lo*) in the sense of ἀπειθεῖν (LXX.), "to refuse compliance with," as in Æschylus, 'Agam.,' 1049.

Ver. 26.—**I also will laugh at your calamity**; or, more accurately, *in the time of your calamity;* as in the Vulgate, *in interitu vestro ridebo.* The preposition prefixed to the substantive *b'eyd'chem* (בְּאֵידְכֶם) refers to the time, or state, or condition (Gesenius, 'Gram.,' 154. 3). In the time of their calamity wisdom will exult or rejoice. The LXX., Τῇ ὑμετέρᾳ ἀπωλείᾳ ἐπιγελάσομαι, however, favours the rendering of the Authorized Version. *Calamity* (אֵיד, *eyd*) is heavy overwhelming misfortune, that which oppresses and crushes its victims. The terrific nature of the punishment of the wicked is marked by a succession of terms all of terrible import—calamity, fear, desolation, destruction, distress, and anguish (vers. 26, 27). When these come upon them, then Wisdom will laugh and have them in derision. The verbs "laugh" (שָׂחַק, *sakhak*) and "mock" (לָעַג, *laag*) are the same as in Ps. ii. 4, where they are rendered "to mock" and "have in derision." **When your fear cometh**; *i.e.* has actually arrived. *Fear* (פַּחַד, *pakhad*); here used metonymically for that which causes the fear or terror (*id, quod timebatis*, Vulgate). There is a similar use of *φόβος* in 1 Pet. iii. 14.

Ver. 27.—**When your fear cometh as desolation.** The imagery in this verse is borrowed from nature—from the tempest and whirlwind, which, in their impetuous fury, involve all in irretrievable ruin. The two leading ideas here in the writer's mind are calamity and fear. These—their fear, that which causes their fear; and their destruction, *i.e.* calamity—both representing Wisdom's, and so God's, judgment, will come on sinners as a wasting tempest and sweeping hurricane. The terror and devastation caused by these latter as they pass over the face of nature are employed to depict the alarm and ruin of sinners. **Desolation**; שְׁאָוָה (*shaavah*) is a wasting, crashing tempest (cf. ch. iii. 25; Zeph. i. 15), derived from שָׁאָה (*shaah*), "to make a crash," as of a house falling. The Vulgate reads, *repentura calamitas;* the LXX., *ἄφνω θόρυβος;* both bringing out the idea of suddenness, and the latter that of the uproar of the tempest. The Khetib, or traditional text of the manuscripts (בְּשֹׁאָתָה), is equivalent to the Keri, or emended reading (כְּשׁוֹאָה), and both appear to have the same root-meaning. **Destruction** (אֵיד, *eyd*); the same as "calamity" in the preceding verse. **Whirlwind**; סוּפָה (*suphah*), from the root סוּף (*suph*), "to snatch, or carry away," means a whirlwind carrying everything before it—the *καταιγίς* of the LXX., or hurricane, as in Arist., 'Mund.,' 4. 16. **Distress and anguish** (צָרָה וְצוּקָה, *tsarah v'tzukah*). A corresponding alliteration occurs in Isa. xxx. 6 and Zeph. i. 15. The root-signification of the former is that of compression, reproduced in the LXX. *θλῖψις*, and the Vulgate *tribulatio;* that of the latter is narrowness. LXX., *πολιορκία*, "a beleaguering;" Vulgate, *angustia*. The LXX. adds, at the close of this verse, *ἢ ὅταν ἔρχηται ὑμῖν ὄλεθρος* as explanatory.

Ver. 28.—The phase which the address now enters upon continues to the thirty-first verse. The change in this verse from the second to the third person is striking. It

implies that Wisdom thinks fools no longer worthy of being addressed personally—"Quasi stultos indignos censunt ulteriori alloquio" (Gejerus and Michaelis). The declaration is the embodiment of the laughter and scorn of ver. 26. The three verbs, "they shall call," "they shall seek," "they shall find," occur in uncommon and emphatic forms in the original. They are some out of the few instances where the future terminations are inserted fully before the pronominal suffix. **I will not answer.** The distress and anguish consequent upon their calamity and fear lead them to pray, but there will be no answer nor heed given to their cry. They are not heard, because they do not cry rightly nor in the time of grace (Lapide). See the striking parallel to the tenor of this passage in Luke xiii. 24—28. **They shall seek me early**; *i.e.* diligently. The verb שָׁחַר (*shakhar*) is the denominative from the substantive שַׁחַר (*shakhar*), "the dawn, morning," and signifies to go out and seek something in the obscurity of the morning twilight (Delitzsch, Zöckler), and hence indicates diligence and earnestness in the search. Gesenius gives the same derivation, but connects it with the dawn in the sense of the light breaking forth, and thus, as it were, seeking (see also ch. ii. 27; vii. 15; viii. 17; Hos. v. 15).

Vers. 29 and 30 belong to ver. 28, and are not the antecedent clauses to ver. 31, as Zöchler remarks. They recapitulate the charges already made against the sinners in vers. 22 and 25, and now set them forth as the ground or reason why Wisdom, on her part, turns a deaf ear to their entreaties. Wisdom will disregard them because they have previously disregarded her. The connection is denoted in the LXX. by γάρ, for the Hebrew *takhath ki*, equivalent to "because," and in the Authorized Version by the punctuation. **Did not choose the fear of the Lord.** The verb "to choose" (בָּחַר, *bakhar*) combines in itself the meanings of *eligere* and *diligere* (Fleischer), and therefore signifies here not only choice of, but also the fuller sense of love for, the fear of the Lord. **They despised**; *i.e.* rejected the reproof with scorn or derision, sneered or turned up their noses at it (μυκτηρίζειν, LXX.), disparaged it (*detrahere*, Vulgate), or, more strongly, as Gejerus says, execrated it. Their rejection of reproof is stigmatized in stronger terms than in ver. 25.

Ver. 31.—**Therefore they shall eat**, etc. A further enlargement of the declaration of Wisdom, showing that their calamity is the result of their own ways. The futures are resumed in the original from ver. 28. The word "therefore" does not occur, but it is met with in the LXX., τοιγαροῦν; in the Vulgate, *igitur*; and in the Syriac, *ideo*. The truth here expressed is accordant with the tenor of the teaching of the Scripture (comp. ch. xiv. 14; xxii. 8; Job iv. 8; Isa. iii. 10; Gal. vi. 7, 8), and with our daily experience of God's moral government of the world (see Butler, 'Analogy,' part i. ch. ii., *ad fin.*). This sentiment of retributive punishment also found expression in Terence, "Tute hoc intristi, tibi omne est edendum" ('Phorm.,' 2. 1. 4). When we are punished, the blameworthiness lies not with God, but with us sinners (Wardlaw). **They shall be filled**; rather, *satiated*, or *surfeited*; *saturabuntur* (Vulgate). The verb שָׂבַע (*shava*) means not only "to fill," but "to be satiated or cloyed" (cf. ch. xiv. 14; xxv. 16; Ps. lxxxviii. 3; cxxiii. 4). Michaelis remarks on this word, "Ad nauseam implebuntur et comedent, ita ut consiliorum suorum vehementer tandem, sed nimis sero, ipsos pœniteat" (Michaelis, 'Notæ Uberiores in Prov.'), "They shall be filled and eat *ad nauseam*, so that at length, but too late, they shall vehemently repent them of their own counsels." **Counsels** (מוֹעֲצוֹת, *moetsoth*); *i.e.* ungodly counsels, or evil devices. The word only occurs in the plural.

Ver. 32.—Wisdom now brings her address to a close by contrasting the destruction and ruin of the foolish, and the security of those who listen to her voice. **The turning away**; מְשׁוּבָה (*m'shuvah*), from שׁוּב (*shuv*), "to turn about, or to return" (which is used metaphorically of conversion), here means *defection*, turning away; and hence apostasy (*aversio*, Vulgate, Chaldee Paraphrase, Syriac; *perversitio*, Cast. Version); the "backsliding" of Jer. viii. 5; Hos. xi. 7. Aben Ezra understands it to signify "ease," as in the marginal reading; but there seems no warrant for taking the word in that sense. The LXX. renders the passage quite differently, Ἀνθ' ὧν γὰρ ἠδίκουν νηπίους, φονευθήσονται, "For because they wronged the young, they shall be slain;" so also the Arabic. The turning away is from the warnings and invitations of Wisdom, and implies rebelliousness against God. **The prosperity.** The word in the original (שַׁלְוָה, *shal'vah*) is here used in a bad sense, and means "carelessness, indolence," that carnal security which is induced by prosperity and worldly success, as in Jer. xxii. 21, "I spoke to thee in thy prosperity (security), but thou saidst, I will not hear" (cf. Ezek. xvi. 49, where it is translated "idleness." So Datlie translates, "Incuria ignavorum eos perdit." The Chaldee Paraphrase and Syriac Versions read "error." It occurs in a good sense as "tranquillity," "security," in ch. xvii. 1 and Ps. cxxii. 7. The derivation of the word is

from שָׁלַח (*shalah*), "to be tranquil, to be safe, secure." Mariana remarks that it is more difficult to bear prosperity than adversity, because we endure adversity, we are corrupted by prosperity, and prosperity or ease makes fools mad. The false security of the prosperous is illustrated by our Lord in his parable of the rich fool (Luke xii. 16—21). The LXX. differs again from the Hebrew in the second clause of this verse, καὶ ἐξεταμὸς ἀσεβεῖς ὀλεῖ; *i.e.* the carefully considered judgment of God concerning them shall destroy them. The LXX. is followed by the Arabic. **Them**; *i.e.* the fools themselves, and not other sinners, as Ben Ezra says, though the apparent security of fools, the impunity with which they seem to go on in their wickedness, and the success of their plans, may lead others to destruction.

Ver. 33.—**Hearkeneth unto me.** Wisdom, in closing her address, draws a beautiful picture of the real security and peace of the righteous, as contrasted with the false security of the wicked. As on the one side rejection of her counsels, her warnings, and invitations, carries with it punishment and irretrievable ruin; so, on the other, the hearkening to her words, and loving obedience, are rewarded by her with the choicest blessings. **Shall dwell safely**; that is, with confidence, without danger (*absque terrore*, Vulgate). The phrase, שָׁכַן בֶּטַח (*shachan betakh*), is used in Deut. xxxiii. 12—18 of the safety with which the covenant people should dwell in the land that God had given them; but it is capable of a further extension of meaning beyond mere temporal security, viz. to the spiritual peace of the righteous. The psalmist also employs it to describe the confidence with which he awaits the resurrection, when he says, "My flesh also shall rest in hope [or, 'dwell confidently']" (Ps. xvi. 9). So here Wisdom promises that he who hearkens to her shall dwell calmly and undisturbed amidst the distractions of the world. The promise agrees with the description of Wisdom elsewhere that "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." **And shall be quiet** (שַׁאֲנַן, *shaanan*, perfect pilel). Wisdom regards her assurance as already accomplished, and hence the perfect in the original is used for the future. The hearers and doers of her will shall live in tranquillity; nay, they are already doing so. It is a thing not only in prospect, but in possession. **From fear of evil**; *i.e.* either without any fear of evil, fear being removed (*timore sublato*, Vulgate), or, as the Authorized Version expresses it, connecting the phrase more intimately with the verb—"quiet from fear of evil." It is not only evil, רָעָה (*raah*), in its substantial form, as calamity, they are to be free from, but even the fear of it. The tranquillity will be supreme.

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 6.—*Proverbs.* It is not surprising to see that proverbs, which are found more or less in the traditional lore of almost all nations, and flourish most abundantly in the East, also enter into the circle of the inspired literature of the Jews. The general characteristics of this portion of the sacred Scriptures are well worthy of our study.

I. THE PROVERBS ARE ALL CONCISE UTTERANCES. In the present age, when time is more precious than ever, it is to be wished that public teachers would correct their prolixity by following the example of these sayings, which certainly contain "the soul of wit." 1. The conciseness of the proverbs renders them *striking*. It is not enough to state a truth; we must make it tell. Men's ears are dull to spiritual ideas. In order to penetrate, words must have point, incisiveness, force. 2. The conciseness also greatly *assists memory*. Proverbs can be handed from one to another like coins. A truth that is worth uttering is worth remembering.

II. MANY OF THE PROVERBS ARE ILLUSTRATIVE SAYINGS. They are "figures." The proverb runs into the parable; indeed, a parable is but an expanded proverb. Either by way of arbitrary illustration, or by reason of real correspondence between the material and the spiritual nature, a proverb will often afford lessons of spiritual truth which are more fresh and interesting than bare abstract statements. The popular mind naturally turns to the concrete. What strikes the senses is felt to be most forcible. How well our Lord knew this fact of human nature, and how graciously he condescended to accommodate himself to it, is seen in his own rich picture-gallery of parabolic teaching. He who can discern "sermons in stones" and "books in the running brooks" will have his eyes opened to see "good in everything."

III. SOME OF THE PROVERBS ARE SUGGESTIVE rather than direct teachings. They are "dark sayings"—possibly because the truth is so profound that it can only be

approached by those who grope after it in difficult research. But more simple truth may be wrapped in enigmatic phrases for the express purpose of testing the genuineness of the desire to possess it, exciting interest, exercising the powers of thought in the learner, and becoming itself a more intelligible and more valuable thing when it is once found (see Matt. xiii. 10—17). Let no man think that the best treasures of thought are scattered prodigally on the surface of life for swine to trample underfoot. They lie deep, and must often be sought with toil and anguish of soul. Yet to the honest seeker after light, if only he follow the Light of the world, it will surely dawn, though for a season

> "The intellectual power, through words and things,
> Went sounding on, a dim and perilous way."

IV. THE PROVERBS TREAT OF HUMAN CONDUCT. 1. Next to theology, the highest knowledge is that of human life and duty. The triumphs of physical discovery seem to have thrown us into the opposite extreme from that to which Socrates tended. Surely whatever other studies we may pursue, "the *proper* study of mankind is man." No other topic is more profoundly interesting, none requires so much light, none is so replete with practical issues. 2. The wisdom of the proverbs is practical. It deals with conduct—which, as Mr. Matthew Arnold says, "is three-fourths of life." What we know is of service to us chiefly as it affects what we do. 3. This wisdom concerns itself with the moral and religious guides to practice. We find here no Machiavellian maxims of dishonest expediency, no mere worldly advice in the school of Lord Chesterfield, no Jesuistic casuistry. Righteousness among men and the fear of God are the leading principles set forth. The least exalted precepts are pure and honest. The highest reach the level of Christian ethics. Though much of the Book of Proverbs falls short of the lofty requirements of the New Testament, many passages in it read like anticipations of the Sermon on the Mount. Thus are we taught that the highest wisdom is one with the purest morality and the noblest religion.

V. THE PROVERBS ORIGINATED IN WISDOM, AND NEED WISDOM FOR THEIR INTERPRETATION. They are words of the wise. Inspiration does not dispense with intelligence; it quickens it. Wisdom is itself a gift of the Spirit of God (Jas. i. 5). The most simple truth is often the product of the most difficult thinking which has triumphed in thus making plain what was previously obscure. Let us see, however, that the clear utterance is a word of the wise; for there is a tendency to accept a saying because of its neat and apt form, without regard to its truth or falseness. Wisdom is therefore needed in understanding proverbs and in "discerning spirits." It is not enough that the grammarian explains the words. Higher wisdom is necessary to see where the isolated truth fits into other truths, by what it is qualified, and how it is to be applied; for it is one of the disadvantages of the proverb that its very terseness gives to it an unnatural isolation, and excludes the addition of counterbalancing truths.

Ver. 7.—*The relation of religion to knowledge.* "The fear of the Lord" being the most common Old Testament name for religion, we must take it here in its large and general sense, and understand that religion in all its relations is set forth as the true basis of knowledge; though it may well be that awe and reverence for the majesty and mystery of God have a special prominence in regard to the pursuit of truth.

I. RELIGION IS AN IMPORTANT REQUISITE FOR THE ACQUISITION OF ALL KINDS OF KNOWLEDGE. Religion—not theology—claims this position. The progress of science was arrested for a thousand years by the claims of theology to dominate all regions of inquiry. Theology, or human speculations about Divine things, is the most difficult, and therefore in many respects the most uncertain, of all the sciences. When the schoolmen made the dogmatic assumptions of patristic theology, combined with elaborate deductions from Aristotelian philosophy, the touchstone of all truth, they set up an impenetrable barrier before the investigation of nature. Even when theological dicta are absolutely true, it is irrelevant to bring these to bear upon physical science. Unquestionably Bacon did a great service to the cause of truth in banishing final causes from the science of nature. But the relation of religion to science is of a totally different nature. That relation consists in the influence that religious experience, religious character, religious feelings and motives, must necessarily have upon scientific

research. Religion influences all life; intellectual life is no exception. 1. Religion should *excite the thirst for truth.* It is a mistake to suppose that religion inclines to indolence and ignorance. It inspires all the noblest endeavours. It is on the side of light and truth. Rightly understood, it will impose the pursuit of science as a duty. Without religion this pursuit is too likely to be followed only from mere inclination, or possibly for ends of self-interest. 2. Religion tends *to induce the most wholesome scientific temper.* There is great resemblance between the Christian graces and the special dispositions requisite for the successful discovery of truth. The Sermon on the Mount contains the best possible precepts for the character of the model man of science. Loyalty to truth, unselfishness in sacrificing prejudices and crotchets, justice to the work of rivals, diligence in uninteresting but needful inquiries, patience in waiting for solid results, conscientiousness in refraining from mere sensationalism, humility in confessing the smallness of the area really conquered, calmness and generosity under criticism, are among the most essential requisites for the pursuit of science, and they are among the best fruits of religion. 3. Religion tends *to open the eyes to truth.* It raises us from the gross animalism which is intellectual death. Elevating the whole man, it enlarges the intellect.

II. RELIGION IS THE NECESSARY FOUNDATION OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE. This fact agrees with the great modern doctrine of inductive philosophy. Experience is the basis of knowledge. To know God we must have personal relations with him. Spiritual truths in regard to human life depend on the same Source. We must do the commandment in order to know the doctrine. Indeed, there is a constant interaction between knowledge and experience—every enlargement of experience increasing our knowledge, and every increment of knowledge throwing light on our way for future experience; till, in consequence of these two processes, we rise, as one has said, by a sort of "spiritual spiral," to the coexistent perfection of knowledge and of character. Our independence upon an external and superhuman revelation for our knowledge of Divine things is no exception to this principle, as two considerations will show. 1. *Revelation was first vouchsafed through religious men.* The fear of God was the beginning of knowledge in the prophets; the love of Christ is its basis in the apostles. Nebuchadnezzar could not have written the prophecies of Isaiah, nor could Judas have written St. John's Gospel. 2. *Revelation can only be understood by religious men.* A bad man may be a good verbal commentator, but the essential truth, the spirit which quickens as distinguished from the "letter that killeth," can only be discerned by those who are in sympathy with it, because "spiritual things are spiritually discerned."

Ver. 10.—*Temptation.* I. HOW THE TEMPTATION COMES. 1. *From sinners.* (1) It comes from without. The evil of our own hearts inclines us to sin; but were we perfectly innocent we could not escape temptation. The serpent was a denizen of Eden. Christ the Sinless One was tempted. The sights and sounds of the wicked world penetrate to the most carefully guarded soul. (2) The temptation is furnished by those who have themselves succumbed to sin. It is sinners who tempt. Sin is contagious. The worst sin is that of those who, like Jeroboam, "make Israel to sin." The bad man has terrible power for harm. Example, social influence, friendship, favour his designs. 2. *By enticements.* Sin is made to be attractive; and it is most important for all of us to know that there are pleasures in sin, in order that we may not be surprised at the discovery of them. The fruit is palatable, though, like apples of Sodom, it soon turns to ashes. If it were not so, who would run the risk of tasting it? If stolen waters were not sweet, who would choose to wear the brand of a thief on his conscience? Herein is the great power of temptation. By slow degrees and soft inducements the evil is wrought. The subtle serpent succeeds where the roaring lion fails. Delilah conquers the man whom no Philistine warrior could overthrow.

"Devils soonest tempt, resembling spirits of light."

II. HOW THE TEMPTATION IS TO BE MET. "Consent thou not." Let no man deem himself the helpless victim of temptation. "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able," etc. (1 Cor. x. 13). We have wills. We can say "Yes" and "No." We are not responsible for meeting with temptation, since even Christ felt the cruel force of this trial, but we are responsible for the way we behave under it.

"'Tis one thing to be tempted,
Another thing to fall."

Now, the resistance to temptation must be immediate and thorough. The tempter entices by gentle degrees, but the tempted must resist at once and with decision. He must not begin with the "retort courteous," but with "the lie direct." There is something brusque about the advice, "consent thou not," very different in tone from the polite *enticing* manner of the tempter. Yet this is necessary, for all that is wanted by the tempter is compliance—no active exercise of will, but a passive yielding. The resistance, however, must be active. The greatest danger is in dallying with temptation.

"Lie in the lap of sin, and not mean harm?
It is hypocrisy against the devil:
They that mean virtuously, and yet do so,
The devil their virtue tempts, and they tempt Heaven."

The difficulty is to give a decided negative. With some people the hardest word to say is "No." Remember: 1. There is a Divine grace to which we can appeal for aid in temptation, and a Saviour who can succour (Heb. ii. 18). 2. We can best keep out sin, not by bare expulsion of the spirit of evil, leaving the soul empty, swept, and garnished, and therefore ready for the advent of worse sins, but by filling our thoughts and affections with pure and worthy objects, by overcoming evil with good.

Vers. 20—23.—*The gospel call.* This cry of Wisdom is a sort of evangel of the Old Testament religion. It is an anticipation of the gracious invitation subsequently put forth by the Christian truth. That, too, is a cry of Wisdom; for is not Christ the "Wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i. 24), and "made unto us Wisdom" (1 Cor. i. 30)? We of the latter times, therefore, may hear in the preaching of Solomon the call of the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

I. THE CHARACTER OF THE CALL. It is a cry, a loud utterance, arresting attention, arousing the thoughtless. Elsewhere we read that wisdom must be sought for like hid treasures (ch. ii. 4), and her most precious gifts are always reserved for diligent inquirers. But before she is found, she calls. Though the choicest blessings of Christ may be pearls to be had only after long search, his call to us is antecedent to our desire to obtain them. God does not wait for us to return to him before he shows a willingness to welcome us. He calls at once in his revelation of truth. It is the duty of Christians to take up and repeat this call, to be heralds of a public truth, not jealous guardians of an esoteric doctrine.

II. THE SCENE OF THE CALL. 1. *Without.* Before the truth can be enjoyed in the heart it must be heard from without. It is not reserved for the initiated. It is declared in the open. 2. *In the streets.* The gospel meets men in their busy lives. The streets and lanes must be scoured to furnish guests for the King's feast. The call is too gracious to contain itself in the conventicle of the elect. Free as the air, it aims to reach all. The faithful preacher of the gospel must seek men in their haunts, not wait till they come to his snug retreat. 3. *In the chief place of concourse.* The gospel courts inquiry, it declares itself in the full light of day, it challenges comparison with all earthly voices. Let us not think that it can only live in conventual seclusion. It boldly claims a place in the busiest life of the world. If it cannot hold its own there, it is worthless. If Christians had more faith in it, they would be less afraid to bring this truth into all possible relations with science, politics, business, recreation. But alas! our ears are dull, and often when the voice of Wisdom is lifted up clear and kindly, it is drowned in the coarse din of worldly commotion.

III. THE PERSONS CALLED. Simple ones, scorners, fools. Divine wisdom is healing wisdom. It is not so much a reward to the wise as instruction for the foolish. Earthly wisdom comes most readily to those who are most advanced. The gospel of Christ seeks the ignorant, the wayward, the fallen.

IV. THE WAY TO RECEIVE THE CALL. "Turn you." It is not enough to hear, we must answer; and to answer is to obey, for the call is an invitation; and to obey is to turn and repent, for the gospel of the holy Christ must be a reproof to sinners. This gospel can be of no avail to us until we come to ourselves, turn our backs on our old life, and arise and go to our Father.

V. THE BLESSING PROMISED—the outpouring of the Divine Spirit. All Divine wisdom is an inspiration. Christ the Wisdom of God can only be received as we are baptized with the Holy Spirit. Thus we receive light, love, purity, peace, strength, and eternal life.

Vers. 24—30.—*Left to their doom.* Broad and encouraging as are the promises of Divine grace, if we forget the darker facts of life we shall be deluded into a false security; for nothing could be more unreasonable than to suppose that the mercy of God takes no account of moral considerations. Legally our sovereign is vested with an unfettered right of pardoning every criminal, but principles of justice and public order put great restraints upon the exercise of such a right. Bald representations of prayer as a means for securing immediate deliverance from trouble, and especially as a sure door of escape from the consequences of sin, are as false as they are shallow. It is most important that we should know under what circumstances God will reject the prayer of his troubled children and leave them to their doom.

I. AN OBSTINATE REJECTION OF GOD'S INVITATIONS AND COUNSELS. No word is here said of the great mass of the heathen world, who have never heard the full declaration of God's will. Clearly it is implied that such men do not come under the same condemnation as that of the persons immediately referred to. For the special accusation is based on the rejection of the overtures of grace, which must have been known to have been refused. The guilt of this rejection may be measured in two directions. 1. *By the character of the Divine voice.* (1) It was an invitation, not a mere declaration of truth. "I have called." (2) It was a persuading. "I have stretched out my hand." (3) It was a warning. "Counsel" and "reproof" are referred to. The sin was plainly demonstrated, the danger clearly revealed. To reject such a Divine message is no slight error. 2. *By the character of the rejection itself.* (1) It was an obstinate refusal. There was no indecision. But, practically, not to decide to obey the voice of God is to decide to rebel against him. (2) It was an insulting indifference. "No man regarded." They refused, and went on their own ways, to their farms and merchandise and pleasure, without further thought.

II. A CRY FOR DELIVERANCE FROM TROUBLE WITHOUT REPENTANCE OF SIN. The simple ingratitude of sin would be no barrier to the full exercise of God's pardon in Christ if it were hated and repented of, for "he is able to save to the uttermost," etc. But without repentance the smallest sin cannot be forgiven. And repentance is not the mere feeling of distress at the consequence of sin—every sane and sentient being would have that feeling; nor is it a mere regret that the wrong thing was done now its horrible fruits are ripening. It must be a hearty abhorrence of the wickedness itself, and a genuine desire to do nothing of the kind in the future. The dying sinner who is appalled at his future prospects, and shrieks for deliverance from the powers of hell, will not be heard, but will be left to his fate, and most reasonably so, if he has experienced no moral change, and feels no compunctions of conscience, but would do all his vile deeds over again if only he could ensure himself against the just penalties of them.

III. AN ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE FROM THE INEVITABLE. The earthly consequences of sin are many of them fixed immutably by laws of nature. Prayer will not heal the shattered constitution of the drunkard, nor restore the squandered fortune of the spendthrift, nor recover the lost reputation of the thief. No doubt many spiritual consequences of sin are also inevitable, and, though God may pardon the sinner, he will take vengeance on his devices. But when there is true penitence and trust in the mercy of God, the incidence of the calamity is shifted, though the calamity itself is not altered, so that it comes as wholesome chastisement, and is then not laughed at by the Divine wisdom, but graciously overruled for the discipline of the penitent.

Ver. 31.—*Punishment the natural fruit of sin.* The punishment of sin is not an arbitrary penalty, but a natural consequence. It follows by laws of nature. It needs no executioner. The sin works out its own doom. This thought may be regarded from two points of view. From the standpoint of nature it is a proof that Divine justice does not abrogate, but works through natural laws. From the spiritual side it is an evidence that God has planted his moral laws in the very constitution of the world.

I. SIN BEARS FRUIT. Nothing really perishes. Deeds live on in their consequences. Evil is not simply negative; there is a terribly active and even vital power in it. Its vitality may be of a diseased, destructive order, like that of the cancer that grows and spreads to the death of the body in which it is imbedded; but it is none the less vigorous and enduring.

II. THE FRUIT OF SIN HAS A NATURAL AFFINITY TO THE STOCK FROM WHICH IT SPRINGS. The consequences of a sin have an inherent resemblance to the sin. As the Beatitudes are specially related to the graces they crown, so the curses of evil have close relations to particular forms of evil. Each sin bears its own fruit. Hatred provokes hatred; selfishness leads to isolation; falsehood engenders distrust.

III. THE FRUIT OF SIN IS BEYOND OUR CONTROL. We are free to sow the seed or to refrain; we are not free to arrest the growth of the tree. A deed once done is not only irretrievable, but it passes out of our power while it lives on to work out perpetual consequences. It may become a Frankenstein, horribly tyrannizing over its creator.

IV. THE FRUIT OF SIN MUST BE EATEN BY THE SINNER. It will come back to him when it is ripe. There may be a long interval between the sowing of the seed and the gathering of the fruit, but the sower will have to devour the harvest. Herein is the peculiar horror of the doom of sin. Though a man would fain forget the past, it returns in the dreadful resemblance it bears to its consequences, now fully developed and revealed in true colours. Nauseous and poisonous, it must not only be witnessed, but eaten. He will have to receive it in his own life, in most close and intimate union with himself.

CONCLUSION. 1. Let us beware of the thoughtless sowing which must lead to so fearful a harvest. 2. Let us lay hold of the hope of redemption in Christ through which our sins may be buried in the depths of the sea.

Ver. 32.—*Fatal prosperity.* It is certainly not incumbent on the Christian preacher to maintain that prosperity is in itself an evil. This would involve a strange paradox, since it must be confessed that we all desire prosperity by natural instinct, and seek it in some form, and when we have met with it are exhorted to be thankful for it; all of which things would need to be deprecated if prosperity were essentially evil. So far is it from being thus represented in the Bible, that the Old Testament regards it as the reward of righteousness, and the New Testament as less important indeed and more full of danger, yet still as something to be enjoyed gratefully (see 1 Tim. iv. 4). But experience and revelation both warn us that it brings peculiar perils and temptations, and that there are some people to whom it is nothing less than fatal.

I. CONSIDER WHO ARE THE PERSONS TO WHOM PROSPERITY IS MOST FATAL. It does not affect all alike. One man can stand calmly on a steep height where another reels with giddiness. The success which is fatal to one may develop magnanimous qualities in another. It is not all prosperity, but the prosperity of fools, that is destructive. The character of the men rather than the inherent evil of the thing determines its effects. Note some of the characters most injured by prosperity. 1. *The weak*, who are moulded by circumstances instead of mastering them. If a man is not strong enough to direct his course, but suffers himself to drift with the currents of external events, prosperity will lead him away into extravagance and folly. He only is safe under it who is independent of it. 2. *The short-sighted*—men whose views of life are exceptionally limited. These people will be likely to expect too much from prosperity, to forget that riches take to themselves wings and fly away. 3. *The empty-minded.* If people have other resources than external possessions they are the more free to make good use of those possessions. But if they have nothing else, if they have no "inner city of the mind," if their life is all on the outside, prosperity will become a god and the idolatry of it a fatal delusion. 4. *The vicious.* A bad man will find in prosperity only enlarged means for evil-doing, and so will increase his wickedness and bring the greater doom upon his own head. To the intemperate, the profligate, the lovers of corrupt pleasures, prosperity is nothing less than a curse.

II. CONSIDER THE WAY IN WHICH PROSPERITY BECOMES FATAL. 1. *It hides folly.* La Bruyère says, "As riches and favour forsake a man, we discover him to be a fool, but nobody could find it out in his prosperity;" and Hare remarks that "nothing hides a blemish so completely as a cloth of gold." But if folly is hidden, it is unchecked,

and grows worse and ripens fatally. 2. *It encourages indolence.* Prosperity may afford ample means for generous occupation, but weak and foolish people are more likely to be satisfied with idleness and self-indulgence when they find that all their wants are supplied without any effort on their own part. Then the disuse of faculties leads to the loss of them. Hence, as the pressure of adversity quickens our powers, the relaxation of prosperity tends to a sort of atrophy of them. 3. *It affords opportunity for the exercise of bad qualities.* Many men have tendencies to particular kinds of sin that are checked for want of opportunity. Prosperity will give this with fatal results. 4. *It induces satisfaction with itself.* Thus it quenches the thirst for deeper satisfaction. Lot, prosperous in Sodom, ceases to be a "pilgrim and stranger," and forgets to seek a "better country" till he is roused by the shock that puts an end to his worldly successes.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—6.—*Design and character of proverbial wisdom.* We may regard the opening words as a general index of the contents, as a designation of the object, and a statement of the value and profit of the teaching, of the book.

I. ITS DESIGN IS TO IMPART PRACTICAL SENSE. 1. And first, this in general includes the information of the understanding and of the memory by wisdom. This Hebrew word (*chôkmâh*) denotes, strictly, all that is *fixed* for human knowledge. We may render it "insight." In other places in the Bible, the judge (1 Kings iii. 28), the artist (Exod. xxviii. 3), or the man of skill and renown in general, are thus said to be men of insight, craft, or cunning, in the original and good sense of those words. Applied to religion and conduct, it means insight into the principles of right conduct, the knowledge of how to walk before God, choosing the right and avoiding the wrong path—the knowledge of the way to peace and blessedness. 2. The training of the will. The word rendered "instruction" denotes moral education or training. Here, then, is the practical side of the matter. Not only sound intelligence is aimed at, but pure feeling, right affections, the will guided by the polar star of duty. All this is general. 3. But next, particulars, falling within this great scope, are pointed out, viz. "the attainment of justice and right and fair dealing." The first is all that pertains to God, the supreme Judge—his eternal order and will. The second refers to established custom and usage among men—to law, in the human sense. The third, an expressive word, signifying literally what is *straight*, points to straightforward, honourable, and noble conduct. 4. But the book has a *special* object in view, and a special class: "To hold out *prudence* to *simple ones*, and *knowledge* and *reflectiveness* to *boys*." Each of these words has its peculiar force. The Hebrew expression for the first class is literally the "open ones," *i.e.* those who in ignorance and inexperience are open to every impression, good or bad; simple-minded ones (not *fools*, which is another idea), who are readily governed by the opinions and examples of stronger minds. They need that prudence, or caution, which the hints of proverbial sense may supply, to enable them to *glide out of danger* and avoid snares (for the word rendered "subtilty" denotes *smoothness*, like that of the slippery snake). Boys, or youths also, stand in peculiar need of "thoughtfulness"—a habit of reflecting with attention and forethought upon life and different modes of conduct. The Book of Proverbs, all must see, is specially adapted for these classes. But not for them alone. 5. The book is a book for all. The wise man may listen and gain instruction; for men "grow old, learning something fresh each day." And the intelligent man may obtain guidance. For although by middle life the general principles and maxims of wisdom may have been stored up, still the applications of them, the exceptions to them, form a vast field for ever-growing acquisition. Knowledge is practically infinite; we can think of no bounds to it. New perplexities continually arise, new cases of conscience present themselves, old temptations revive in fresh combinations; and the records of others' experience continually flash new light from angles of observation distinct from our own.

II. THE CHARACTER AND VALUE OF THE BOOK. (Ver. 6.) 1. It is a *collection of proverbs.* Condensed wisdom. Landmarks in the field of experience. Beacons of warning from dangerous shores. Objects of interest in life's travel. Finger-posts.

The "wit of many, the wisdom of one." A portable property of the intellect. A currency honoured in every land. "Jewels five words long, that on the outstretch'd forefinger of all time sparkle for ever." They may be compared to darts, to stings, to goads. They arouse the memory, awake the conscience; they fix the floating impressions of truth in forms not easily forgotten. These Bible proverbs are in poetical form; and of them it may well be said, with George Herbert, "A verse finds him who a sermon flies." 2. The mode of speech is often *figurative*. The word rendered "dark saying" means a profound saying, enigma, "thing hidden" (Matt. xiii. 35; Ps. lxxviii. 2), "obscure allegory" (Augustine). An example of this parabolic way of speaking is found in Agur's discourse (ch. xxx.). The power of it, like the power of pictures and of all sensuous symbols and poetical images, lies in the fact that the form "half reveals and half conceals the soul within," and thus excites the curiosity, fixes the attention, stimulates exertion of thought in the listener. The best preachers leave much for the hearers to fill up for themselves. Suggestive teaching is the richest; it makes the pupil teach himself. Such is the method of our Lord in his parables; but not the only method; to be combined, as with him and here, with the direct mode of statement. The application is: "Take heed how ye hear." "To him that hath it shall be given." All wisdom is of God; the teacher and the disciple are both listeners at the living oracle of eternal truth. Knowledge is essential to religion, and growth belongs to both (Luke xvii. 5; Eph. iv. 15, 16; Col. i. 11; ii. 19; 2 Thess. i. 3; 2 Pet. iii. 18).—J.

Ver. 7.—*Religion the true beginning.* This is the motto of the book. It is often found (ch. ix. 10; Sirach i. 16, 25, 26; Ps. cxi. 10). The Arabs have adopted it at the head of their proverbial collections.

I. THE OLD TESTAMENT DESIGNATION OF RELIGION. It is the *fear of Jehovah.* That is reverence for him who is One, who is eternal, incomparable with any of the gods of the heathen, the Deliverer of Israel in the past and ever, the All-holy, just and merciful One. Such reverence includes practical obedience, trust, gratitude, and love. With this expression we may compare *walking before Jehovah* and the *service of Jehovah*, as designations of the *practical* aspect of religion, as the former indicates the *emotional* and *intellectual.*

II. SUCH RELIGION IS THE TRUE GERM OF SOUND KNOWLEDGE. Men have divorced by a logical abstraction science, and often sense, from religion. But ideally, psychologically, historically, they are in perfect unity. Religion is "the oldest and holiest tradition of our race" (Herder). From it as the beginning the arts and sciences sprang. It is ever so. True science has a religious basis. 1. In both the Infinite is implied and is sought through the finite. 2. Both run up into mystery—science into the unknowable ground or substance behind all phenomena, religion before the inscrutable and unutterable God. 3. The true mood is alike in both, that of profound humility, sincerity, self-abnegation, impassioned love of the truth, the mood of Bacon, of Newton, etc.

III. THE REJECTION OF RELIGION FOLLY. The Hebrew word for "fool" is strong; it is *crass, stupid*, insensible. "A stock, a stone, a worse than senseless thing." Folly is always the reversal of some true attitude of the mind and temper. It is the taking a false measure of self in some relation. It is the conceit of a position purely imaginary —amusing in a child, pathetic in a lunatic, pitiful in a rational man. True wisdom lies in the sense that we have little, in the feeling of constant need of light and direction; extreme folly, in the notion that the man "knows all about it." Most pitiable are learned fools. Without religion, *i.e.* the constant habit of reference to the universal, all knowledge remains partial and shrunk, is tainted with egotism, would reverse the laws of intelligence, and make the universal give way to the particular, instead of lifting the particular to the life of the universal. Beware of the contemptuous tone in books, newspapers, and speakers. Reserve scorn for manifest evil. The way to be looked down upon is to form the habit of looking down on others. To despise any humblest commonplace of sense and wisdom is to brand one's self in the sight of Heaven, and of the wise, a *fool.*—J.

Vers. 8, 9.—*Filial piety.* The teacher speaks under the assumed form of a father, like St. Paul (1 Cor. iv. 15; Philem. 10), to give the more affectionate zest to his

appeal. And the word "mother" is brought in by poetical parallelism, enhancing the parental image. We may include the parent and the teacher in one conception. The duty owed to both is analogous. And the teacher may be at the same time the parent.

I. DUTY TO PARENTS AND EARLY TEACHERS COMES NEXT TO DUTY TO GOD. It occupies that place in the Decalogue. Pythagoras and Plato, and the wise of antiquity, generally taught that parents came next to the gods, and were to be honoured even as the gods. The family is the key-stone of society. Parents are the earliest representatives to children of the principle of authority, of "other-will," and, in this sense, of God.

II. THE TRUE PARENT IS THE BEST EARLY TEACHER. 1. He has the fresh mind to deal with, the opportunity of the first word, the early and deepest impression. 2. He is the most sincere of teachers, or has the least temptation to be insincere. His one object is the child's good. 3. He is the most loving. 4. The father and the mother should combine in this work—the father to train the young mind to principle, the mother to inspire pure sentiment. The masculine influence deals with the general, with law and relation in life, with the logic or mathematics of conduct; the feminine, with the particular, with the details of behaviour, with the concrete expression of right thought and feeling. Neither can be dispensed with.

III. REVERENCE FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS IMPARTS GRACE AND BEAUTY TO THE BEARING. The adoption of their example and instruction is compared, in Oriental illustration, to the wearing of a "pleasant chaplet" on the head (and the necklace of pearls), as at feasts and entertainments—a wreath of roses or other flowers. The former was a general custom of antiquity, both for men and women. We have no exact parallel to it, and must recur to the thought of good or graceful dress in general. What significance, as we all know, is there in dress to make or mar the personal appearance! But the spiritual, not the material "habit" is the best dress, and will set off the most ungainly form. It is natural to wish to appear graceful, and one of the first manifestations of the artistic instinct in humanity is in this attention to dress. Let the instinct, then, have a moral or religious turn, and true beauty be found above all in the moral idea, in the attire of the soul, "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price." The complimentary deferences to one another in polite society, the slight submissions in word and deed, the trifling self-abnegations which give a transient perfume and refinement to social hours,—all these do but mimic or represent something of more permanent value, the principle of obedience, the will governed by law, the character formed by the true, which is also the good and the beautiful.—J.

Vers. 10—19.—*Warnings against the evils of the time.* An unsettled time, one of violence and insecurity of life, appears to be indicated, such as has only its occasional parallel in our society. Yet the perverted impulses which lead to open crime are those which induce every species of dishonesty and more subtle attacks upon the life or property of others. We may thus draw from a particular description some general lessons. But it seems to give more point and force to the passage if we view it as attaching to notorious and frequent forms of crime.

I. THE TEMPTER. He is always existing in every state of society, and not hard to find. There are human beings who have come to adopt evil as a trade, and, not content with practising it themselves, must have help and sympathy in their work, and turn recruiting-sergeants for the devil. The beautiful laws of our being assert themselves amidst all the perversion of depraved choice. Crime, like sorrow, is lonely, and craves partnership. Remorse would soothe itself by fixing the like sting in the bosoms of others. And the criminal, constantly on his defence against society, learns to acquire an allurement of manner which is not the least of his dangerous qualities. The warning to youth against "enticing sinners" of both sexes can never be obsolete. Beware of persons of "peculiarly fascinating manners." What is it that fascinates? Generally it will be found to be some species of flattery, overt or concealed, attacking the weak point of the tempted ones. The warning may be so far generalized into "Beware of the flatterer." Flattery is at the bottom of most temptation.

II. PICTURES OF CRIME. 1. *Its aspect of horror.* They are to be understood as drawn by the teacher's hand. He is putting the *real meaning* of the tempter's suggestions into vivid descriptions. The tempter himself will take care not to expose the bloody and hideous aspect of his trade.

"Vice is a monster of so hideous mien,
That to be hated needs but to be seen."

On such a principle the teacher acts. The veil is torn aside from the life of crime, and its repulsive inhumanity disclosed. It is a "lurking for blood," after the image of the hunter with nets and nooses, watching for his prey. And this too for "the vainly innocent," *i.e.* whose innocence will avail him nothing with us (comp. Ps. xxxv. 19; lxix. 5; Lam. iii. 52), or, in the other interpretation, for the innocent who has given us no cause for hatred or revenge. "Will swallow them up living like the pit [or, 'abyss']." An expression for sudden death as opposed to that by lingering sickness—the earth as it were yawning from its abysses to devour the fated lives (comp. Ps. cxxiv. 3; ch. xxx. 16). The expression *whole*, whether it denotes sound in body or in character (honest men), adds to the force of the description. 2. But there is an *attractive aspect* in crime. "Thou shalt cast thy lot into our midst," *i.e.* shalt share and share alike with us, as we say, or take an equal chance for the best of the booty, the lot in such cases being the custom of robbers and of soldiers (Ps. xxii. 19; Neh. x. 35). There is freedom, communism, good-fellowship, in the life of the banditti; no distinction of rank or class, poor or rich. In certain times the picture of such a life has proved of overwhelming fascination for young adventurous spirits. In solemn reiterated warning the teacher raises his voice against the treading of their path and way. This simple biblical figure may remind us that every mode of active life, every profession or occupation, is like a path; it *leads somewhither.* Unless we could cease from activity, we must all be advancing to some moral issue. What will it be? 3. *A summary description of the criminal.* He runs toward wickedness, hastes to shed blood. The eagerness, the swiftness, and perseverance of the criminal often arouse intellectual admiration, and shame the slothfulness of those who follow noble callings. But the devotion of ability and energy of a high order to such ends is, indeed, one of the most striking proofs we can have of the corruption of man's nature. This is crime revealed in its hatefulness, on the one hand, by its cruel and inhuman conduct and effects; on the other, in its dark source, the utter perversion of the criminal's mind itself.

III. THE RECOIL OF EVIL ON THE DOERS. Here again are powerful pictures. Like thoughtless birds, which rush with open eyes into the net, so do these miscreants, in preparing destruction for others, themselves run headlong upon their fate (comp. Job xviii. 8). While they are lurking for others' blood and laying snares for others' lives, their own are forfeited. This self-defeat of wickedness is a central thought in biblical wisdom (comp. ch. xv. 32; xvi. 27; Eccles. x. 8; Ps. vii. 16; Rom. ii. 5; Gal. vi. 8; 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10; Jas. v. 3—5). Thus wisdom and folly form an antithesis in their nature, their powers, and their result. 1. Wisdom is at one with religion and morality; folly casts off God and right. 2. Wisdom pursues good ends by good means; folly pursues evil by evil means. 3. The result of wisdom is life and blessedness, health and peace; that of folly is self-undermining, self-overthrow, or "slow suicide."

III. THE ROOT OF CRIME. It is like that of all sin, in desire, in misdirected desire, the greed of "unlawful gain," to give the fuller force of the expression. Note: 1. The *prevalence* of this passion. By far the largest proportion of men's worst actions are probably to be traced to it. Read the reports of the courts of law, listen to the gossip of the hour for illustrations. 2. Its *intoxicating, illusory* power. The victim of it deceives himself, as in other passions: it is thrift, it is due regard to what is of substantial value to one's interests, etc. And how difficult to distinguish that desire for more, which is the spring of action in commerce as in honourable ambition, the pursuit of knowledge, etc.! The question must be carried to the conscience and to God. 3. Its *unsocial* character. More than any passion, it separates man from his kind, and assimilates him to the beast of prey. 4. Its *suicidal* effect. If it does not destroy the man's body, it certainly corrodes and eats away his soul. It dehumanizes

him. There is no object more shadowy in one aspect, more unreal, in another more monstrous, than the miser, as depicted by Balzac and other great writers. Covetousness is self-slaughter.—J.

Vers. 20—33.—*Warning cry of Wisdom.* In dramatic style, Wisdom is presentiated, personified, endued with visible and audible attributes. As contempt for religion has been animadverted upon, so now contempt for Wisdom calls for rebuke. The motto (ver. 7) is still in the preacher's mind.

I. THE CRY OF WISDOM IS PUBLIC AND CLEAR. In the street, "where merchants most do congregate," and in all places of general resort, the cry is heard. Hers is no esoteric doctrine; it is popularly exoteric, it is for all. She has no concealments. She is not ashamed of her message. She seeks the weal of each and of all. Like her Divine embodiment, she is the Friend of the simple and the meek, yea, of the fools and the sinners (Matt. x. 27; Luke xiv. 21). It is a voice to be heard above the mingled sounds of these thronged centres. The state of the markets and of the weather, passing events, the gossip of the hour, news of success and of failure, all have a moral meaning, run up into moral calculations, may be reduced to expressions of moral law.

II. HER TONE. 1. It is *commanding and superior.* She appeals to different classes of the frivolous, the free-thinking, the scoffers of the time. The times of Solomon, as pointed out by Delitzsch, were times of widespread worldliness and religious indifference. The *lēzim*, or "scorners," must have been a numerous class. They scoffed at sacred things, laid claim to superior sense (ch. xiv. 6), were contentious and full of debate (ch. xxii. 10). They avoided the *chakanim*, or "wise men," and hence received the name of scoffers or mockers. They were like our modern free-thinkers, and have left their clear traces on the biblical page. The "wise men" were a kind of practical philosophers, not a professional class, but belonging to different callings. Religion and worship have never been exempt from criticism, have in every age been exposed to that "ridicule which is the test of truth." In these conflicts the tone of truth is ever commanding, conscious of authority, calm; that of the scoffer irritable and wanting in weight. Wisdom is commanding, because she holds the conscience. She bandies no arguments with the scoffer, who will only find in them fuel for his contentious spirit; she aims directly at the conscience, accuses and judges the perverted heart. "Turn at my denunciation" from your evil ways! "I will cause my Spirit to stream forth upon you." 2. Her tone is *hortatory* and *promising.* The Spirit of wisdom is compared to a mighty, forth-bubbling, never-exhausted fountain. So Christ cried in the last great day of the feast in Jerusalem, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." (1) There is a *rich fulness* in having wisdom, in contrast to which are the dry negations which are all the scoffer has to offer. (2) It is a refreshing and a strengthening supply. It is not pedantry, the wisdom of words, nor abstract science of logic and metaphysics, but vital truth, the knowledge of facts and laws of the inner and outer world, which we need for everyday consumption, for the life of the mind. (3) Its impartation is conditioned by the will of the recipient. There must be the turning and the seeking, that there may be the finding and the enjoying of it; the opening of the mouth before it can be filled. 3. Her tone is *threatening and prophetic* of retribution. The day of grace is now conceived as past, the hour gone that will not return. She has called, has stretched out the hand, in token of pleading for attention, has lavished both counsel and rebuke; but has been responded to by sullen refusal, averted looks, scornful depreciation, obstinate resistance. This relation of forbearance and good will has been strained to the last degree; in the law of things it must be succeeded by a reaction. The places will be reversed. The scoffer will be the scoffed; the mocker will afford material for mirth. And here the pictures accumulate their dread impression on the imagination; the tempest and the tempest-whirlwind answer in nature to the calamity and the horror, the anguish and constraint, of the faithless soul. All moral teaching carries in it a twofold prophetic element; a prophecy of penal *retribution* and a prophecy of *blessed recompense.* Retribution is the logical consequence of certain acts; and it involves a *correspondence.* The relation which has been wrongly denied comes in the end to be affirmed; and that which was affirmed, to be in the end denied. The manner of the sin foretells the manner of the penalty. Those who turned from pleading Wisdom, plead in the end with her in vain; seeking her now with zeal ("early"), their

search is vain. The attitude which the soul refused to assume in its pride, it is forced into by its distress. The wheel comes full circle; the sinner is smitten in the very place of his sin; and outraged conscience is avenged. 4. Above all, the tone of Wisdom is *reasonable*. These are no arbitrary, cruel, capricious dealings with the sinner. They rest upon the *law of things* (vers. 29—31). "*Because* they hated reasonable doctrine, and coveted not the fear of Jehovah, fared not on the way of my counsel, and despised all my rebuke; *therefore* they shall eat of the fruit of their way, and be satiated with their counsels!" It is the law of causality applied to moral things. "The curse *causeless* shall not come!" The most obvious example of the law of cause and effect in nature—the connection of seed and crop, sowing and reaping—best illustrates the process in the human spirit. We cannot deceive God, cannot evade law; whatsoever we sow, we must reap, and that according to *quantity*, to *kind* or *quality*. Again, the figure of a *surfeit* is forcible as applied to this experience of the consequences of guilt. We find it also in Isa. iii. 10; Ps. lxxxviii. 4; cxxiii. 4. It brings out the principle that all spurious pleasures, *i.e.* those which are rooted only in egotism, *cloy*, and so turn the man against himself. Self-loathing, self-contempt, is the deep revelation of an inner judgment. If any one asks with the anger of the atheistic poet, "Who made self-contempt?" let him turn to this passage for an answer. 5. Wisdom is *declarative* of moral laws. The *turning away*, the resistance and recalcitrancy of the simple, murders them (Jer. viii. 5; Hos. xi. 5), and the *security* (idle, easy, fleshly carelessness, Jer. xxii. 21) destroys them.

"More the treacherous calm I dread
Than tempests sailing overhead."

(See South's powerful sermon, with his usual splendid illustrations, on "Prosperity ever dangerous to Virtue," vol. ii. ser. vi.) 6. She is *prophetic of good* to the obedient. In bright contrast to the spurious peace of the dulled conscience is the true peace of the wise and God-fearing, "He who listens to me shall dwell securely, and have rest without terror of calamity." It is like that of ordered nature—"central peace abiding at the heart of endless agitation." In this profound union with God, the parables of life are but superficial and transient as the waves of ocean, while the depths are calm as eternity. The method of personified Wisdom is that of Christ, with which it may be compared at every point. (1) Sin is clearly exposed, in its effects and its cause. (2) Judgment is clearly announced. (3) Promises of eternal good are no less emphatically given. (4) Refuge from evil, and the way of salvation both temporal and eternal, are pointed out.—J.

Vers. 1—6.—*The ideal teacher.* Solomon had all possible advantages to qualify him for the work of a teacher of men. He had (1) special endowments from the hand of his Creator (1 Kings iii.); (2) a heritage of rich experience from the life of his father, beside parental counsels from his lips; (3) the best instruction which the kingdom could afford, and surely there must have been much wisdom to learn from so wise and faithful a teacher as the Prophet Nathan (2 Sam. xii.). Who, then, should be so well able as he was to give us the ideal of a true teacher? We are reminded by these verses that he is the man who—

I. Is AFFECTED BY THE PRESENCE OF IGNORANCE AND ERROR. He notices the "simple" man and the "young man" (ver. 4); he has regard to the fact that there are those about him who need to be led into the paths of "justice and judgment and equity" (ver. 3). His eye rests on these; his mind perceives how urgently they need the "instruction" and "understanding" which will save them from the perils to which they are exposed; his heart goes out to them; his sympathies embrace them; he desires "to give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion." He is, therefore, the man who—

II. CONVEYS KNOWLEDGE. 1. He seeks to impart a knowledge of *facts;* to give "instruction" (ver. 2); to make known to the simple-minded and inexperienced the truth that "all is not gold that glitters," that men are often very different from that which they seem to be, that under a fair exterior there may lurk uttermost corruption, that the sweetest morsels may be the introduction to bitterest consequences, etc. 2. He seeks also to convey a knowledge of *principles:* to give "understanding;" to make

plain to the mind distinctions between that which is true and that which is false, that which is honourable and that which is shameful, that which elevates and that which lowers, that which is permissible and that which is desirable. He is, further, the man who—

III. IMPARTS WISDOM. He will not be content until he has instilled into the mind and introduced to the heart discretion (ver. 4) and wisdom itself (ver. 2). Wisdom is the pursuit of the highest end by the surest means. No teacher of men who recognizes his true position will ever be contented until he has led his disciples to walk in the path of wisdom—to be seeking after the noblest ends for which God gave us our being, and to be seeking them by those ways which are sure to lead thereto. 1. Our highest wisdom is to seek "the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Matt. vi. 33). 2. Our one "Way" is the Son of God himself (John xiv. 6). The true teacher thus becomes the man who—

IV. CONDUCTS TO MORAL EXCELLENCE. For he who is the child of wisdom will also receive the instruction of "justice and judgment and equity." He will be a man who will have continual regard to the claims of his fellow-men; who will shrink from encroaching on their rights; who will endeavour to give to them the consideration, the care, the kindness, which they may rightly look for as children of the same Father, as disciples of the same Saviour, as citizens of the same kingdom, as travellers to the same home. The ideal teacher will also be a man who—

V. FOSTERS INTELLECTUAL GROWTH. (Vers. 5, 6.) We ourselves are not truly and satisfactorily progressing except our mental capacities are being developed, and thus truth and wisdom are being seen with clearer eye and held with tighter grasp. The wise man is therefore bent on training, exercising, bracing the intellectual faculties of his disciple, so that he "will increase learning," will "attain to wise counsels," will think out and see through the proverbs and problems, the puzzles and perplexities, which come up for investigation. We know something in order that we may know much. We are wise that we may become wiser. We climb the first slope of the hill of heavenly truth that we may ascend the one which is beyond; we master the "deep things of God" that we may look into those which are deeper and darker still. Ours is ever to be the spirit of holy inquiry; not of querulous impatience, but of patient, untiring effort to understand all those truths which are within our reach, waiting for the fuller revelation of the days which are to come.—C.

Ver. 7.—*The foundation-truth.* These words invite our attention to—

I. THAT WHICH CONSTITUTES THE FEAR OF GOD. "The fear of the Lord" was the chief note of Hebrew piety. It expressed itself in that form (see Gen. xlii. 18; Exod. xviii. 21; Lev. xix. 14; Neh. v. 15; Ps. lxvi. 16; Eccles. xii. 13, etc.). What did it signify? Evidently something more and other than mere dread. The piety of the Jews was an immeasurably higher thing than the abject terror with which the heathen shrank from the capricious and malignant power of the deities they worshipped. It included: 1. Reverence for his Divine nature. 2. Sense of the Divine presence: "The Lord before whom I stand." 3. Regard for the Divine will, shown in the two ways of (1) obedience to his commands, and (2) submission to his appointments.

II. THE FACT THAT THE FEAR OF GOD CONSTITUTES THE FOUNDATION ON WHICH WE BUILD. "The fear of the Lord is *the beginning* of knowledge." The sense of God, the belief that he is, that he reigns, that he is the Source and Fountain of all life and blessing—this is the foundation on which all wisdom, all success, all excellency, rests. How truly fundamental is this fear of God is seen when we consider: 1. That it is implanted, as one of the earliest thoughts, in the human mind. The very little child can entertain it; it enters his opening mind with the first conceptions which are cherished there. As soon as we begin to think we begin to fear God. That sentiment, which never once affected the life of the most intelligent of the brute creation in any land or age, strikes deep root and bears fairest fruit in the spiritual nature of the "little child." "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge," even *in time*. 2. That the acceptance of God is the basis on which all truth must rest. There are mysteries in theism which may baffle and sometimes perplex us. But in atheism we are utterly at sea. Not to start from the acceptance of an originating, designing, fashioning, controlling, out-working Intelligence is to be "all abroad" in the region of human investi-

gation and inquiry. Accepting that, the universe is indeed mysterious, but it is not an all-shrouding mist in which we ourselves and everything around us are hopelessly lost. The fear of the Lord, the reverent acceptance of the truth that God is, and that he reigns, lies at the foundation, is the beginning, of knowledge—of the truth which makes the world comprehensible to the understanding, and life valuable to the soul. 3. That the fear of God is the ground of all heavenly wisdom. We cannot know our own Divine Father, our own spiritual nature with all its high and ennobling capacities, the excellency of moral and spiritual worth, the supreme blessedness of self-surrender, if we do not know God, if we have not the mind of Christ revealed to us and accepted by us. The fear of the Lord is the beginning, and is the very substance of that knowledge which constitutes the "life eternal" (John xvii. 3).

III. THE FOLLY OF SPIRITUAL INDIFFERENCE. "Fools despise wisdom and instruction." The foolish man does not care even *to begin* to know; he despises the very elements of instruction; he will not take the first step in the path of wisdom. He wanders off at his own will, and he goes in the direction of the thick darkness. He is turning from him who is the Light of life, and is travelling to that dreary region where it is always night, away from God, from wisdom, from holiness, from love.—C.

Vers. 8, 9.—*The duty and the beauty of filial piety.* The wise teacher here commends to us the excellency of the filial spirit. And it is worthy of notice that he exhorts the young to be obedient to their mother as well as mindful of the counsels of their father. We think of—

I. THE DUTY OF FILIAL PIETY, based upon and arising from: 1. The relation itself. It is enough that our parents *are* our parents, and that we are their offspring. On that simple ground it behoves us to listen and to obey. 2. The fact that they have expended on us far more than any other beings. Who shall measure the thought, the anxiety, the solicitude, the prayers, the labours, the sacrifices, which they have cheerfully devoted to us? 3. The fact that it is the will of God that we should render such filial honour (Exod. xx. 12; Lev. xix. 3; Deut. v. 16; Eph. vi. 2).

II. THE BEAUTY OF FILIAL PIETY. "They shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck" (ver. 9). Youth, especially young manhood, is apt to think that there is something unbecoming, ungraceful if not disgraceful, in rendering filial obedience; it is apt to imagine that there is something admirable in breaking away, in even early years, from parental guidance, and establishing an independence of judgment and action. In truth, there is nothing more offensive, nothing morally uglier, than such premature assertiveness. On the other hand, nothing is more comely, nothing more attractive, nothing more intrinsically beautiful, than filial devotedness. It has all the best elements of spiritual excellency: (1) humility, a lowly view of ourselves; (2) responsiveness to strong and tender love; (3) the recognition of real worth, of the claims of age and wisdom; (4) cheerful acceptance of the ordination of nature, and acquiescence in the will of God. Those who illustrate the duty of filial piety live in the admiration of the wise, and walk in the sunshine of the smile of the Supreme.—C.

Vers. 10—19.—*The peril and the wisdom of youth: a sermon to the young.* How many human lives are nothing better than failures! How many souls are there that "make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience"! Over how many of the children of men do the wise and the holy mourn, as those who might have done well and wrought good, but who have turned aside to folly, guilt, and ruin! As a rule, these have gone astray in their younger days. Temptation assailed them when they were comparatively unarmed, attacked them when least prepared to resist, and they were overcome. Our text suggests—

I. THE PECULIAR PERIL OF YOUTH. Youth is endangered by three things. 1. The invitations of the unholy. "Sinners entice it." Companionship is dear to the young, and is very powerful over it. Its heart is open, trustful, responsive. It rejoices with a keen delight in the confidences of friendship. And when one whose advances have been received, and who has been welcomed as a congenial companion, says, "Come," it is hard for friendship to refuse; this more especially when the solicitation comes from him who has a strong will or an amiable and fascinating disposition. The heart of youth is very powerfully drawn, sometimes to good, but too often to evil, by the charm

of early friendship. 2. The subtlety of sin (ver. 17). Sin makes a very fair promise, but its word is false, its coin is counterfeit. (1) It professes disinterestedness (ver. 14), but it is utterly selfish at heart. (2) It affects to be able to hide all traces and elude all evil consequences of its acts (ver. 12), but it cannot: the blood which it sheds will cry to Heaven for retribution. (3) It offers gain and satisfaction (vers. 13, 19), but it constantly fails to secure its immediate object, and it never brings real and lasting joy to the soul. The fowler does not spread the net in sight of the bird, or he would fail. Sin keeps its snares well out of view; it proceeds with cruel cunning; it shows the present pleasure, and hides the coming shame, and so it secures its victims. 3. *The appeal of powerful instincts.* The love of daring exploits has led many a young man to consent when sinners have said, "Come, let us attack the victim, that we may seize the prey" (vers. 11, 12). Guilty violence shapes itself as manly daring. And the instinct of acquisition, the desire to obtain and to possess (vers. 13, 19), often leads astray. Greediness of gain begins in a desire to be rich, an ambition to have abundance.

II. THE EARNEST SOLICITUDE OF THE WISE. There is an air of earnestness, a tone of deep solemnity, about these words of the wise man. "My son, if sinners entice thee," etc. (ver. 10); "My son, walk not thou in the way," etc. (ver. 15). Here is the urgency of a tender solicitude; here are the pleadings of profound affection. And why? Because the wise man (the father, minister, teacher) knows; 1. That sin means ruin to others (ver. 16). The path of evil is marked with blood: it is the track which is trodden by death itself; it is red with the blood of souls. 2. That sin is the supreme mistake. It is really laying wait for itself, to compass its own miserable end (ver. 18); it is robbing itself of all the excellency of life in order to secure its gains (ver. 19). Men too often "lose their life for the sake of the means of living." They expend on the means all those resources of their manhood which should be devoted to life itself. Sin is suicidal; the young who are yielding themselves to a life of ungodliness and guilt may well be the object of the most fervent anxiety, of the most tender, tearful pity of the wise.

III. THE WAY OF VICTORY. And there is no other way than that of decisive refusal at once. As soon as the alluring voice says, "Come," let the resolute reply be heard, "I will not." Let the lips of holy resentment open at once to say, "Depart from me, ye evil-doers; I will keep the commandments of my God" (Ps. cxix. 115). To hesitate is to risk everything. Speak a strong, unwavering refusal on the spot.—C.

Vers. 20—23.—*The voice of Wisdom.* Wisdom is here personified; it is the language of poetic inspiration. Later on, "in the dispensation of the fulness of times," Wisdom was manifested in human form, and spake in the hearing of men. But its voice has never been silent altogether, from the beginning until now. We are reminded of it—

I. THAT THERE ARE MANY CHANNELS THROUGH WHICH WISDOM UTTERS ITS VOICE. The plural form of the word ("wisdoms") suggests the manifoldness of the utterance. God teaches us his truth, makes known his mind to us, through (1) the objects and laws of the physical world around us; (2) the constitution of our own frame; (3) the teachings of our own spiritual nature, the judgments of our conscience and the conclusions of our reason; (4) his providential orderings; (5) the admonitions of his Spirit; (6) the words of Jesus Christ: he is *the* "Wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i. 24).

II. THAT THE VOICE OF WISDOM IS AUDIBLE TO ALL WHO WILL LISTEN. "Wisdom crieth without; she utters her voice in the streets: she crieth in the chief place of concourse," etc. (vers. 20, 21). Wisdom, Divine truth, does not merely whisper its doctrine in secret places where there are few to hear; she does not reserve her teaching to the closed class-room to which only some favoured ones find admittance; she speaks "in the open," where the "ways meet," in "the chief places of concourse." "Upon whom doth not God's light arise?" (Job xxv. 3). The friendly voices speak in the ear of childhood; they address the mind of youth; they have a message for manhood; they find their way to the sanctuary of age. Wisdom waits upon the pure and holy, walks by the side of spiritual indifference to win its ear, and confronts sin in its most secret haunts. Nothing—or nothing but the most hardened iniquity which calls evil good and good evil—can shut its doors so fast that the monitory voice cannot enter the chambers of the soul.

III. THAT WISDOM SPEAKS WITH A HOLY AND LOVING ENERGY. Wisdom "crieth," "utters her voice in the streets." There is an energy and an urgency in her tones and in her language (vers. 22, 23). The utterance of Wisdom is none other than the voice of God. It is our Father who pleads with us; it is our Saviour who calls to us; it is our Divine Friend who implores us. It is no hard voice as of a court doomster that assaults us; it is the pleading, plaintive, pathetic voice of One who loves us with fatherly affection, and yearns over us with more than motherly solicitude, that arrests us in our course and touches the tender and sacred feelings of our heart.

IV. THAT WISDOM SPARES NOT TO TELL US EXACTLY WHAT WE ARE. She does not mince her words; she does not cut away the knots of the cord with which we are to be stirred to newness of life. She calls men simpletons, scorners, fools, and upbraids them for their stupidity and their folly (ver. 22). When we listen to the voices which are from above we must expect plain speaking. We must not start back with offence if we find ourselves condemned in strong terms. "Thou art the man!" follows the narrative which transfixes the cruel and heartless robber of his neighbour's all. "Ye fools and blind!" said the Wisdom of God, as he rebuked the hypocrisy of his day. We are not to be repelled from, but attracted to, the man who, speaking for the only wise God, puts sacred truth into the strongest and even the sternest language.

V. THAT WISDOM SEEKS TO IMPART ITS OWN SPIRIT TO ITS DISCIPLES. "Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you" (ver. 23). Its aim is spiritual and beneficent. God wounds only that he may heal. He sends "poverty of spirit" that he may thereby make rich for evermore. He humbles that he may exalt. His one desire is to make us like himself; to put his own Spirit within us, that we may be "the children of our Father who is in heaven."—C.

Vers. 24—33.—*The Divine ultimatum.* There is something which is fearful and appalling in these verses. We are ready to tremble as we read them. We are ready to exclaim, "How far may human perversity, and Divine retribution go!" With hushed voice, with subdued spirit, as those before whose eyes the lightnings of heaven are flashing, we consider the significance of the words. But first we see—

I. THAT GOD MAKES MANY APPEALS TO THE HUMAN SOUL. He calls, and we refuse; he stretches out his hands, and no man regards (ver. 24). He multiplies his counsel and his reproof (vers. 25 and 30). Thus his statement is sustained by his dealings with us; he gives us the repeated and manifold admonitions of our own conscience, of the home, of the sanctuary, of friendship, of his Word, of his Spirit, etc.

II. THAT HUMAN PERVERSITY GOES AS FAR AS THE DIVINE PATIENCE. Man "refuses," "regards not" (turns away his eyes, closes his ears), "sets at nought," "will not have," "hates," does not choose (deliberately rejects), all the counsel of God. Perhaps the course of human perversity may be thus traced: first temporizing, with the idea of submitting; then postponing, without any such intention; then disregarding, hearing without heeding; then positively disliking and getting away from; then actually hating, cherishing a feeling of rebellious aversion, ending in mockery and scorn. So far may human perversity go. God's wonderful patience in seeking to win is extended far, but not further than human opposition and resistance. To every "Come" from Heaven there is an answer, "I will not," in the human spirit.

III. THAT GOD FINALLY ABANDONS SIN TO ITS DOOM. We must, of course, understand the language of vers. 26, 27 as highly figurative. No proverb is to be pressed to its fullest possible meaning. The author always assumes that it will be applied with intelligence and discrimination. This is the language of hyperbole. No one could for a moment believe that the eternal Father of our spirits would, literally and actually, laugh and mock at our calamity and alarm. The significance of the passage is that, after a certain point of perverse refusal has been past, God no longer pleads and strives with his wayward children. He interposes no further between a man and the consequences of his folly. He "leaves him alone" (Hos. iv. 17). He "gives him up" (Acts vii. 42; Rom. i. 26). He permits sin to do its own sad work in the soul, and to produce its own natural results in the life; he removes his restraining hand, and suffers them "to eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices" (ver. 31). This *is* the end of impenitence. We see it only too often illustrated before our eyes. Men act as if they might defy their Maker, as if they might draw indefinitely

on the patience of their Divine Saviour, as if they might reckon on the unlimited striving of the Holy Spirit. They are wrong; they make a fatal mistake; they commit the one unpardonable sin! They try to go beyond the Divine ultimatum. God's marvellous patience reaches far, but it has its bounds. When these are passed his voice is still, his hand is taken down, his interposing influence is withdrawn. Sin must bear its penalty. But this awful passage closes with a word of hope. Let us turn to a brighter aspect, and see—

IV. THAT SO LONG AS MAN HONESTLY DESIRES GOD'S SERVICE, HE MAY FIND PEACE AND REST. (Ver. 33.) If at any time it is in our heart to obey the voice of the All-wise, to lend an attentive ear to the Divine counsel, we may reckon on his grace and favour. Happy the heart that heeds the voice of Wisdom! Others may be rocked and tossed on the heaving billows of care and anxiety, of alarm and dread; but he, "dwelling in the secret place of the Most High," hiding in the Rock of his salvation, shall "dwell safely, and be quiet from fear of evil." God will hide him in his pavilion; he will "rest in the Lord."—C.

Ver. 32.—"*The prosperity of fools.*" "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them." Few men fear prosperity; but if they had enough wisdom to know their own weakness, they would see that there was nothing which they had so much reason to dread. We approach the truth of the text by seeing—

I. THAT IT IS IN OUR HUMAN NATURE TO ASPIRE TO PROSPERITY AND TO STRIVE AFTER IT. The Author of our nature has made us hunger for success as the food of the soul.

II. THAT THE PROSPERITY OF THE WISE IS AN EMINENTLY DESIRABLE THING. For it (1) will do them no harm, and (2) will multiply their influence for good.

III. THAT THE PROSPERITY OF THE FOOLISH IS A CALAMITOUS THING. 1. It results in ruin to other people—often their temporal, still more often their spiritual, ruin. 2. It ends in their own destruction. It leads down to death; for: (1) It fosters pride, and "pride comes before a fall." (2) It ministers to passion, and passion conducts to the grave in every sense. (3) It induces worldliness, and the man who loses himself in the cares, engagements, and excitements of the world is "dead while he lives."

The conclusion of the matter is this: 1. Let those to whom God has denied prosperity cheerfully accept their lowliness. In their humble position they are comparatively safe. They live where many arrows of destruction do not fly. 2. Let those who have attained prosperity ever recognize that the post of honour and of power is the place of danger, and that they need peculiar grace from God that they may not fall. 3. Let those who are being injured by their prosperity beware lest they go down fast to utter and irretrievable ruin.—C.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER II.

Vers. 1—22.—3. *Third admonitory discourse, pointing out the benefits which arise from a sincere, earnest, and persevering search after Wisdom.* This discourse divides itself into three parts. (1) Vers. 1—9: a statement of the conditions which, if fulfilled, result in the highest knowledge of Jehovah—the fear of Jehovah and the knowledge of God, who is the Source of wisdom and the Protection and Ensurer of safety to the righteous. (2) Vers. 10—19: the negatively beneficial results of Wisdom, in delivery from the paths of evil, from destructive lusts and passions, from the temptations of wicked men and wicked women. (3) Vers. 20—22: the epilogue, or conclusion, combining encouragement on the one hand, and warning on the other.

Ver. 1.—The teacher here reverts to the original form of his address, as appears from the employment of the term, **my son**. It seems clear that it is no longer Wisdom personified who is the speaker, from the fact that the words, "wisdom and understanding" in ver. 2 are used without the possessive pronoun "my," which would have been undoubtedly inserted if this address had been a continuation of the discourse in the preceding chapter. Some of the ideas of that address, however, are restated, as the crying and lifting up the voice after Wisdom, and the

conclusion, wherein the respective destinies of the pious and wicked are portrayed. The particle "if" (אִם) is conditional, and serves to introduce the series of clauses (vers. 1—4) which lay down the conditions upon which the promises depend, and which form the protasis to the double apodosis in vers. 5 and 9. De Wette, Meyer, and Delitzsch regard it as voluntative, as expressing a wish on the part of the teacher, and translate, "Oh that thou wouldst!" and אִם, "if," is used in this way in Ps. cxxxix. 19; but the LXX. (ἐάν) and Vulgate (*si*) make it conditional. It is repeated in an emphatic form in ver. 3. **Receive.** The verbs "receive" and "hide" show that the endeavour after Wisdom is to be candid and sincere. "To receive" (לָקַח) seems to be here used, like the LXX. δεχέσθαι, in the sense of "to receive graciously," "to admit the words of Wisdom." It is noticeable that there is a gradation in emphasis in the various terms here used by the teacher. Just as "commandments" is stronger than "words," so "hide" is stronger than "receive." The emphasizing is carried on in the following verses in the same way, and at length culminates in ver. 4, which sums up the ardent spirit in which the search after Wisdom is to be prosecuted in presenting it to us in its strongest form. **Hide.** The original (צָפַן, *tsaphan*) is here used in a different sense to that in which it occurs in ch. i. 11 and 18. It here refers, as in ch. vii. 1; x. 14; and xiii. 22, to the storing or laying up, as of treasure, in some secret repository, and means "to lay up." The Divine commands of the teacher are to be hidden in safe custody in the memory, in the understanding, in the conscience, and in the heart (cf. ch. iv. 21; vii. 1). The psalmist expresses the same idea in Ps. cxix. 11, "Thy words have I *hid* in my heart, that I might not sin against thee."

Ver. 2.—This verse is dependent on the preceding. **So that thou incline.** The literal translation is "to incline;" but the inclination of the ear and the application of the heart follow as a consequence upon the preceding ideas (cf. the Vulgate, *ut audiat sapientiam auris tua*). The root-idea of the original (הַקְשֵׁב, *kashav*) is "to sharpen," viz. the ear as expressed, and so to give diligent attention to the precepts of Wisdom. In ch. i. 24 it is rendered "to regard." **To apply thine heart** is to turn the heart with the whole scope of its powers, in the spirit of humility and eagerness, to understanding. As the ear represents the outward vehicle of communication, so the heart (לֵב, *lev*) represents the inward, the intellectual faculty, the mind, or it may mean the affections as suggested by the LXX. καρδία and Vulgate *cor*. **Understanding** (תְּבוּנָה, *t'vunah*) is here interchanged with "wisdom," which must determine its meaning to some extent. The LXX. interpreters take it as σύνεσις, "the faculty of comprehension." Like בִּינָה (*vinah*) in ch. i. 2, the word describes the faculty of distinguishing or separating; but it does not appear to be here used as representing this "as a faculty of the soul, but as a Divine *power* which communicates itself as the gift of God" (Delitzsch). A second and perhaps simpler sense may be given to the sentence. It may mean the turning or applying of the heart in an affectionate and loving way, *i.e.* with full purpose, to the discrimination of what is right and what wrong. The ideas of wisdom and understanding seem to some extent to be brought forward as personifications. They are things outside of ourselves, to which we have to give attention. Religion appeals not only to the affections, but also to the intellect, as this satisfies all the yearnings of our nature.

Ver. 3.—**Yea, if thou criest after knowledge.** The endeavour after Wisdom is not only to be sincere, it is also to be earnest, as appears from the "yea, if," and the verbs "crying" and "lifting up the voice," both of which frequently occur in Scripture as indicating earnestness. This earnestness is the counterpart of that which Wisdom herself displays (see ch. i. 20, 21). *Knowledge;* i.e. insight. In the original there is practically little difference between "knowledge" and "understanding" (בִּינָה and תְּבוּנָה). They carry on the idea expressed in "understanding" in the preceding verse, and thus throw the emphasis on the verbs. The LXX. and Vulgate, however, take "knowledge" as equivalent to σοφία, *sapientia*, "wisdom." The reading of the Targum, "If thou callest understanding thy mother," arises from reading אֵם for אִם, but is not to be preferred to the Masoretic text, as it destroys the parallelism.

Ver. 4.—**If thou seekest,** etc. The climax in the series of conditions is reached in this verse; and the imagery employed in both clauses indicates that the search after Wisdom is to be *persevering*, unrelaxing, and diligent, like the unremitting toil and labour with which men carry on mining operations. "To seek" (בָּקַשׁ, *bakash*) in the original is properly "to seek diligently" (piel), and is kindred to "to search" (חָפַשׂ, *khaphas*), which again is equivalent to "to dig" (חָפַר, *khaphar*), the Vulgate *effodere*, "to dig out." Compare the expression in Job iii. 21, "And dig for it more than for hid treasures." We trace in these verbs the idea in the mind of the teacher indicated above, which finds expression also in the object of the search, the silver, in its crude state, and the hidden

treasures (מַטְמֹנִים, *mat'monim*), *i.e.* the treasures of gold, silver, and precious metal concealed in the earth. The comparison here made between the search for Wisdom and the search for the hidden treasures of the earth was not unfamiliar to the Hebrew mind, as it is found worked out with great beauty of detail in the twenty-eighth chapter of Job. Again, the comparison of Wisdom with things most precious in the estimation of man is natural and common, and occurs in Ps. cxix. 72; Job xxviii. 15—19. The same ideas and comparisons here used are presented to us in the New Testament teaching, in our Lord's parable of the man who finds the hid treasure in the field, and, in the phraseology of St. Paul, who speaks of "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," and of "the unsearchable riches of Christ." "Divine knowledge is an inexhaustible mine of precious ore" (Wardlaw). The language of the Proverbs would receive additional force from the circumstances of the reign of Solomon, the most splendid and prosperous era in the annals of the Jewish national history, in the means taken to secure the treasures of other and distant countries; the wealth and the riches of that reign (see 2 Chron. ix. 20—22) would help to bring out the idea of the superlative value of Wisdom. In no era of the Jewish national history was there such abundance of riches, such splendid prosperity, as in the reign of Solomon, whose ships of Tarshish brought "gold and silver" (see 2 Chron. ix. 20—22), and this state of things would give point to the comparisons which the teacher uses in our text.

Ver. 5.—**Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord.** *Then* (אָז), introducing the first apodosis, and answering to the conditional "if" of vers. 1, 3, 4. The earnest endeavour after Wisdom meets with its reward, and those that seek shall find (cf. Matt. vii. 7); and thus an inducement is held forth to listen to the admonition of the teacher. *Understand* implies the power of discernment, but Zöckler gives it the further meaning of taking to one's self as a spiritual possession, just as "find," meaning primarily "to arrive at," conveys the idea of getting possession of (Mercerus). *The fear of the Lord* (יִרְאַת יְהוָה, *yir'ath y'hovah*); "the fear of Jehovah," as in ch. i. 7. As it is the beginning, so it is the highest form of knowledge and the greatest good. Elsewhere it is represented as a fountain of life (ch. xv. 27). All true wisdom is summed up in "the fear of the Lord." It here means the reverence due to him, and so comprises the whole range of the religious affections and feelings, which respond to various attributes of the Divine character as they are revealed, and which find their expression in holy worship. **The knowledge of God** (דַּעַת אֱלֹהִים, *daath Elohim*); literally, *the knowledge of Elohim*. Not merely cognition, but knowledge in its wider sense. The two ideas of "the fear of the Lord" and "the knowledge of God" act reciprocally on each other. Just as without reverence of God there can be no knowledge of him in its true sense, so the knowledge of God will increase and deepen the feeling of reverence. But it is noticeable that the teacher here, as in ch. ix. 10, where, however, it is "the knowledge of the holy" (דַּעַת קְדֹשִׁים, *daath k'doshim*), gives the chief place to reverence, and thus indicates that it is the basis of knowledge, which is its fruit and result. The relation here suggested is analogous to that which subsists between faith and knowledge, and recalls the celebrated dictum of Anselm: "Neque enim quæro intelligere ut credam; sed credo, ut intelligam." *Elohim*, here interchanged with *Jehovah*, is not of frequent occurrence in the Proverbs, as it is only found therein five times, while the predominating word which is used to designate the Deity is *Jehovah*. But it is difficult to draw any distinction between them here. *Jehovah* may refer more especially to the Personality of the Divine nature, while *Elohim* may refer to Christ's glory (Plumptre). Bishop Wordsworth thinks that a distinction is made between the knowledge of Elohim and the knowledge of man which is of little worth.

Ver. 6.—**For the Lord giveth wisdom.** The Lord Jehovah is the only and true Source of wisdom. The truth stated here is also met with in Dan. ii. 21, "He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding." He "giveth," or more properly, "will give" (יִתֵּן, *yitten*, future of נָתַן, *nathan*), wisdom; but the connection requires us to understand that the assurance applies only to those who seek after it earnestly and truly (cf. Jas. i. 5—7). The two coefficients to our obtaining wisdom are our efforts and God's assistance. Solomon may be adduced as a striking exemplification of this; he asked for "an understanding heart," and God graciously granted his request (see 1 Kings iii. 9, 12). **Out of his mouth** (מִפִּיו, *mippiv*); *ex ore ejus*; God is here spoken of anthropologically. He is the true Teacher. The meaning is that God communicates wisdom through the medium of his Word (Delitzsch, Pi.). The law proceeds from his mouth (Job xxii. 22). In the Book of Wisdom (vii. 25), "Wisdom is the breath of the power of God." His word is conveyed to us through men divinely inspired, and hence St. Peter (2 Pet. i. 21) says that "holy men of old

spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Ver. 7.—Wisdom which is the foundation of security and safety, and hence is *sound wisdom*, is that which God treasures up for the righteous. The teacher passes to another phase of the Divine character. God is not only the Source of wisdom; he is also the Ensurer of safety, the Source of salvation to those who act uprightly. It will be noted that the use of the word is confined to the Proverbs and Job, with the exception of the two passages in Isaiah and Micah. **Buckler.** Besides storing up the treasures of sound wisdom, which the righteous may use and so obtain security in their uprightness, God is himself a *Buckler*, or *Shield* (מָגֵן, *magen*), to those who walk in innocence. This aspect of God's directly protecting power is met with in other parts of Scripture. In Gen. xv. 1 he encourages Abram with the assurance, "I am thy Shield." In Ps. xxxiii. 20; lxxxiv. 11; lxxxix. 18; cxliv. 2, Jehovah is called a Shield to his saints. He renders them security against the assaults of their enemies, and especially against the fiery darts of the wicked one. Again, in ch. xxx. 5, it is said, "God is a Shield (*magen*) unto them that walk uprightly." It is incorrect to take מָגֵן (*magen*) either as an accusative after the verb or in apposition with "sound wisdom." **To them that walk uprightly**; literally, *to the walkers in innocence* (לְהֹלְכֵי תֹם, *l'khol'key thom*). תֹם (*thōm*) is "integrity of mind," "moral faultlessness," "innocence." "To walk uprightly" is to maintain a course of life regulated by right principles, and directed to right ends. He "walks uprightly who lives with the fear of God as his principle, the Word of God as his rule, and the glory of God as his end" (Wardlaw). The *completeness* of the moral and religious character is involved in the expression which is found also in ch. x. 9 and Ps. lxxxiv. 11. The Vulgate translates the latter clause of the verse, *proteget gradientes simpliciter*, "he will protect those who walk in simplicity;" cf. 2 Cor. i. 12 in illustration of the phrase. **He layeth up**; *i.e.* he treasures up (LXX., θησαυρίζειν), or preserves and protects (*custodire*, Vulgate), as a person does "treasure or jewel, that it may not be stolen" (Zöckler). The majority of commentators read the Keri (יִצְפֹּן, "he will treasure up," future of צָפַן) in preference to the Khetib (צָפַן, perfect of same verb, with prefix וְ, "and he treasured up"), and this is the reading adopted in the Authorized Version. The Keri implies that God does treasure up sound wisdom, while the Khetib, as Delitzsch observes, has the force of the aorist, and so represents the treasuring up as an accomplished fact. The same verb occurs in ch. ii. 1, where it is translated in the Authorized Version by "hide," and also in ch. vii. 1 and x. 14 by "lay up." The laying up, or treasuring, points to the preciousness of that which is treasured, "sound wisdom." **Sound wisdom.** A great variety of opinions exists as to the true meaning of the word in the original, תּוּשִׁיָּה (*tvushiyyah*), of which "sound wisdom" is an interpretation. Zöckler explains it as "wisdom, reflection;" Delitzsch, as "advancement and promotion;" Dathe, as "solid fortune;" Gesenius, as "aid." The proper meaning of the word seems to be "substance," from the root יָשָׁה, "to be, to exist, to be firm." Professor Lee remarks on the word, "From the places in which it occurs, either wealth, thought, or some such sense it manifestly requires. It occurs in Job vi. 13, in parallelism with 'help;' in ch. ii. 7, with a 'shield;' in Job xi. 6, with 'wisdom;' in Job xii. 16, with 'strength;' in ch. iii. 21, with 'discretion;' in ch. viii. 14, with 'counsel' and 'understanding;' in Isa. xxviii. 29, with 'counsel;' and so in Job xxvi. 3. In Job xxx. 22 and Micah vi. 9, 'entirely' or the like seems to suit the context; see also ch. xviii. 1, and generally 'excess,' or 'abundance,' taken either in a good or bad sense, and varied by other considerations, seems to prevail in every case in which this word is used" (see Professor Lee, on Job v. 12). The parallelism of the passage before us seems to require that it should be understood in the sense of *security*; and transferring the idea to wisdom as the means of security. This idea is reproduced in the LXX. σωτήρια, the Vulgate *salus*, and the Targum *incolumitas*.

Ver. 8.—**He keepeth the paths of judgment.** This verse is explanatory of the latter hemistich of ver. 7, and points out more fully in what way God is a Protector of his saints. Some connect the Hebrew infinitive לִנְצֹר (*lin'tsor*), "to watch or keep," with "them that walk uprightly," and translate, "them that walk uprightly by keeping the paths of judgment;" but this is to transfer the idea of protection from God to such persons. The verb signifies specially "to defend, to preserve from danger," as in ch. xxii. 12, "The eyes of the Lord preserve knowledge; *i.e.* defend or protect it from danger." It is God who "keepeth the paths of judgment," as he alone has the power to do so. He watches over all that walk therein, guides, superintends, and protects them. *The paths of judgment*; or rather, *justice*, אָרְחוֹת מִשְׁפָּט (*ar'khoth mish'pat*). The abstract is here used for the concrete, and the phrase means "the paths of the just," *i.e.* the paths in which the just walk, or "those who walk justly"

(Mercerus). This expression corresponds with "the way of his saints," just as "keep" and "preserve" are synonymous verbs, both meaning "to guard, keep safe, or protect." **He preserveth the way of his saints.** God does this (1) by his preventing grace, as in Ps. lxvi. 9, "He suffereth not our feet to slip." Cf. Hannah's song, "He will keep the feet of his saints" (1 Sam. ii. 9); (2) by angelic agency, as in Ps. xci. 11, "He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways." The saints are ever under the watchful care and mighty protection of Jehovah. *His saints* (חֲסִידָו, *khasidav*); *i.e.* the pious towards God, the godly, those in whose hearts the principles of sanctity have been implanted, and who cherish earnest inward love to God, and "walk righteously" and "speak uprightly" (Isa. xxxiii. 15). It is remarkable that the word "saints" only occurs once (in this passage) in the Proverbs. During the period of the Maccabæan Wars, a party or sect, which aimed at ceremonial purity, claimed for themselves the title of *Chasidim* or *Asidæans* (*Ἀσιδαῖοι*), as expressive of their piety or devotion. They are those whom Moses called "men of holiness," Exod. xxii. 31 (אַנְשֵׁי־קֹדֶשׁ, *v'an'shev-kodesh*); cf. Ps. lxxxix. 5; cxlix. 1; lxxxix. 8; Deut. xxxiii. 3; Dan. vii. 18, 21, 22, 25. Under the Christian dispensation, the saints are those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus (1 Cor. i. 2; 1 John v. 1), and who are holy in all manner of conversation (1 Pet. i. 15; 1 Macc. ii. 42; vii. 13; 2 Macc. xiv. 6); see Bishop Lightfoot, 'Colossians and Philemon,' diss. ii. p. 355.

Ver. 9.—**Then** (אָז, *az*), repeated from ver. 5, introduces the second apodosis. As the former referred to God, so this appears to refer more especially to man, and thus we have stated the whole benefit, in its twofold aspect, which Wisdom confers on those who diligently seek her. It is not to be affirmed, however, that righteousness and judgment and equity refer exclusively to man; they must represent some aspects of our relationship to God, both from the meaning of the words themselves, and because the law which regulates our dealings and intercourse with man has its seat in the higher law of our relation to God. **Righteousness, and judgment, and equity.** These three words occur in the same collocation in ch. i. 3, which see. **Yea, every good path.** "Yea" does not occur in the original. The expression is a summarizing of the three previous conceptions, as if the teacher implied that all good paths are embraced by and included in "righteousness, and judgment, and equity;" but the term is also comprehensive in the widest degree. The literal translation is "every path of good" (כָּל־מַעְגַּל־טוֹב, *cal-ma'gal-tov*), *i.e.* every course of action of which goodness is the characteristic, or, as the Authorized Version, "every good path," the sense in which it was understood by St. Jerome, *omnem orbitam bonam*. The word here used for "path" is מַעְגָּל (*ma'gal*), "the way in which the chariot rolls" (Delitzsch), and metaphorically a course of action, as in ch. ii. 15; iv. 26.

Vers. 10—19.—Statement of the advantages which result from the possession of Wisdom, and specially as a safeguard against evil men (vers. 12—15) and evil women (vers. 16—19).

Ver. 10.—**When wisdom entereth into thine heart.** There is practically little difference as to the sense, whether we render the Hebrew כִּי by the conditional "if" or by the temporal "when" as in the Authorized Version. The conditional force is adopted by the LXX. *ἐάν* and the Vulgate *si*. In the previous section of this address, the teacher has shown that the search after Wisdom will result in possession; now he points out, when Wisdom is secured, certain advantageous consequences follow. The transition is easy and natural. The form of construction is very similar to that adopted previously. There is first the hypothesis, if we give this force to כִּי, though much shorter; and secondly the climax, also shorter and branching off into the statement of two special cases. *Entereth*; or, *shall enter* (תָּבוֹא, *thavo*) in the sense of permanent residence in the heart. Wisdom is not only to come in, but to *rest* there (cf. ch. xiv. 33). The expression is illustrated by John xiv. 23. The imagery of the verse is taken from the reception and entertainment of a guest. As we receive a welcome guest, and find pleasure in his company, so is Wisdom to be dear to the heart and soul. *Into thine heart* (בְּלִבֶּךָ, *b'libecha*). The heart (לֵב) "concentrates in itself the personal life of man in all its relations, the conscious and the unconscious, the voluntary and the involuntary, the physical and the spiritual impulses, the emotions and states" (Cremer, 'Bib. Theol. Lex.,' *sub voce καρδία*). It is that in which the נֶפֶשׁ (*nephesh*), "soul," manifests itself. It is the centre of the life of will and desire, of the emotions, and of the moral life. Rudloff ('Lehre von Menscher,' p. 59, *sqq.*, apud Zöckler) remarks that everywhere in the Scriptures the heart appears to belong more to the life of desire and feeling than to the intellectual activity of the soul. But at the same time, it is to be noted that intelligent conception is attributed to the heart (לֵב); ch. xiv. 10; viii. 5; xvi. 9. The expression seems to be put

here for the moral side of man's nature; and in the Hellenistic sense, *καρδία*, the proper equivalent of לֵב, "heart," involves all that stands for *νοῦς*, *λόγος*, *συνείδησις*, and *θυμός*; *i.e.* it includes, besides other things, the intellectual faculty. The word "soul" (נֶפֶשׁ, *nephesh*) is here found in combination with "heart." The other passages where they are mentioned together are Deut. vi. 5; Ps. xiii. 2; Jer. iv. 19; ch. xxiv. 12. The soul is primarily the vital principle, but according to the *usus loquendi* of Holy Scripture, it frequently denotes the entire inward nature of man; it is that part which is the object of the work of redemption. The home of the soul is the heart, as appears from ch. xiv. 10, "The heart knoweth his own bitterness [or, 'the bitterness of his soul,' Hebrew]." While the "heart" (לֵב) is rendered by *καρδία* and *ψυχή*, the only Greek equivalent to "soul" (נֶפֶשׁ) is *ψυχή*. The two expressions, "heart," and "soul," in the passage before us may be taken as designating both the moral and spiritual sides of man's nature. Wisdom is to be acceptable and pleasant to man in these respects. It may be remarked that an intellectual colouring is given to the word "heart" by the LXX., who render it by *διανοία*, as also in Deut. vi. 5 and other passages, evidently from the idea that prominence is given to the reflective faculty. Classically, *διανοία* is equivalent to "thought," "faculty of thought," "intellect." **Knowledge** (Hebrew, דַּעַת); literally, *to know*, as in ch. viii. 10 and xiv. 6; here used synonymously with "wisdom." Knowledge, not merely as cognition, but perception; *i.e.* not merely knowing a thing with respect to its existence and being, but as to its excellence and truth. Equivalent to the LXX. *αἰσθησις*, "perception," and the Vulgate *scientia*. **Is pleasant** (Hebrew, יָנְעַם, *yin'am*); literally, *shall be pleasant*; i.e. sweet, lovely, beautiful. The same word is used impersonally in Jacob's blessing of 'Issachar (Gen. xlix. 15, "And he saw the land that it was pleasant"), and also in ch. xxiv. 25, "To those that punish [*i.e.* the judges] there shall be delight." And this usage has led Dunn to take "knowledge" as an accusative of reference, and to translate, "There is pleasure to thy soul in respect of knowledge;" but the Authorized Version may be accepted as correct. "Knowledge" is masculine, as in ch. viii. 10 and xiv. 6, and agrees with the masculine verb "is pleasant." Knowledge will be pleasant from the enjoyment and rest which it yields. The Arabic presents the idea of this enjoyment under a different aspect: "And prudence shall be in thy soul the most beautiful glory."

Ver. 11.—**Discretion shall preserve thee.** *Discretion* (מְזִמָּה, *m'zimoth*), as in ch. i. 4, is the outward manifestation of wisdom; it tests what is uncertain, and avoids danger (Hitzig). The word carries with it the idea of reflection or consideration (see ch. iii. 21; v. 2; viii. 12). The LXX. reads, *βουλὴ καλή*, "good counsel;" and the Vulgate, *concilium*. *Shall preserve thee.* The idea of protection and guarding, which is predicated of Jehovah in ver. 8, is here transferred to discretion and understanding, which to some extent are put forward as personifications. **Understanding** (תְּבוּנָה, *t'vunah*), as in ch. ii. 11; the power of distinguishing and separating, and, in the case of conflicting interests, to decide on the best. **Shall keep**; *i.e.* keep safe, or in the sense of watching over or guarding. The two verbs "to preserve" (שָׁמַר, *shamar*) and "to keep" (צָר, *natsar*), LXX. *τήρειν*, occur together again in ch. iv. 6.

Ver. 12.—**To deliver thee from the way of the evil man.** The first special advantage resulting from the protecting guardianship of discretion and understanding. *From the way of the evil man*; properly, *from an evil way*; Hebrew, מִדֶּרֶךְ רָע (*midarek ra*), not necessarily, though by implication, connected with man, as in the Authorized Version. רָע (*ra*), "evil," "wicked," in an ethical sense, is an adjective, as in Jer. iii. 16 (לֵב רָע, *lev ra*), "an evil heart;" cf. the LXX., *ἀπὸ ὁδοῦ κακῆς*; the Vulgate, Targum, and Arabic, *a viâ mala*, and the Syriac, *a viis pravis*. "Way," is here used in the sense of "conduct," and the evil way is a line of conduct or action which is essentially wicked or evil. The teacher has already warned youth against the temptations and dangers of the way of evil men in ch. i. 10—15; he now shows that discretion, arising from wisdom being resident in the heart, will be a sufficient safeguard against its allurements. **From the man that speaketh froward things.** Perverse utterances are here brought in contradistinction to the evil way or froward conduct. *Man* (אִישׁ, *ish*) is here used generically, as the representative of the whole class of base and wicked men, since all the following verbs are in the plural. *Froward things.* The word תַּהְפֻּכוֹת (*tah'pucoth*), here translated "froward things," is derived from the root הָפַךְ (*haphak*), "to turn," "to pervert," and should be translated "perverseness." Perverseness is the wilful misrepresentation of that which is good and true. The utterances are of a distorted and tortuous character. The word, only found in the plural, is abstract in form, and is of frequent, though not of exclusive, occurrence in the Proverbs. It is attributed to the Israelites in Deut. xxxii. 20. It is met with again in such expressions as "the mouth of perverseness," Authorized Version "froward mouth" (ch. viii. 13); "the

tongue of perverseness," "froward tongue," Authorized Version (ch. x. 31); "the man of perverseness," "froward man," Authorized Version (ch. xvi. 28). What is here said of wicked men is attributed to drunkards in ch. xxiii. 33, "Thine heart shall utter perverse things." The expression finds its explanation in ch. vi. 13, 14. The spirit which indulges in this perverseness is stubborn, scornful, self-willed, and rebellious, and it is from such a spirit that discretion is a preservative. In Job v. 13 it is said that "the counsel of the froward is carried headlong" (see also 2 Sam. xxii. 27; Ps. xviii. 26; ci. 4). The LXX. rendering of this word is *μηδὲν πιστόν*, "nothing trustworthy," which is amplified in the Arabic, *quod nullam in se continet veritatem*, "that which contains in itself no truth."

Ver. 13.—**Who leave the paths of uprightness.** Between vers. 13 and 15 the teacher proceeds to give a more detailed description of those who speak perversely. *Who leave* (הָעֹזְבִים, *haoz'vim*); literally, *forsaking*, but the present participle has the force of the preterite, as appears from the context. The men alluded to have already forsaken or deserted the paths of uprightness (see previous note on the word "man." *The paths of uprightness* (אָרְחוֹת יֹשֶׁר, *ar'khoth yosher*); the same as the "right paths" of ch. iv. 11. The strict meaniug of the Hebrew word translated "uprightness" is "straightness," and hence it stands opposed to "perverseness" in the previous verse. Uprightuess is integrity, rectitude, honest dealing. The LXX. translators represent the forsaking of the paths of uprightness as a consequence resulting from walking in the ways of darkness, "O ye who have left the right ways by departing [*τοῦ πορεύεσθαι*, equivalent to *abeundo*] into the ways of darkuess." Again, **the ways of darkness** (דַּרְכֵי חֹשֶׁךְ, *dar'chey kkoshek*) are opposed to the "paths of uprightness" which rejoice in the light. Darkness includes the two ideas of (1) ignorance and error (Isa. ix. 2; Eph. v. 8), and (2) evil deeds. To walk in the ways of darkness, then, is to persist in a course of wilful ignorance, to reject deliberately the light of knowledge, and to work wickedness, by performing "the works of darkuess (*τὰ ἔργα τοῦ σκότους*)," which St. Paul exhorted the Church at Rome to cast away (Rom. xiii. 12), and by having fellowship with "the unfruitful works of darkness (*τὰ ἔργα τὰ ἀκάρπα τοῦ σκότους*)," against which the same apostle warned the Ephesians (v. 11). They are ways of darkness, because they endeavour to hide themselves from God (Isa. xxix. 15) and from man (Job xxiv. 15; xxxviii. 13, 15). In their tendency and end they lead to the blackness of darkness for ever. In Scripture darkness is associated with evil, just as light is with uprightness (see John iii. 19, 20). The same association of ideas is discoverable in the dualism of the Persian system, as formulated by Zoroaster—Ormuzd, the good principle, presides over the kingdom of light, while Ahriman, the principle of evil, is the ruler of the kingdom of darkness.

Ver. 14.—**Who rejoice to do evil.** Another element is here brought forward, and the description increases in intensity. The wicked not only rejoice to do evil themselves, but they exult when they hear of evil in others (cf. Rom. i. 32). Such may be the interpretation, though the latter part, of the verse is capable of a different and more general rendering as signifying exultation in evil generally, whether it appears in themselves or others. The expression rendered in the Authorized Version, in the **frowardness of the wicked**, is in the original (בְּתַחְפֻּכוֹת רָע, *b'thah'pucoth ra*), *in the perverseness of evil*, or in evil perverseness, where the combination of the two nouns serves to give force to the main idea, which is that of perverseness. This rendering is adopted in the LXX., *ἐπὶ διαστροφῇ κακῇ*, "in evil distortion;" in the Vulgate, *in pessimis rebus;* in the Targum, Syriac, and Arabic, *in conversatione malâ*, "in a bad course of conduct;" and in the Targum, *in malitiæ perversione*, "in the perversion of wickedness." It is not perverseness in its simple and common form that these men exult in, but in its worst and most vicious form (for a similar construction, see ch. vi. 24; xv. 26; and xxviii. 5). How widely different is the conduct of charity, which "rejoiceth not in iniquity" (1 Cor. xiii. 6)!

Ver. 15.—**Whose ways are crooked;** better, perhaps, *who as to their ways are crooked.* This is the construction adopted by Fleischer, Bertheau, Zöckler, and others, though it may be remarked that the substantive אֹרַח (*orakh*), "way," is common gender, and may thus agree with the adjective עִקְּשִׁים (*ikesh*), "perverse," which is masculine. The Targum, LXX., Vulgate, Syriac, and Arabic, all make "crooked" agree with "ways," so that, grammatically, the Authorized Version may be regarded as not incorrect. *Crooked* (עִקְּשִׁים, *ik'shim*); *i.e.* tortuous, perverse, not straightforward (*σκολιαί*, LXX.). Symmachus translates the original by *σκαμβαί*, *i.e.* "bent." Theodotion, by *στρεβλαί*, "twisted, crookt." Sinners, in their perverseness, are ever winding about, turning in every direction, and changing from purpose to purpose, as wayward caprice or shifting inclination, the alternations of evil propensity, happen to dictate (Wardlaw). (For the expression, "crooked ways," see Ps. cxxv. 5.) And they **froward in their paths;** *i.e.* perverse in their

paths. The root-idea of the Hebrew niph. participle נִלְוִזִים (*vun'lozim*), translated "and they froward," is "to bend aside," "to turn away." They are turned aside to the right hand and to the left in their walk. The niph. participle נָלוֹז (*naloz*) only occurs four times in the Scriptures—here; ch. iii. 32; xiv. 2; and Isa. xxx. 12. This is the last feature in their wickedness.

Ver. 16.—**To deliver thee from the strange woman.** This is the second form of temptation against which *wisdom* (discretion) is a preservative, and the great and especial dangers arising from it to youth, owing to its seductive allurements, afford the reasou why the teacher is so strong in his warnings on this subject. Two terms are employed to designate the source of this evil—"the strange woman" (אִשָּׁה זָרָה, *ishshah zara*), and "the stranger" (נָכְרִיָּה, *nok'riyah*)—and both undoubtedly, in the passage before us, mean a meretricious person, one who indulges in illicit intercourse. The former term is invariably employed in this sense in the Proverbs (ch. v. 2, 20; vii. 5; xxii. 14; xxiii. 33) of the adulteress (זָרִים, *zarim*), and Jer. ii. 25. The participle זָר (*zar*), from the verb זוּר (*zur*), of which זָרָה (*zarah*) is the feminine form, is, however, used in a wider sense, as signifying (1) one of another nation, or one of another family; (2) or some one different from one's self; (3) or strange. Thus: (1) in Isa. i. 7 we have "Strangers devour it (your land) in your presence;" but in Exod. xxx. 33 "the stranger" is one not the high priest. (2) The "stranger" is another (ch. xi. 15; xiv. 10; xx. 16; xxvii. 2, 13). (3) The "strange fire" (אֵשׁ זָרָה, *esh zarah*) is the unlawful fire as opposed to the holy fire (Lev. x. 1); the "strange god" (אֵל זָר, *el zar*) is the foreign god (Ps. lxxxi. 9). But the idea of foreign origin implied in the word is more strongly brought out in the next term, נָכְרִיָּה (*nok'riyah*), on which Delitzsch remarks that it scarcely ever divests itself of a strange, foreign origin. This word is used to designate those "strange women" whom Solomon loved in his old age, and who turned his heart aside to worship false gods (1 Kings xi. 1—8), "outlandish women," as they are termed in Neh. xiii. 26; it designates "the strange wives" of Ezra x. and Neh. xiii. 27; and is applied to Ruth the Moabitess (Ruth ii. 10). Again, it has to be further observed that the laws of the Mosaic code against prostitution were of a most stringent nature (Lev. xix. 29; xxi. 9; Deut. xxiii. 17), and no doubt served to maintain a higher standard of morality among Israelitish women than that observed among the Midianites, Syrians, and other nations. Strong prohibitions were directed against the intermarriage of Israelites with the women of the surrounding nations; but the example set by Solomon would serve to weaken the force of these prohibitions, and would lead to a large influx of women of a different nationality. The conclusion we arrive at is that the class mentioned in the text, though not Israelitish by birth, were yet so by adoption, as the context clearly indicates (ver. 17) the fact of marriage and the acceptance of certain religious observances. Such women, after a temporary restraint, would eventually set all moral and religious obligations at defiance, and would become the source of temptation to others. The allegorical interpretation given to this passage by the LXX. is to be rejected on the ground that the previous section (vers. 12—15) speaks of perverse *men*. Which **flattereth with her words**; literally, *who has made smooth her words*, the hiph. perfect being used of חָלַק (*khalak*), "to make smooth," or "flattering." The preterite shows what her habitual practice is, and is used of an action still continuing, and so may be fitly rendered by the present, as in the Authorized Version: "She has acquired the art of enticing by flattering words, and it is her study to employ them;" cf. the Vulgate, *quæ mollit sermones suos*, "who softens her words;" and the Syriac, *quæ subvertit verba sua*, "who subverts her words," *i.e.* "uses deceit." The expression occurs again in ch. v. 3; vi. 24; vii. 5.

Ver. 17.—**The guide of her youth** (אַלּוּף נְעוּרֶיהָ, *alluph n'ureyah*); properly, *the associate* or *companion of her youth*. The Hebrew, אַלּוּף (*alluph*), being derived from the root אָלַף, (*alaph*), "to accustom one's self to," or "to be accustomed to" or "familiar with" any one. The word is rendered as "friend" in ch. xvii. 9; xvi. 28; Micah vii. 5. The idea of guidance, which is adopted in the Authorized Version, and appears also in the Vulgate *dux*, and Targum *ducatus*, is a secondary idea, and is derived probably from the relation in which the husband stands to his wife. Various interpretations have been given to the expression. It occurs again in Jer. iii. 4, where Jehovah applies it to himself, and says, through his prophet, to the religiously adulterous Judah, "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the Guide of my youth (אַלּוּף נְעוּרַי, *alluph n'ura*)?" It has also been understood as referring to the woman's parents, her father and mother, who were her natural guardians. But the context seems to require that it should be taken as designating her *husband*. It will then be the correlative of "the wife of thy youth" of Mal. ii. 14. **The covenant of her God**; *i.e.* the marriage covenant, called "the covenant of her God,"

because entered into in his presence. The forsaking of the guide of her youth is essentially bound up with a forgetfulness of the solemn covenant which she had entered into in the presence of God. No specific mention is made in the Pentateuch of any religious ceremony at marriage; yet we may infer, from Mal. ii. 14, 15, where God is spoken of as "a Witness" between the husband and "the wife of his youth," "the wife of thy covenant," that the marriage contract was solemnized with sacred rites. The Proverbs thus give a high and sacred character to marriage, and so carry on the original idea of the institution which, under the gospel dispensation, developed into the principle of the indissolubility of the marriage tie. It is no objection to this view that the monogamic principle was infringed, and polygamy countenanced. The reason of this latter departure is given in Deut. xxii. 28 and Exod. xxii. 16. The morality of the Proverbs always represents monogamy as the rule; it deprecates illicit intercourse, and discountenances divorce. It is in entire accordance with the seventh commandment. The woman who commits adultery offends, not only against her husband, but against her God.

Ver. 18.—**For her house inclineth unto death**; rather, *she sinks down to death together with her house* (Böttcher, Delitzsch). The objection to the Authorized Version is that it does not follow the construction of the original, the verb "sinks down" (שָׁחָה, *shakhah*) being feminine, while "house" (בַּיִת, *bayith*) is invariably masculine. 'Aben Ezra translates, "She sinks down to death, (which is to be) her house;" but it seems better to regard "her house" as an adjunct of the strange woman. Her house includes all who belong to her. She and they are involved in the same fate. The Authorized Version is evidently influenced by the Vulgate, *Inclinata est enim ad mortem domus ejus*, "For her house is inclined to death." The LXX. gives a different rendering, Ἔθετο γὰρ παρὰ τῷ θανάτῳ τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς, "For she hath placed her house beside death." So the Arabic. The "for" (כִּי, *ki*) refers back to ver. 16, and indicates how great is the deliverance effected by wisdom. The meaning of the passage is aptly illustrated by ch. vii. 27, "Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death." **And her paths unto the dead.** *The dead* (רְפָאִים, *r'phaim*) are properly the quiet, or the feeble. They are the shadowy inhabitants or shades of Hades, the *inferi* of the Vulgate, and are here put for Sheol itself. Compare the εἴδωλα καμόντων of Homer, and the *umbræ*, "shades," of Virgil. The word occurs again in ch. ix. 18; xxi. 16; and in Ps. lxxxviii. 11; Isa. xxvi. 14, 19; Job xxvi. 5.

Ver. 19.—**None that go unto her return again.** The fate of the companions of the strange woman is described as irrevocable. All who visit her shall not return again. The Targum reads, "They shall not return in peace." The difficulty which they who give themselves up to the indulgence of lust and passion encounter in extricating themselves makes the statement of the teacher an almost universal truth. Hence St. Chrysostom says, "It is as difficult to bring back a libidinous person to chastity as a dead man to life." This passage led some of the Fathers to declare that the sin of adultery was unpardonable. Fornication was classed by the scholastic divines among the seven deadly sins, and it has this character given to it in the Litany: "From fornication, and all other deadly sin." St. Paul says, "No whoremonger nor unclean person . . . hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph. v. 5; cf. 1 Cor. vi. 9; Rev. xxii. 15). The sin which they commit who have dealings with the strange woman is deadly and leads on to death, and from death there is no return, nor laying hold of or regaining the paths of life (see Job vii. 9, 10). Compare the words with which Deiphobe, the Cumæan sibyl, addresses Æneas—

"Tros Anchysiade, facilis descensus Averno
Sed revocare gradum superasque evadere ad auras,
Hoc opus, hic labor est."
(Virgil, 'Æneid,' vi. 126—129.)

"O Trojan, son of Anchyses, easy is the path that leads to hell. But to retrace one's steps, and escape to the upper regions, this is a work, this is a task."

Vers. 20—22.—Conclusion of the discourse in which are antithetically stated the respective destinies of the good and the bad, the upright and the wicked.

Ver. 20.—**That** (Hebrew, לְמַעַן, *l'maan*); *in order that* (Vulgate, *ut*), carries us back properly to ver. 11. The protecting power of wisdom is developed in a positive direction. Negatively, it delivers from the evil man and from the strange woman, but it does more—"it shall keep thee in order that thou mayest walk in a good way," etc. The Hebrew לְמַעַן (*l'maan*) is co-ordinate with "to deliver thee," but it serves to bring the discourse to a conclusion. Umbreit renders it "therefore," thus making what follows an inference from the preceding discourse. So the Syriac, *ambula igitur*, "therefore walk." **In the way of good** men (בְּדֶרֶךְ טוֹבִים, *b'derek tovim*); *i.e.* in the way of the good, in an ethical

sense, *i.e.* the upright, as in Isa. v. 20. The Vulgate renders, *in viâ bonâ*, "in the good way." "The way of good men" is the way of God's commandments, the way of obedience. **Keep.** The Hebrew verb שָׁמַר (*shamar*) is here used in the sense of "to observe," "to attend to," but in a different sense from Ps. xvii. 4, "I have observed the ways of the violent man," *i.e.* that I might avoid them. To keep the paths of the righteous is to carefully attend to the life of obedience which they follow. The LXX. closely connects this verse with the preceding, and renders, "For if they had walked in good ways, they would have found the paths of righteousness light."

Ver. 21.—**For the upright shall dwell in the land.** Much the same language is met with in Ps. xxxvii. 29, "The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever." It is the secure and peaceful dwelling in the land which is intended (cf. ch. x. 30). To dwell in the land was always put forward as the reward of obedience to God's commandments (see Exod. xx. 12; Lev. xxv. 18; xxvi. 5), and the phrase conveyed to the Hebrew mind the idea of one of the greatest, if not the greatest, of all temporal blessings. The love of country was a predominant characteristic of the race. Elster, quoted by Zöckler, remarks, "The Israelite was beyond the power of natural feeling, which makes home dear to every one, more closely bound to the ancestral soil by the whole form of the theocracy; torn from it, he was in the inmost roots of life strained and broken. Especially from psalms belonging to the period of the exile this patriotic feeling is breathed out in the fullest glow and intensity." *The land* (אֶרֶץ, *arets*) was the promised land, the land of Canaan. The word is not used here in the wider sense in which it occurs in Matt. v. 5, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." **And the perfect shall remain in it;** *i.e.* they shall not, as Rabbi Levi remarks, be driven thence nor caused to migrate. The *perfect* (תְּמִימִים, *th'mimim*), the holy (LXX., ὅσιοι), the spotless (*immaculati*, Targum), those without a stain (*qui sine labe*, Syriac), the guileless (*simplices*, Vulgate). *Shall remain;* יִוָּתְרוּ (*yivath'ru*), niph. future of יָתַר (*yathar*), properly "to be redundant," and in the niph. form, "to be left," or "to remain." LXX., ὑπολειφθήσονται, "shall remain;" *permanebunt*, Vulgate.

Ver. 22.—**But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth.** The punishment of the wicked is contrasted with the blessings that are promised to the upright. *Shall be cut off;* יִכָּרְתוּ (*yikkarethu*), niph. future of כָּרַת (*karath*), "to cut off, or destroy." LXX., ὀλοῦνται; Vulgate, *perdentur*. The expression is used to convey the idea of extermination, as in Ps. xxxvii. 9 (cf. Job xviii. 17; Ps. xxxvii. 28; civ. 35). The verb is found also in Gen. xvii. 14; Exod. xii. 15. *The earth;* properly, *the land*. The same word (אֶרֶץ, *arets*) is used as in ver. 21. **The transgressors** (בּוֹגְדִים, *bog'dim*); here employed synonymously with "the wicked" (יְשָׁעִים, *y'shaim*), "the impious." The primary meaning of the verb from which it is derived (בָּגַד, *bagad*) is "to cover," "to deal treacherously," and hence the word signifies those who act treacherously or perfidiously, the faithless. They are those who perfidiously depart from God, and break away from the covenant with Jehovah. LXX., παράνομοι (cf. ch. xi. 3, 6; xiii. 2, 25; xxii. 12; Ps. xxv. 3; lix. 5; Isa. xxxiii. 1). **Shall be rooted out** (יִסָּחוּ, *yiss'khu*). This word is taken by Davidson as the future kal of נָסַח (*nasah*), "to pluck up," and hence is equivalent to "they shall pluck up," or, passively, "they shall be plucked up." Delitzsch remarks that it is as at ch. xv. 25 and Ps. lii. 7, active, "they shall pluck up," and this with the subject remaining indefinite is equivalent to the passive form, "they shall be plucked up." This indefinite "they" can be used of God, as also in Job vii. 3 (Fleischer). The expression has been understood as referring to being driven into exile (Gesenius), and this view would be amply justified by the fate which overtook the apostate nation when both the kingdoms of Israel and Judah suffered this fate (cf. LXX. ἐξωθήσονται, "they shall be driven out"). It also derives colour from the language of the preceding verse, but the imagery appears to be derived from the cutting down and rooting up of trees. The destruction of the wicked and transgressors will be complete. They shall be exterminated (cf. Targum, *eradicabuntur;* Syriac, *evellentur;* and Arabic, *exterminabuntur*).

## HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—5.—*The search for wisdom.* I. DIVINE WISDOM MUST BE SOUGHT BEFORE IT CAN BE FOUND. It is true that Wisdom cries aloud in the street and invites the ignorant and simple to partake of her stores. But the burden of her cry is to bid us seek her. It is the voice of invitation, not that of revelation. The latter is only audible to those who incline their ears purposely and thoughtfully. The thoughtless

are satisfied with hasty impressions of the moment; but the only religious convictions worth considering are the outcome of thought and prayer. Still, it is to be observed that this wisdom is not reserved for the keen-sighted, the intellectual, the philosophical. It is not ability, but industry, that is required; not exceptional capacity to attain knowledge, but diligence in pursuing it. Laborious dulness can never achieve the triumphs of the brilliant scholar in secular studies. Industry alone will not make a senior wrangler. But the highest knowledge, Divine knowledge, depends so much more on moral considerations which are within the reach of all, that it can stand upon this democratic basis and offer itself to all patient inquirers.

II. THE SEARCH FOR DIVINE WISDOM MUST BEGIN IN RECEPTIVE FAITH. This wisdom is not innate; it is not attained by direct observation; it is not the result of self-sustained reasoning. It comes as revelation, in the voice of God. Thus the soul's first duty is to hear. But the right attitude towards the Divine revelation is not merely a state of receptivity. It is one of faith and careful attention, receiving the words and hiding them. All through the Bible this essential distinction between heavenly truth and philosophy, between the mere intellectual requisites of the one and the faith and obedience which lie at the root of the other, is apparent. The first steps towards receiving the wisdom of God are childlike trust and that purity and devoutness which bring the soul into communion with God.

III. THE SEARCH FOR DIVINE WISDOM MUST BE MAINTAINED WITH INCREASING EARNESTNESS. The verses before us describe a progressive intensity of spiritual effort—receiving, hiding the commandment, inclining the ear, applying the heart, crying after, lifting up the voice, seeking, searching as for hid treasure. The truth may not be found at once. But the earnest soul will not desist at the first discouragement; if his heart is in the pursuit, he will only press on the more vigorously. It is, moreover, the characteristic of Divine truth that a little knowledge of it kindles the thirst for deeper draughts. Thus we are led on to the most energetic search. Spirituality does not discourage the eager energy with which men seek worldly gain; on the contrary, it bids us transfer this to higher pursuits, and seek wisdom as men seek for silver, and sink mines after hidden treasures. Christ does not say, "Be anxious for nothing;" but, "Be not anxious for the morrow"—in order that we may transfer our anxiety to more important concerns, and "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."

IV. THE SEARCH FOR DIVINE WISDOM WILL BE REWARDED WITH SUCCESS. Some question this, and, after weary pursuit, abandon the quest in despair, or settle down into indolent indifference. Perhaps they lack patience—toiling in the night and taking nothing, they cannot hold on till the dawn, when the Master will give them a rich draught; or they seek wrongly, not in spiritual faith, but in cold human reason; or they seek a mistaken goal—the explanation of mystery rather than practical wisdom as the guide of life. This wisdom is promised to those who truly seek, and it is attainable.

Ver. 6.—*Wisdom a gift of God.* I. TRUE WISDOM ORIGINATES IN DIVINE INSPIRATION. Prophets and apostles—teachers of the highest truths—claim to be delivering a message from heaven. The greater the thoughts declared to us in Scripture, the more emphatic is the ascription of them to a superhuman source. Surely this very fact—this conjunction of unique value in the thoughts with the confident assertion that they are from God—should go far in leading us to believe in the inspiration of them. But it is also urged by the men who bring these truths to us that we can only receive them when we are inspired by the Spirit of God; and experience shows that they who have most spirituality of life are able to drink most deeply of the fountains of revelation. Further, when once we admit this much, it follows that, if we recognize the constancy of God in all his methods of action, it is reasonable for us to feel that all truth must depend on a Divine illumination for its manifestation, and that all wisdom must be the outcome of some degree of inspiration. Nevertheless, it is not to be inferred that inspiration dispenses with natural channels of knowledge; on the contrary, it opens the eyes of men, who must then use their eyes to be seers of spiritual truth.

II. THE INSPIRATION OF WISDOM DEPENDS ON SPIRITUAL RELATIONS WITH GOD. If inspiration is the source, the questions arise—Who are privileged to drink of this fountain? and how do they gain access to it? Now, it is much to be assured that this is

not reserved to any select class of men. Prophets have a special revelation to convey a special message, and apostles have a distinctive endowment for the accomplishment of a particular mission; but the inspiration of wisdom generally is not thus limited. On the contrary, it comes freely to all who rightly avail themselves of it. What, then, are the conditions for receiving it? 1. *Prayer.* "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (Jas. i. 5). Whosoever seeks shall find. 2. *Purity.* "The pure in heart shall see God," and the highest wisdom is in the beatific vision of him who dwells in the light of eternal truth. 3. *Obedience.* As we submit our wills to God's will, we open the channel through which his Spirit enters into us, and by fellowship illumines.

III. TRUE WISDOM, BEING INSPIRED BY GOD, WILL BEAR THE STAMP OF DIVINE CHARACTERISTICS. It will differ from mere human speculation; sometimes it will be so much in conflict with that speculation as to pass for foolishness (see 1 Cor. i. 18). It will be distinctly opposed to the wisdom that is purely carnal, *i.e.* to that which takes account only of earthly facts and ignores spiritual principles, the wisdom of expediency, the cleverness of men of the world. Such wisdom is not only earthly; its low maxims and immoral devices proclaim it to be "sensual, devilish" (Jas. iii. 15). Divinely inspired wisdom, on the contrary, is spiritual—taking account of the facts and laws of the higher order; pure—not ministering to selfish greed and degraded pleasure; wholesome—strengthening and elevating the soul; "peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy" (Jas. iii. 17).

Vers. 10, 11.—*The antidote to temptation.* I. WE NEED AN ANTIDOTE TO TEMPTATION. It is not enough to trust to our own spiritual health to throw off the poison. We are already diseased with sin, and have a predisposition to yield to temptation in the corruption of our own hearts. But if we were immaculate, we should still be liable to fall; the power of temptation is so fearful that the purest, strongest soul would be in danger of succumbing. The tempter can choose the moment of his attack. When we are most off our guard, when we are faint and weary, when we are suffering from spiritual depression, the mine may be suddenly sprung, and we may be lost before we have fully realized the situation. Like the dragon in Spenser's 'Faëry Queene,' which would have stifled the Red Cross Knight with the fiery fumes it belched forth unless he had fallen into the healing fountain, the tempter would destroy our spiritual life with an atmosphere of foul thoughts after more tangible attacks have failed, were it not that we have a supply of grace outside ourselves, equal to our need. Even Christ, when tempted, did not rest on his own purity and power, but appealed for support to the sacred wisdom of Scripture.

II. THE ANTIDOTE TO TEMPTATION MUST BE SOME FORM OF POSITIVE GOOD. Fire is quenched by water, not by opposing flames. Evil must be overcome with good. The way to keep sin out of the heart is to fill the heart with pure thoughts and affections till there is no room for anything else. The citadel entered most easily by the tempter is an empty heart.

III. TRUE WISDOM IS THE SUREST ANTIDOTE TO TEMPTATION. All knowledge tends in some degree to preserve from evil. Light makes for goodness. Both are from God, and therefore they must harmonize. Secular knowledge is morally useful. A very large proportion of the criminals in our jails can neither read nor write. Ignorant of wiser courses, they are led aside to the lowest pursuits. Sound intelligence and good information introduce men at least to the social conscience. But the schoolmaster is not the saviour of the world. Higher wisdom is needed to be the successful antidote to sin—that wisdom which, in the Book of Proverbs, is almost synonymous with religion—the knowledge of God and his laws, and the practical discernment of the application of this knowledge to conduct. We must know God's will and the way of the Christian life, the beauty of holiness and how to attain it, if we are to have a good safeguard against sin. Christ, the Wisdom of God, dwelling in our hearts, is the great security against temptation.

IV. TO BE EFFECTUAL AS AN ANTIDOTE TO TEMPTATION, WISDOM MUST BE RECEIVED WITH DELIGHT. Knowledge must be "pleasant." We are most influenced by that which we love most. There is a strength in the Divine joy. So long as religious truths are accepted in cold intellectual conviction, or submitted to through hard com-

pulsions of duty, they will have little power over us. But happily God has joined the highest truth to the purest gladness. Wisdom is a pleasure to those who welcome it to their hearts. The acquisition of all knowledge is pleasurable. The knowledge of God is joined with peculiar spiritual delights. In rejoicing in this and in love to the incarnation of this wisdom in Christ, we have the strongest safeguard against temptation.

Ver. 14.—*Rejoicing to do evil.* We often insist upon the fact that goodness is the secret of true happiness, and invite men to rejoice in the service of God; but we are here reminded of an opposite kind of joy which some find in the course of wickedness.

I. THIS IS A POSSIBLE EXPERIENCE. It is so unnatural that one who knew nothing of the world might well declare it to be impossible. But experience proves its existence, and the explanation of it is not far to seek. 1. *Naturally desirable ends lend a sense of pleasure to the evil means by which they are sought.* The miser loves his money on its own account through previous associations with the ideas of what it might purchase. So the criminal may come to delight in his crimes because the profit he gets out of them has cast a glamour over the ugly deeds themselves. 2. *Some pleasures are sinful.* Then the whole course, end as well as means, is wicked; yet, as it concerns self-indulgence, a wicked glee accompanies it. 3. *There is a sense of freedom in sin.* There is more room to range at large over the broad way than in the narrow path of righteousness. The sinner has burst the shackles of law, and he revels in the licence of self-will. 4. *Sin gives an opportunity for the exercise of power.* Much evil is done simply for the sake of effect, in order that the doer of it may find himself producing results. But it is easier to do harm than to do good. Therefore a man turns to evil for the larger realization of his power. So wicked children delight in picking flies to pieces.

II. THIS IS A SIGN OF ADVANCED WICKEDNESS. 1. *At first it is painful to sin.* The poor, weak soul gives way to temptation, but the very act of sinning is accompanied with a sense of uneasiness and humiliation. 2. *A further stage is reached when sin is committed with indifference.* This is indeed a state of moral degradation, for conscience is now practically dead, and the sinner is as willing to have his pleasure by lawless means as in an innocent manner. 3. *The lowest depth is reached when there is a positive pleasure in doing wrong.* Evil is then chosen on its own account, and not as the disagreeable or the indifferent means for reaching some ulterior end. When two courses are open, the bad one is deliberately selected as the more pleasant on its own account. A malignant joy lights up the countenance of the abandoned sinner at the mere prospect of some new villainy. This is Satanic wickedness. The abandoned sinner can now exclaim with Milton's Satan—

"Evil, be thou my good!"

III. THIS IS A DELUSIVE JOY. 1. *It is shallow.* Though it may be excited into a diabolical ecstasy, it has no heart-satisfying qualities. Beneath it there is profound unrest. The peace which accompanies the joy of holiness, and which is the sweetest ingredient in the cup of the good man, is quite wanting here. There are shooting pangs, dark misgivings, and dread sinkings of heart in the midst of this monstrous delight. 2. *It will not endure.* The pleasures of sin do but endure for a season. The sweet morsels soon turn to dust and ashes. After the wild orgie there follows deep depression or dread despair, or at best a sense of listless weariness. The appetite is soon exhausted. New and more piquant forms of wickedness must be invented to stimulate the jaded palate. At length the awful consequences must come, and anguish of soul follow the delights of sin when God's judgment takes effect.

Ver. 15.—*Crooked ways.* I. CROOKED WAYS ARE DEVIATIONS FROM THE STRAIGHT PATHS OF MORAL SIMPLICITY. The man of high character is simple in conduct. Great complexity of motive is generally a sign of moral laxity. The way of right is straight because it makes for its goal without any considerations of expediency, danger, or pleasure. To be turned aside from the steep Hill of Difficulty, or into By-path Meadow, is to forsake the right for selfish ease. When men allow considerations of momentary advantage to guide their actions, they will be perpetually swayed from side to side till their track is marked by an irregular "zigzag." "The expression of truth," says Seneca, "is simplicity."

II. CROOKED WAYS ARE SIGNS OF LACK OF PRINCIPLE. Principles are like the rails on which the train runs, keeping it in a direct course and facilitating its speed. The unprincipled man is off the rails, and the result is confusion. Like a ship without compass, rudder, or chart, the unprincipled man drifts with wind and tide, and so leaves behind him a crooked track. The security for straightforward conduct is the guidance of a deep-seated principle of righteousness.

III. CROOKED WAYS RESULT FROM SHORT-SIGHTED AIMS. The lane which is made, bit by bit, from farm to farm, is likely to wind about; but the old Roman high-road that connects two distant cities runs as directly as possible. The ploughman who looks no further than his horses' heads will make a crooked furrow; to go straight he must fix his eyes on the end of the field. He who regards only present circumstances will wander aimlessly. To go right we must look out of self to Christ; beyond present expediency to the full purpose and end of life; above all earthly pursuits to the goal of the life eternal.

IV. CROOKED WAYS ARE DECEITFUL WAYS. Bad men often fear to go straight towards their evil aims lest they shall be discovered. They beat about the bush. The assassin avoids the high-road and slinks along under a hedge, that he may come upon his victim unawares. The thief breaks into the house by the back door. Honesty is direct; dishonesty is circuitous. Crooked ways tend to become deceitful, if they are not so of set purpose. A man may wander in them till he has lost account of the points of the compass, and knows not whither he is going. The most elementary notions of right and wrong are then confused. This is the common issue of casuistic and disingenuous conduct; it results in self-deception.

V. CROOKED WAYS LEAD TO A FATAL END. The way to heaven is to "turn to the right, and keep straight on." The road that leads to destruction is broad, admitting of much irregularity of motion from one side to the other. It is the straight and narrow way that leads to life.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—9.—*The conditions of religious knowledge.* The previous chapter having shown us in a variety of representations the necessity and the worth of wisdom, the question is now dealt with—How shall it be sought and attained?

I. CONDITIONS ON MAN'S SIDE. The enumeration is climactic, proceeding from the less strong to the stronger expressions. 1. *Receptivity.* The open mind and heart, ever ready to "adopt" true sentiments and appropriate them as one's own. The point is not to ask—Who says this? By what channel does it come to me? But—Is it sound? is it true? If so, it is *for me*, and shall be made my own. Truth is common property. 2. *Attention, concentration, assimilation.* "Keeping her commands with us." The thorough student finds it necessary to exercise his memory, and to help it by the use of note-books, where he hives his knowledge. So must we hive and store, arrange and digest, our religious impressions, which otherwise "go in at one ear and out at the other." Short germ-sayings may be thus kept in the memory; they will burst into fertility some day. 3. *Active application.* In figurative language "bending the ear" and "turning the heart" in the desired direction. The mind must not be passive in religion. It is no process of "cramming," but of personal, original, spiritual activity throughout. 4. *Passionate craving and prayerfulness.* "Calling Sense to one's side, and raising one's voice to Prudence"—to give another rendering to ver. 3. We must *invoke* the spirit of Wisdom for the needs of daily conduct; thus placing ourselves in living relation with what is our true nature. Fra Angelico prayed before his easel; Cromwell, in his tent on the eve of battle. So must the thinker in his study, the preacher in his pulpit, the merchant at his desk, if he would have the true clearness of vision and the only genuine success. True prayer is always for the *universal*, not the *private*, good. 5. *Persevering and laborious exertion.* Illustrated by the miner's toil. The passage (Job xxviii.), of extraordinary picturesque power and interest, describing the miner's operations, may help us to appreciate the illustration. The pursuit of what is ideal is still more arduous than that of the material, as silver and gold. It is often said that the perseverance of the unholy

worker shames the sloth of the spiritual man. But let us not ignore the other side. The toil in the spiritual region is not obvious to the eye like the other, but is not the less really practised in silence by thousands of faithful souls. We should reflect on the immense travail of soul it has cost to produce the book which stirs us like a new force, though it may appear to flow with consummate ease from the pen. Such are the conditions of "understanding the fear of Jehovah," or, in modern language, of appropriating, making religion our own; "receiving the things of the Spirit of God," in the language of St. Paul (1 Cor. ii. 14). It is the highest human possession, because permanent, inalienable, and preservative amidst life's ills.

II. CONDITIONS ON THE SIDE OF GOD. If religion be the union or identification of the soul with God, he must be related to us in such a way as makes this possible. 1. He is *wisdom's Source* and *Giver*. He not only contains in himself that knowledge which, reflected in us, becomes prudence, sense, wisdom, piety; he is an active Will and a self-communicating Spirit. The ancients had a glimpse of this when they said that the gods were not of so grudging or envious a nature as not to reveal their good to men. God is self-revealing; "freely gives of his things" to us, that we may *know*, and in knowing, *possess* them. 2. *His wisdom is saving.* "Sound wisdom" (ver. 7) may be better rendered *soundness*, or *salvation*, or *health*, or *saving health*. It seems to come from a root signifying the *essential* or *actual*. Nothing is essential but health for sensuous enjoyment; nothing but health, in the larger sense, for spiritual enjoyment. Let us think of God as himself absolute Health, and thus the Giver of all health and happiness to his creatures. 3. He is *Protector* of the faithful. The Hebrew imagination, informed by constant scenes of war, delights to represent him as the Buckler or Shield of his servants (Ps. xviii. 2; xxxiii. 20; lxxxix. 19). Those who "walk in innocence" seem to bear a charmed life. They "fear no evil," for he is with them. The vast sky is their tent-roof. They may be slain, but cannot be hurt. To be snatched from this world is to be caught to his arms. 4. He is eternal *Justice*. Being this in himself, the "way of his saints," which is synonymous with human rectitude, cannot be indifferent to him. Right is the highest idea we can associate with God. It is exempt from the possible suspicion of weakness or misdirection which may cleave to the mere idea of goodness or kindness. It essentially includes might. Thus the soul finds shelter beneath this vast and majestic conception and faith of its God. These, then, are the conditions, Divine and human, of religion. That we may realize it in ourselves, "understand right, justice, and equity"—in a word, "every good way" of life and thought, uniting piety with morality—the conditions must be faithfully fulfilled. Perfect bodily health may not be attainable; some of its conditions lie without the sphere of freedom, and within that of necessary law. Spiritual health *is* attainable, for it lies within the sphere of freedom. Then God is realized; it is the ether of the soul, and the region of love and light and blessedness.—J.

Vers. 10—22.—*The profit of religious knowledge.* It is preservative amidst the influences of evil example and of sensuous solicitation.

I. THE WAY IN WHICH IT ACTS AS A PRESERVATIVE. 1. By taking up a *central place in the consciousness.* "When wisdom enters thy heart, and knowledge is dear to thy soul." Not as a stranger or mere guest, but a beloved and confidential intimate. The heart denotes here, as elsewhere, "the centre and organic basis of the collective life of the soul, the seat of sentiment, the starting-point of personal self-determination." The soul, as used by Hebrew writers, denotes the entire assemblage of the passive and active principles of the inner life. Delitzsch terms the heart, as used in the Bible, "the birthplace of thought;" and this is true, because thought springs out of the dim chaos of feeling as the defined crystals from the chemical mixture. 2. By *counteractive force.* If the inmost thing we know and feel be a sense of right and a sense of God, a pure sentiment and a lofty idea, this must exclude the baser feelings, and displace the images of pleasure and objects of desire which are unlawful and undivine. There is watch and ward in the fortress of Man-soul against the enemy and the intruder. The "expulsive force of a new affection" operates. It is the *occupied* heart that alone is temptation-proof. "Discretion shall watch over thee, prudence guard thee." The mind, directed to what is without, and feeling for its course among uncertainties, thus appears forearmed against dangers.

II. THE DANGERS FROM WHICH IT PRESERVES. Social dangers. In society lies our field of full moral development, both in sympathy with the good and in antipathy to the evil. Two dangers are particularized. 1. *The influence of the bad man.* We know men by their talk and by their actions—their habit in both; their "style," their "form," in the expressive language of the day. (1) His *talk* is of "froward things," or "perversities"—cunning, crafty, malicious in spirit (ver. 12). Literally it is *crooked* talk, which is a relative term—the direct opposite of the "straightness" of ver. 9 being meant. Our moral intuitions appear in the mind under the analogy of relations in space, and are thus designated probably in all languages. The right line and the curve or zigzag represent what we *feel* about good and evil in conduct. The speech of *evil insinuation, covert suggestion, bad tone*, generally may be meant; or perhaps, rather, guilty topics of conversation. The East is more leisurely in its habits than are we; and the warning has peculiar adaptation to the unfilled hours of an easy life, and which bad talk so often wastes and corrupts. (2) His *habit of life.* He forsakes the "straight paths" to walk in "dark ways," such as those alluded to by St. Paul (Rom. xiii. 13; Eph. v. 11; 1 Thess. v. 5). In the like sense that darkness is antipathetic to us, is moral evil (hence its appropriateness as an emblem); we may overcome the feeling partially, but only by doing ourselves a violence. It is a step further in self-perversion to "take pleasure in the execution of evil, and to make merry over wickedness." Human nature demands sympathy; the most depraved cannot do without it or the semblance of it. We are always craving the sight of that which reflects us; hence the sight of evil gives joy to the bad man, the sight of good enrages him. For he is a deformity. His ways are crooked, twisted all his mode of mind and life; a moral deformity. The conscience, armed with the healthy perception of the true, beautiful, and good, sees all this in the bad man, recognizes him for what he is, and so is proof against him. One great lesson of Goethe's 'Faust' is that the tempted man does not see the devil in human shape, because his moral temper has been first unstrung, and so his vision vitiated. 2. *The solicitations of the bad woman.* The expressions, "strange, foreign" (ver. 16), appear to designate her as the wife of another, an adulteress (comp. ch. vi. 26; but the sense is disputed). To allegorize the passage is to weaken its force; for the actual dangers of youth are clearly indicated. She is depicted in the strongest light of reality. This is what she is in the view of the inspired conscience. (1) Her *infidelity* to her husband and her God (ver. 17). For marriage is a bond, not only between two human beings, but between each and God. Affiance is the glory of womanhood; to break her plighted troth is to wreck all her true charm and beauty. "Companion of her youth" is a beautiful designation of the husband (Jer. iii. 4; Ps. lv. 14). (2) Her *dangerous arts.* Oh, what can replace a youth defiled? or what more dangerous influence can there be than that of her whose "hatred is goaded by shame"—hatred against the virtue which confronts to reproach her? Her smooth tongue, flattering her victim with simulated admiration, and with the "hypocrisy of passion," is more deadly than the sword. (3) Her *deadly seductions.* Death, the kingdom of the shades, the ghosts who lead, according to the view of the ancient world, a faint and bloodless existence below, is the end of her and the partakers of her sins. To Sheôl, to Hades, the bourne whence no traveller returns, the steps of all her visitors tend. Her house seems ever to be tottering over the dark abyss. The truth held in this tragic picture is too obvious to need further illustration. Fatal to health of body, to peace of soul, to the very life itself, is the zymotic disease of lust. To the religious conscience thus the harlot appears; stripped of her paint and finery, her hypocrisy exposed, the poison of her being detected. It is the shadow of a life, and ends in emptiness, darkness, and ghostly gibbering.—J.

Vers. 20—22.—*The principle of moral stability.* This may be regarded as the epilogue or summary of the whole chapter. The object of all Wisdom's exhortations and warnings is the direction of youth to the good way, and that they may hold on the path of the just. For—

I. THE RIGHTEOUS HAVE A FUTURE BEFORE THEM. A "dwelling in the land"—the home-land; sound dear to an Israelitish ear. The *form* in which the happy future shall be realized may be first *material*, but only to pass into the spiritual. For ages Israel saw the promise under the image of material prosperity; afterwards, in the

purification and enlightenment of her conscience by the gospel, she looked for a "better country, that is, an heavenly." Both senses may be included. The enlightened spirit knows how to idealize every material content, and will leave much undefined in the prospect. Enough to say of all the seekers of God's kingdom and righteousness, "They have a future before them." The soul itself suffices to itself for the scene of bliss, and converts the rich land of Canaan into the type of its inward joys and harvests of good.

II. THE WICKED HAVE NO FUTURE BEFORE THEM. That is, in the sense *par excellence*. Their doom is to be rooted out and cast forth from the land. What lies behind the material figure, who can say? To conceive it transcends the bounds of human thought. There is no travelling out of the analogies of experience possible. We reach at last a *negative* conception in the case both of future bliss and future woe. The Buddhists aim as their highest goal at the *Nirvana*, which is the negation of finite existence with its defects and evils. What must be the *Nirvana* of the wicked? The negation of the Infinite must mean confinement in self, and this is death indeed. They who have persistently said "No" to God and the good in their life will be confronted by an everlasting "No!" And thus again the wheel comes full circle, and they reap as they sow (comp. Matt. vii. 24—27).—J.

Vers. 1—9.—*The course, the goal, and the prize of wisdom.* These are comprehensive verses; they include the three main features of the heavenly race.

I. THE COURSE OF THE WISDOM-SEEKER. He who searches for wisdom is a wise runner in a heavenly race; he is pursuing an end which the Divine Author of his being distinctly and emphatically commends. 1. His search for life-giving truth must be characterized by *readiness to receive*. He must be wholly different in spirit from those who are disinclined to learn; still more must he be far removed from those who scornfully reject; he must be a son who "will receive the words" of wisdom—the words of the "only wise God," of him who is "the Wisdom of God" (ver. 1). 2. But there must be not only readiness; there should be *eagerness to receive*. He must "incline his ear" (ver. 2). Not only be prepared to listen when Wisdom speaks, but make a distinct and positive effort to learn the truth which affects him and which will bless him. 3. Beyond this, there must be *carefulness to retain*. The student must not let his mind be a sieve through which knowledge passes and from which it is readily lost; he must make it a reservoir which will retain; he is to "hide God's commandments" within him (ver. 1), to take them down into the deep places of the soul whence they will not escape. 4. Further, there must be *perseverance in the search*. He must "apply his heart to understanding" (ver. 2). Not by "fits and starts" is the goal to be reached, but by steady, patient, continuous search. 5. And there must also be *enthusiasm in the endeavour* (vers. 3, 4). With the impassioned earnestness with which a man who is lost in the pathless wood, or is sinking under the whelming wave, "cries" and "lifts up his voice," should the seeker after heavenly wisdom strive after the goal which is before him. With the untiring energy and inexhaustible ardour with which men toil for silver or dig for the buried treasure of which they believe themselves to have found the secret, should the soul strive and search after the high end to which God is calling it.

II. THE GOAL HE WILL SURELY REACH. He who thus seeks for heavenly truth will attain that to which he is aspiring; "for the Lord giveth wisdom," etc. (ver. 6). There is no man who desires to be led into the path of that Divine wisdom which constitutes the life and joy of the soul, and who pursues that lofty and holy end in the spirit here commended, who will fail to reach the goal toward which he runs. That earnest and patient runner shall be helped of God; Divine resources shall be supplied to him; he shall run without weariness, he shall walk without fainting, till the winning-post is clasped (see Matt. v. 6; vii. 7, 8). 1. He shall apprehend the essential elements of religion. "Thou shalt understand the fear of the Lord" (ver. 5). He will be led into a spiritual apprehension of that which constitutes the foundation and the essence of all true piety. He will be able to distinguish between the substance and the shadow, the reality and the pretence of religion. 2. He shall also—and this is a still greater thing—*attain to a vital and redeeming knowledge of God himself*. "Thou shalt find the knowledge of God" (ver. 5). To know him is eternal life (John xvii. 3).

But this knowledge must be—what in the case of the earnest disciple of heavenly wisdom it will become—a *vital* knowledge; it must be of the whole spiritual nature, and not only of the intellectual faculty. It must be a knowledge which (1) engages the whole powers of the spirit; (2) which brings joy to the soul; (3) which leads to an honest effort after God-likeness.

III. THE PRIZE HE WILL WIN. It may be truly said that the runner in the race finds a deeper satisfaction in clasping the goal while his competitors are all behind him than in wearing the chaplet of honour on his brows. And it may be truly said that the most blessed guerdon which the heavenly runner wins is in that knowledge of God which is his "goal" rather than in the after-honours which are his "prize." Yet we may well covet with intense eagerness the prize which Wisdom holds in her hand for those who are victorious. It includes much. 1. Stores of deep spiritual verities. "He layeth up sound wisdom," etc. (ver. 7)—greater and deeper insight into the most profound and precious truth. 2. Discernment of all practical wisdom. "Thou shalt understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path" (ver. 9). 3. Divine guardianship along all the path of life. "He is a Buckler to them that walk uprightly. He keepeth the paths of judgment," etc. (vers. 7, 8).—C.

Vers. 10—15.—*The course of sin and the strength of righteousness.* We have here portrayed for us—

I. THE SHOCKING COURSE OF SIN. 1. It begins in departure from rectitude. Evil men first manifest their error by "leaving the paths of uprightness." They were once under the wholesome restraints of righteousness. Parental control, the influences of the sanctuary and of virtuous society, held them in check, but these are thrown off; they have become irksome, and they are rebelled against and abandoned. The old and wise principles which were received and cherished are one by one discarded, and they stand unshielded, unguided, ready to wander in forbidden paths. 2. It continues in the practice of evil. Having thrown off old restraints, they "walk in the ways of darkness" (ver. 13); they proceed to do, habitually, those things which the unenlightened do—those things which shun the light and love the darkness; deeds of error and of shame. 3. It resorts to despicable shifts. "Whose ways are crooked" (ver. 15). Sin cannot walk straight on; it would be soon overtaken by penalty, or fall over the precipice. It is like men pursued of justice, who have to turn and double that they may elude those who are behind. The course of sin is twisted and tortuous; it resorts to cunning and craftiness. All manliness is eaten out of it; it has the spirit and habit of a slave (see Rom. vi. 16). 4. It hardens into utter perversity. They "are froward in their paths" (ver. 15); they "speak froward things" (ver. 12), *i.e.* they sink down into complete hardihood and spiritual stubbornness; their hearts are turned aside from all that is devout, pure, wise, and they have gone utterly after that which is profane and base. 5. It culminates in a hateful and hurtful propagandism. They "rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked" (ver. 14). Sin can go no further in enormity, no deeper in abasement, than when, rejoicing in iniquity, it seeks to lead others into the same guilt and vileness with itself. What a pitiful zealotry is this—the anxiety and pertinacity of sin in winning from the paths of rectitude the children of innocence and truth! What a saddening thought that thousands of our fellow-men are actively occupied in this diabolical pursuit!

II. THE PERIL OF PIETY AND VIRTUE. Here, on earth, the purest virtue must walk side by side with the worst depravity. Sin sits down at the same hearth with goodness; profanity with piety. And thus brought into close contact, it is open to one to win or to seduce the other. We rejoice that godliness is seeking to gain impiety for God, but we mourn and tremble as we see sin seeking to pervert purity and goodness from "the right ways of the Lord." We are all open to human influence. The heart of man is responsive to human entreaty and example. But especially so is the heart of youth: *that* is tender, impressionable, plastic. Perhaps never a day passes but the sun looks down, in every land, on some young heart detached from truth, led into the path of evil, stained with sin, through the snares and wiles of guilty men. Who does not sigh with some feeling of solicitude as he sees the young man go forth from the shelter of the godly home into the world where the wicked wait, "rejoicing to do evil," and taking pride in the destruction they produce?

III. THE STRENGTH AND SECURITY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. When wisdom enters the heart and knowledge is pleasant to the soul, then discretion will preserve, and understanding will keep us (vers. 10, 11). In other words, the cordial acceptance of the truth of God is the one security against sin. Delighting to do God's will, his Law being *in the heart* as well as in the understanding (Ps. xl. 8), this will prove an effectual breakwater against the tides of evil. He that can say, "O Lord, how love I thy Law!" (Ps. cxix.) will never have to utter words of bitter remorse and black despair. Would youth know the certain path of victory, and pursue that way which leads, not down to shame, but on and up to heavenly glory? 1. Let it regard with earnest gaze him who is the Wisdom of God in fullest revelation to the sons of men. 2. Yield to him its early, unbounded love. 3. Then will it find unfading joy in the Divine truth which flowed from his lips, and which shone in his holy life. Whoso believes in him shall never be confounded.—C.

Vers. 16—19.—*The way of sin: a sermon to young men.* Reference is made here to one particular sin. While the words of the teacher are specially appropriate to it, they will also apply to all sin; they show the way it takes. Let us see—

I. THAT SIN IS THE CONTRADICTION OF THE DIVINE THOUGHT. It is a "strange" thing (ver. 16). The painted harlot is "the strange woman." And while the prostitution of a human being, meant to be a helpmeet for man in all his highest and holiest pursuits to a mere ministress to his unlawful lusts, is the very saddest departure from the Divine ideal, and amply justifies the use of the word "strange woman," we may remember that *all* sin is a *strange* thing in the universe of God. How it ever entered there is the problem which can never be solved. But meeting with it here, in whatever form, we say, "This is the contrary of the thought of the Supreme," "This is the exact opposite of his design," "This is something alien, unnatural, intrusive: cannot we cast it out?"

II. THAT SIN MUST STOOP TO FALSEHOOD IF IT WILL WIN ITS WAY. It "flattereth with its words" (ver. 16). Flattery is only another name for a sweet falsehood. The woman that is a sinner uses flattery to accomplish her ends. So sin cannot live without lying. That may be said of sin which was said of a great European usurper, that it "has deliberately taken falsehood into its service." But the most effective and destructive form of it is flattery. Let the young take earnest heed to their danger. When the lips of beauty speak soft and gratifying things, let purity beware; it is only too likely that temptation in its most seductive form is nigh, and that character and reputation are being insidiously assailed.

III. THAT SIN SINKS TO ITS DARKEST DEPTHS THROUGH VARIOUS VIOLATIONS. (Ver. 17.) It is uncertain whether by the "guide of her youth" is to be understood her husband (see Mal. ii. 14, 15), her parents, or her God. The second clause clearly refers to the marriage covenant, which is regarded as a sacred bond. Whichever be the correct view of the former clause, it is certain that the sinner of the text could only descend to her shameless depth by violating every promise she has made, by breaking through every fence which once stood between her and guilt. This is the inevitable course of sin. It violates first one vow, then another, until all sacred promises are broken. (1) Deliberate resolutions, (2) solemn assurances, (3) formal vows;—all are infringed.

IV. THAT SIN LEADS STRAIGHT TO THE DOORWAY OF DEATH. (Vers. 18, 19.) It leads: 1. To physical death. Vice carries with it a penalty in the body; it robs of health and strength; it enfeebles; it sows seeds of sickness and death. The "graves of lust" are in every cemetery and churchyard in the land. 2. To spiritual death. "None that go unto her return again" as they went. Men come away from every unlawful indulgence other than they go—weaker and worse in soul. Alas for the morrow of incontinence, of whatever kind it be! The soul is injured; its self-respect is slain, its force is lessened; it is on the incline which slopes to death, and one step nearer to the foot of it. "Her house inclineth unto death." 3. To eternal death. They who resort to forbidden pleasure are fast on their way to the final condemnation; they have wandered long leagues from "the paths of life." We conclude with two admonitions: (1) Keep carefully away from the beginnings of evil. Shun not only the "strange woman's" door, but the evil glance, the doubtful company, the impure book, the mere-

tricious paper. (2) The way of escape is *immediate* and *total* abandonment of sin. Such resolution made at once, seeking God's strength and grace, will permit the wanderer to "return again."—C.

Vers. 20—22.—*Recompense and retribution.* It ought to be enough for us that wisdom is the supremely excellent thing; that the service of God is the one right thing. We should hasten to do that which commends itself to our conscience as that which is obligatory. But God knows that, in our weakness and frailty, we have need of other inducements than a sense of duty; he has, therefore, given us others. He has made wisdom and righteousness to be immeasurably remunerative; he has made folly and sin to be utterly destructive to us. We look at—

I. THE REWARD OF WISDOM. (Vers. 20, 21.) 1. The man who pursues wisdom, who seeks conformity to the will of the Wise One, will have holy companionship for the path of life. He will walk in the way in which good and righteous men walk. Instead of being "the companion of fools," he will be "the friend of the wise." Those whose hearts are pure, whose minds are stored with heavenly treasure, and whose lives are admirable, will be about him, making his whole path fragrant with the flowers of virtue, rich with the fruits of goodness. 2. He will be upheld in personal integrity. Walking in the way of the good, and keeping the paths of the righteous, he himself will be preserved in his integrity, and be set before God's face for ever (see Ps. xli. 12). His feet will not slip; he will not wander into forbidden ways; he will keep "the King's highway of holiness;" his face will be ever set toward the heavenly Jerusalem. 3. He will dwell in the land of plenty (ver. 21). To "dwell in the land," to "remain" in the land of promise, was to abide in that country where all things in rich abundance waited for the possession and enjoyment of the people of God (Exod. iii. 8). Those who are the children of wisdom now dwell in a region which is full of blessing. If outward prosperity be not always their portion, yet is there provided by God (1) everything needful for temporal well-being; (2) fulness of spiritual privilege; (3) the abiding presence and favour of the eternal Father, the unfailing Friend, the Divine Comforter.

II. THE FATE OF FOLLY. (Ver. 22.) Those who were the children of folly in the wilderness-period were shut out of the land of promise; they did not enter into rest. The threat of the Holy One to those who had inherited the land was deportation and distance from their inheritance—being "cut off" and "rooted out." The evils which foolish and stubborn souls have now to dread, as the just penalty of their folly and their frowardness, are (1) exclusion from the "kingdom of God" on earth, and (2) exile from the kingdom of God in heaven. Such impenitent and unbelieving ones, by their own folly, cut themselves off from that "eternal life" which begins in a blessed and holy union with the Lord of glory here, and which is consummated and perpetuated in the nearer fellowship and more perfect bliss of heaven.—C.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER III.

Vers. 1—18.—4. *Fourth admonitory discourse.* The third chapter introduces us to a group of admonitions, and the first of these (vers. 1—18) forms the fourth admonitory discourse of the teacher. To all intents and purposes this is a continuation of the discourse in the preceding chapter, for inasmuch as that described the benefits, spiritual and moral, which follow from the pursuit of Wisdom, in promoting godliness and providing safety from evil companions, so this in like manner depicts the gain flowing from Wisdom, the happiness of the man who finds Wisdom, and the favour which he meets with both with God and man. The discourse embraces exhortations to obedience (vers. 1—4), to reliance on God (vers. 5, 6) against self-sufficiency and self-dependence (vers. 7, 8), to self-sacrificing devotion to God (vers. 9, 10), to patient submission to God's afflictive dispensations (vers. 11, 12), and concludes with pointing out the happy gain of Wisdom, her incomparable value, and wherein that value consists (vers. 13—18). It is noticeable that in each case the exhortation is accompanied with a corresponding promise

of reward (vers. 2, 4, 6, 8, 10), and these promises are brought forward with the view to encourage the observance of the duties recommended or enjoined. Jehovah is the central point to which all the exhortations converge. Obedience, trust, self-sacrificing devotion, submission, are successively brought forward by the teacher as due to God, and the persons in whom they are exhibited are truly happy in finding Wisdom. The transition in thought from the former to the latter part of the discourse is easy and natural. Obedience and trust are represented as bringing favour, guidance, and health—in a word, prosperity. But God is not only to be honoured in times of prosperity, but also in adversity his loving hand is to be recognized; and in this submission to his will is true wisdom.

Ver. 1.—**My son** (*b'ni*) serves to externally connect this discourse with the preceding. **Forget not my law.** This admonition bears a strong resemblance to that in ch. i. 8, though the terms employed are somewhat different, *torah* and *mits'oth* here occupying the place respectively of *musar* and *torah* in that passage. *My law* (*torathi*), is literally, *my teaching*, or *doctrine*, from the root *yarah*, "to teach." The *torah* is the whole body of salutary doctrine, and designates "Law" from the standpoint of teaching. Forgetting here is not so much oblivion arising from defective memory, as a wilful disregard and neglect of the admonitions of the teacher. **Thine heart** (*libekha*); Vulgate, *cor;* LXX., *καρδία;* and so the sum total of the affections. **Keep**; *yitstsor*, from *notsar*, "to keep, or observe that which is commanded." The word is of frequent occurrence in the Proverbs, and appears about twenty-five times. **My commandments** (*mits'othay*); Vulgate, *præcepta mea;* LXX., *τὰ ῥήματα μου; i.e.* my precepts. The Hebrew verb from which it is derived means "to command, or prescribe." The law and commandments here alluded to are those which immediately follow, from ver. 3 onwards. The three main ideas combined in this verse are remembrance, affection, and obedience. Remembering the law or teaching will depend, to a large extent, on the interest felt in that law; and the admonition to "forget not" is an admonition to give "earnest heed," so that the law or teaching may be firmly fixed in the mind. In using the words, "let thy heart keep," the teacher goes to the root of the matter. There may be an historical remembrance of, or an intellectual assent to, the commandments, but these are insufficient, for the keeping of the commandments must be based on the recognition of the fact that the affections of the heart are to be employed in the service of God, the keeping of the commandments is to be a labour of love. Again, the expression, "keep my commandments," implies, of course, external conformity to their requirements: we are "to observe to do them" (Deut. viii. 1); but it implies, further, spiritual obedience, *i.e.* an obedience with which love is combined (Deut. xxx. 20), and which arises from the inward principles of the heart being in harmony with the spirit of the commandments (see Wardlaw).

Ver. 2.—**Length of days** (*orek yamim*); Vulgate, *longitudo dierum*. The expression is literally "extension of days," and signifies the prolongation of life, its duration to the appointed limit—a meaning which is brought out in the LXX. *μῆκος βίου*, "length of days," the Greek word *βίος* being used, not of existence, but of the time and course of life. It occurs again in ver. 16, and also in Job xii. 12 and Ps. xxi. 4. "Length of days" is represented as a blessing in the Old Testament, depending, however, as in the present instance, on the fulfilment of certain conditions. Thus in the fifth commandment it is appended to the honouring of parents (Exod. xx. 12), and it was promised to Solomon, at Gibeon, on the condition that he walked in the way, statutes, and commandments of God (1 Kings iii. 14). The promise of prolongation of life is not to be pressed historically as applying to every individual case, but is to be taken as indicating the tendency of keeping the Divine precepts, which, as a rule, ensure preservation of health, and hence "length of days." **Long life** (*vush'noth khayyim*); literally, *years of life;* Targum Jonathan, Vulgate, Syriac, and Arabic, *anni vitæ;* LXX., *ἔτη ζωῆς*. The Authorized Version scarcely serves to bring out the sense of the original, as there is practically no difference in meaning between "length of days" and "long life." The idea conveyed in the expression, "years of life," is that of material prosperity. The thought of an extended life is carried on from the preceding expression, but it is amplified and described. The years of life will be many, but they will be years of life in its truest sense, as one of true happiness and enjoyment, free from distracting cares, sickness, and other drawbacks. The Hebrew plural, *khayyim*, "lives," is equivalent to the Greek expression, *βίος βιωτός*, "a life worth while living" (cf. Plat., 'Apol.,' 38, A). To the Israelitish mind, the happiness of life consisted in "dwelling in the land" (Deut. iv. 40; v. 30, etc.), and "abiding in the house of the Lord" (Ps. xv. 1; xxiii. 6; xxvii. 3) (Zöckler). The conjecture that the plural, *khayyim*, signifies the present and the future

life, is unfounded. The scope of the promise before us is confined to the present stage of existence, and it is negatived also by the similar use of the plural in ch. xvi. 5, "In the light of the king's countenance is life (*khayyim*)," where *khayyim* cannot possibly refer to the future life. *Khayyim* stands for life in its fulness. "Godliness" has indeed, as St. Paul wrote to Timothy, "promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. iv. 8). **Peace** (*shalom*). The verb *shalam*, from which the substantive *shalom* is derived, signifies "to be whole, sound, safe," and hence "peace" means internal and external contentment, and tranquillity of mind arising from the sense of safety. In ver. 17 the ways of Wisdom are designated *peace*. While, on the one hand, peace is represented by the psalmist as the possession of those who love God's Law (Ps. cxix. 165), on the other, it is denied the wicked (Isa. xlviii. 22; lvii. 21). **Shall they add to thee**; *i.e.* shall the precepts and commands bring (Zöckler) or heap upon (Muffet) thee.

Ver. 3.—**Mercy and truth** (*khesed vemeth*); properly, *love and truth;* Vulgate, *misericordia et veritas;* LXX., ἐλεημοσύναι καὶ πίστεις. With this verse begin the commandments which are alluded to in ver. 1. The Hebrew *khesed* has to be understood in its widest sense, though the Vulgate and the LXX. confine it to one aspect of its meaning, viz. that which refers to the relation of man to man, to the pity evoked by the sight of another's misfortunes, and to almsgiving. The radical meaning of the word is "ardent desire," from the root *khasad*, "to eagerly or ardently desire." Delitzsch describes it as "well-affectedness." Predicated of God, it indicates God's love and grace towards man; predicated of man, it signifies man's love towards God, *i.e.* piety, or man's love towards his neighbour, *i.e.* humanity. Where this mercy or love is exhibited in man it finds expression in (1) mutual outward help; (2) forgiveness of offences; (3) sympathy of feeling, which leads to interchange of thought, and so to the development of the spiritual life (see Elster, *in loc.*). The word carries with it the ideas of kindliness, benignity (Targum, *benignitas*), and grace (Syriac, *gratia*). *Truth* (*emeth*); properly, *firmness*, or *stability*, and so fidelity in which one performs one's promise. Truth is that absolute integrity of character, both in word and deed, which secures the unhesitating confidence of all (Wardlaw). Umbreit and Elster designate it as inward truthfulness, the *pectus rectum*, the very essence of a true man. As *khesed* excludes all selfishness and hate, so *emeth* excludes all hypocrisy and dissimulation. These two virtues are frequently combined in the Proverbs (*e.g.* ch. xiv. 22; xvi. 16; xx. 28) and Psalms (*e.g.* Ps. xxv. 10; xl. 11; lvii. 4—11; cviii. 5; cxxxviii. 2), and, when predicated of man, indicate the highest normal standard of moral perfection (Zöckler). The two ideas are again brought together in the New Testament phrase, ἀληθεύειν ἐν ἀγάπῃ, "to speak the truth in love" (Eph. iv. 15). There seems little ground for the remark of Salasius, that "mercy" refers to our neighbours, and "truth" to God. Each virtue, in fact, has a twofold reference—one to God, the other to man. The promise in ver. 4, that the exercise of these virtues procures favour with God and man, implies this twofold aspect. **Bind them about thy neck**; either (1) as ornaments worn about the neck (Gejerus, Zöckler); or (2) as amulets or talismans, which were worn from a superstitious notion to ward off danger (Umbreit and Vaihinger); or (3) as treasures which one wears attached to the neck by a chain to guard against their loss (Hitzig); or (4) as a signet, which was carried on a string round the neck (Delitzsch). The true reference of the passage seems to lie between (1) and (3). The latter adopts itself to the parallel expression, "Write them on the tablet of thine heart," and also agrees with ch. vi. 21, "Tie them about thy neck," the idea being that of their careful preservation against loss. The former meaning, however, seems preferable. Mercy and truth are to be ornaments of the character, to be bound round the neck, *i.e.* worn at all times (comp. ch. i. 9, "For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thine head, and chains about thy neck." See also Gen. xli. 42; Song of Sol. i. 10; iv. 9; Ezek. xvi. 11). The imagery of the binding is evidently taken from Exod. xiii. 9 and Deut. vi. 8, and is suggestive of the tephillim, or phylacteries. **Write them upon the table of thine heart**; *i.e.* inscribe them, mercy and truth, deeply there, impress them thoroughly and indelibly upon thine heart, so that they may never be forgotten, and may form the mainspring of your actions. The expression implies that the heart is to be in entire union with their dictates. *The table* (*luakh*) was the tablet expressly prepared for writing by being polished, corresponding to the πινακίδιον, the writing-table of Luke i. 63, which, however, was probably covered with wax. The inscription was made with the *stylus*. The same word is used of the *tables* of stone, on which the ten commandments were written with the finger of God, and allusion is in all probability here made to that fact (Exod. xxxi. 18; xxxiv. 28). The expression, "the tables of the heart," occurs in ch. vii. 3; Jer. xvii. 1 (cf. 2 Cor. iii. 3); and is used by Æschylus, 'Pro.,' 789, δέλτοι φρενῶν, "the tablets of the heart." This clause is omitted in the LXX.

Ver. 4.—**So shalt thou find** (*vum'tsa*);

literally, *and find.* A peculiar use of the imperative, the imperative kal (*m'tsa*) with *vau* consecutive (ו) being equivalent to the future, "thou shalt find," as in the Authorized Version. This construction, where two imperatives are joined, the former containing an exhortation or admonition, the second a promise made on the condition implied in the first, and the second imperative being used as a future, occurs again in ch. iv. 4; vii. 2, "Keep my commandments, and live;" ix. 6, "Forsake the foolish, and live;" xx. 13, "Open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread" (cf. Gen. xlii. 18; Ps. xxxvii. 27; Job xxii. 21; Isa. xxxvi. 16; Hos. x. 12; Amos v. 4—6; Gesenius, § 130. 2). Delitzsch calls this "an admonitory imperative;" Böttcher, "the desponsive imperative." Compare the Greek construction in Menander, Οἶδ' ὅτι ποίησον, for ποιήσεις, "Know that this you will do." *Find* (*matza*); here simply "to attain," "obtain," not necessarily implying previous search, as in ch. xvii. 20. **Favour** (*khen*). The same word is frequently translated "grace," and means the same thing; Vulgate, *gratia;* LXX., χαρίς. For the expression, "to find favour" (*matsa khen*), see Gen. vi. 8; Exod. xxxiii. 12; Jer. xxxi. 2; comp. Luke i. 30, Εὗρες γὰρ χάριν παρὰ τῷ Θεῷ, "For thou hast found favour [or, 'grace'] with God," spoken by Gabriel to the Virgin. **Good understanding** (*sekel tov*); *i.e.* good sagacity, or prudence. So Delitzsch, Bertheau, Kamph. A true sagacity, prudence, or penetrating judgment will be adjudicated by God and man to him who possesses the internal excellence of love and truth. The Hebrew *sekel* is derived from *sakal*, "to act wisely or prudently," and has this intellectual meaning in ch. xiii. 15; Ps. cxi. 10 (see also 1 Sam. xxv. 3 and 2 Chron. xxx. 22). The Targum Jonathan reads, *intellectus et benignitas*, thus throwing the adjective into a substantival form; the Syriac, *intellectus* simply. Ewald, Hitzig, Zöckler, and others, on the other hand, understand *sekel* as referring to the judgment formed of any one, the favourable opinion or view which is entertained of him by others, and hence take it as *reputation*, or estimation. The man who has love and truth will be held in high esteem by God and man. Our objection to this rendering is that it does not seem to advance the meaning of the passage beyond that of "favour." Another, mentioned by Delitzsch, is that *sekel* is never used in any other sense than that of *intellectus* in the Mishle. The marginal reading, "good success," *i.e.* prosperity, seems inadmissible here, as the hiph. *has'kil*, "to cause to prosper," as in ch. xvii. 8; Josh. i. 7; Deut. xxix. 9, does not apply in this instance any more than in Ps. cxi. 10, margin. **In the sight of God and man** (*b'eyney elohim v'adam*); literally, *in the eyes of Elohim and man;* i.e. according to the judgment of God and man (Zöckler); Vulgate, *coram Deo et hominibus.* A simpler form of this phrase is found in 1 Sam. ii. 26, where Samuel is said to have found favour with the Lord, and also with men. So in Luke ii. 52 Jesus found favour "with God and man (παρὰ Θεῷ καὶ ἀνθρώποις)" (comp. Gen. x. 9; Acts ii. 47; Rom. xiv. 18). The two conditions of favour and sagacity, or prudence, are not to be assigned respectively to God and man (as Ewald and Hitzig), or that finding favour has reference more to God, and being deemed prudent refers more to man. The statement is universal. Both these conditions will be adjudged to the man who has mercy and truth by God in heaven and man on earth at the same time (see Delitzsch). The LXX., "after favour," instead of the text, reads, "and provide good things in the sight of the Lord and men," quoted by St. Paul (2 Cor. viii. 21).

Ver. 5.—**Trust in the Lord** (*b'takh el-y'hovah*); literally, *trust in Jehovah.* Entire reliance upon Jehovah, implied in the words, "with all thine heart," is here appropriately placed at the head of a series of admonitions which especially have God and man's relations with him in view, inasmuch as such confidence or trust, with its corresponding idea of the renunciation of reliance on self, is, as Zöckler truly remarks, a "fundamental principle of all religion." It is the first lesson to be learnt by all, and no less necessary for the Jew than for the Christian. Without this reliance on or confidence in God, it is impossible to carry out any of the precepts of religion. *Batakh* is, properly, "to cling to," and so passes to the meaning of "to confide in," "to set one's hope and confidence upon." The preposition *el* with *Jehovah* indicates the direction which the confidence is to take (cf. Ps. xxxvii. 3, 5). **Lean** (*tishshaen*); Vulgate, *innitaris;* followed by *el*, like *b'takh*, with which it is very similar in meaning. *Shaan*, not used in kal, in hiph. signifies "to lean upon, rest upon," just as man rests upon a spear for support. Its metaphorical use, *to repose confidence in*, is derived from the practice of kings who were accustomed to appear in public leaning on their friends and ministers; cf. 2 Kings v. 18; vii. 2, 17 (Gesenius). The admonition does not mean that we are not to *use* our own understanding (*binah*), *i.e.* form plans with discretion, and employ legitimate means in the pursuit of our ends; but that, when we use it, we are to depend upon God and his directing and overruling providence (Wardlaw); cf. Jer. ix. 23, 24, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom," etc. The teacher points out not only where

we are to rely, but also where we are not to rely.

Ver. 6.—**In all thy ways.** This expression covers the whole area of life's action—all its acts and undertakings, its spiritual and secular sides, no less than its public and private. It guards against our acknowledging God in great crises and solemn acts of worship only (Plumptre). **Acknowledge** (*daehu*); Vulgate, *cogita*; LXX., γνώριζε. The Hebrew verb *yada* signifies "to know, recognize." To acknowledge God is, therefore, to recognize, in all our dealings and undertakings, God's overruling providence, which "shapes our ends, rough-hew them as we will." It is not a mere theoretical acknowledgment, but one that engages the whole energies of the soul (Delitzsch), and sees in God power, wisdom, providence, goodness, and justice. This meaning is conveyed by the Vulgate *cogitare*, which is "to consider" in all parts, "to reflect upon." David's advice to his son Solomon is, "Know thou (*ola*) the God of thy father." We may well acknowledge Jehovah; for he "knoweth the way of the righteous" (Ps. i. 6). Acknowledging God also implies that we first ascertain whether what we are about to take in hand is in accordance with his precepts, and then look for his direction and illumination (Wardlaw). **And he shall direct thy paths** (*v'hu y'yashsher or'khotheyka*); *i.e.* he himself shall make them straight, or level, removing all obstacles out of the way; or they shall, under God's direction, prosper and come to a successful issue; they shall be virtuous, inasmuch as deviation into vice will be guarded against, and happy, because they are prosperous. The pronoun *v'hu* is emphatic, "he himself;" Vulgate, *et ipse*. *Yashar*, piel, is "to make a way straight," as in ch. ix. 15; xv. 21; xi. 5. Cf. the LXX. ὀρθοτομεῖν, "to cut straight" (see on ch. xi. 5). God here binds himself by a covenant (Lapide). This power is properly attributed to God, for "it is not in man to direct his steps" (Jer. x. 23).

Ver. 7.—**Be not wise in thine own eyes.** This admonition carries on the thought from the preceding verses (5, 6), approaching it from a different direction. It is a protest against self-sufficiency, self-conceit, and self-reliance. It says, in effect, "Trust in the Lord, do not trust in yourself." Wisdom, as Michaelis remarks, is to trust in God; to trust in yourself and in your own wisdom is unwisdom. God denounces this spirit: "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!" (Isa. v. 21), because such a spirit leads to the prohibited self-dependence, and is inconsistent with "the fear of the Lord." The precept of the text is reiterated by St. Paul, especially in Rom. xii. 16, "Be not wise in your own conceits" (cf. 1 Cor. viii. 8; Gal. vi. 3). It commends humility. The diligent search for Wisdom is commanded. The great hindrance to all true wisdom is the thought that we have already attained it (Plumptre). *In thine own eyes;* i.e. in thine own estimation; *arbitrio tuo* (Trem. et Jun.). **Fear the Lord, and depart from evil.** The connection of this with the first part of the verse becomes clear upon reflection. "The fear of the Lord" is true wisdom (Job xxviii. 28; ch. i. 7). Fear the Lord, therefore, because it is the best corrective of one's own wisdom, which engenders arrogance, pride, presumption of mind, which, moreover, is deceptive and apt to lead to sin. The fear of the Lord has this other advantage—that it leads to the departure from evil (ch. xvi. 6). It is the mark of the wise man that he fears the Lord, and departs from evil (ch. xiv. 16). These precepts form the two elements of practical piety (Delitzsch), an eminent example of which was Job (Job i. 1).

Ver. 8.—**It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.** A metaphorical expression, denoting the complete spiritual health which shall follow from fearing the Lord and departing from evil. *Health*, (*riph'uth*); properly, *healing;* LXX., ἴασις; Vulgate, *sanitas;* so Syriac and Arabic. The Targum Jonathan has *medicina*, "medicine," as the margin. The root *rapha* is properly "to sew together," and the secondary meaning, "to heal," is taken from the healing of a wound by sewing it up. Delitzsch, however, thinks *riph'uth* is not to be taken as a restoration from sickness, but as a raising up from enfeebled health, or a confirming of the strength which already exists. There shall be a continuance of health. Gesenius translates "refreshment." *To thy navel* (*l'shor'rekha*); Vulgate, *umbilico tuo;* so Targum Jonathan. *Shor* is "the navel," here used synecdochically for the whole body, just as "head" is put for the whole man (Judg. v. 30), "mouth" for the whole person speaking (ch. viii. 13), and "slow bellies" for depraved gluttons (Titus i. 12) (Gejerus, Umbreit). The idea is expressed in the LXX., Syriac, and Arabic by "to thy body" (τῷ σώματι σου; *corpori tuo*). The navel is here regarded as the centre of vital strength. For the word, see Cant. vii. 2; Ezek. xvi. 4. This is the only place in the Proverbs where this word is found. Gesenius, however, takes *shor*, or *l'shor'rekha*, as standing collectively for the nerves, in which, he says, is the seat of strength, and translates accordingly, "Health (*i.e.* refreshment) shall it be to thy nerves." *Marrow* (*shik'kuy*); literally, *watering* or *moistening*, as in the margin; Vulgate, *irrigatio*. Moistening is imparted to the bones by the marrow, and

thus they are strengthened: "His bones are moistened with marrow" (Job xxi. 24). Where there is an absence of marrow the drying up of the bones ensues, and hence their strength is impaired, and a general debility of the system sets in—they "wax old" (Ps. xxxii. 3). The effect of a broken spirit is thus described: "A broken spirit drieth up the bones" (ch. xvii. 22). The physiological fact here brought forward is borne witness to by Cicero, 'In Tusc.:' "In visceribus atque medullis omne bonum condidisse naturam" (cf. Plato). The meaning of the passage is that, as health to the navel and marrow to the bones stand as representatives of physical strength, so the fear of the Lord, etc., is the spiritual strength of God's children.

Ver. 9.—**Honour the Lord with thy substance**, etc. An exhortation to self-sacrificing devotion by the appropriation and use of wealth to the service of Jehovah. *With thy substance* (*mehonekha*); Vulgate, *de tua substantia*; LXX., *ἀπὸ σῶν δικαίων πόνων*. *Hon*, properly "lightness," is "opulence," "wealth," as in ch. i. 13. The *min* in composition with *hon* is not partitive, as Delitzsch and Bertheau take it, but signifies "with" or "by means of," as in Ps. xxviii. 7; Isa. lviii. 12; Ezek. xxviii. 18; Obad. 9. The insertion of *δικαίος* by the LXX. limits the wealth to that which is justly acquired, and so guards against the erroneous idea that God is honoured by the appropriation to his use of unlawful wealth or gain (Plumptre). The Israelites "honoured Jehovah with their substance" when they contributed towards the erection of the tabernacle in the wilderness, and later when they assisted in the preparations for the building of the temple, and in the payment of tithes. The injunction may undoubtedly refer to tithes, and is in accordance with the requirement of the Mosaic Law on that and other points as to oblations, free-will offerings, etc.; but it has a wider bearing and contemplates the use of wealth for all pious and charitable purposes (see ch. xiv. 31). The word *maaser*, "tithe," does not occur in the Proverbs. **With the firstfruits** (*mereshith*); Vulgate, *de primitiis*. So Targum Jonathan, Syriac, and Arabic. The law of the firstfruits is found in Exod. xxii. 29; xxiii. 19; xxxiv. 20; Lev. xxiii. 10; Numb. xviii. 12; Deut. xviii. 4; xxvi. 1—3. The firstfruits were presented by every Israelite to the priests, in token of gratitude and humble thankfulness to Jehovah, and consisted of the produce of the land in its natural state, or prepared for human food (Maclear, 'Old Test. Hist.,' bk. iv. c. iii. *a*). The "firstfruits" also carried with it the idea of the best. The custom of offering the firstfruits of the field and other revenues as a religious obligation was observed by ancient pagan nations (see Diod. Sic., i. 14; Plut., 'De Iside,' p. 377; Pliny, 'Hist. Nat.,' 18. 2 (Zöckler). Some of the ancient commentators find in this verse an argument for the support of the ministry. It is well known that the priests "lived of the sacrifice," and were "partakers of the altar," and as their support by these means tended to the maintenance of Divine worship, so those who supported them were in the highest degree "honouring God." The injunctions also show that the honouring of God does not consist simply of lip-service, of humility and confidence in him, but also of external worship, and in corporeal things. They are not peculiar to Israel, but are binding on all. They oppose all *selfish* use of God's temporal gifts, and lead to the thought that, in obeying them, we are only giving back to God what are his own. "The silver and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts" (Hag. ii. 28).

> "We give thee but thine own,
> Whate'er the gift may be;
> All that we have is thine alone,
> A trust, O Lord, from thee."
> (Day's 'Psalter.')

Ver. 10.—**So shall thy barns be filled with plenty.** The promise held out to encourage the devotion of one's wealth to Jehovah's service, while supplying a motive which at first sight appears selfish and questionable, is in reality a trial of faith. Few persons find it easy to realize that giving away will increase their store (Wardlaw). The teacher is warranted in bringing forward this promise by the language of Moses in Deut. xxviii. 1—8, where, among other things, he promises that Jehovah will command a blessing upon the "storehouses" and industry of those who honour God. The principle is otherwise expressed in ch. xi. 25, "The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be also watered himself;" and it is exemplified in Hag. i. 3—11; ii. 15, 19; Mal. iii. 10—12, and in the New Testament in Phil. iv. 14—19; 2 Cor. ix. 6—8. *Thy barns; asameykha*, the only form in which *asam*, "a storehouse," "barn," or "granary," occurs. The Hebrew *asam* is the same as the Latin *horreum* (Vulgate) and the Greek *ταμιεῖον* (LXX.). *With plenty* (*sava*); Vulgate, *saturitas*; i.e. fulness, abundance, plenty. The root *sava* is "to become satisfied," and that richly satisfied. This expression and the following, **and thy presses shall burst out with new wine**, depict the greatest abundance. *Thy presses* (*y'kaveykha*). The word here translated "presses" is, strictly speaking, "vats" or "reservoirs," into which the must from the wine-press flowed. The wine-press con-

sisted of two parts, the *gath* (equivalent to the Latin *torcularium*, *torculum*, or *torcular*; Greek, ληνός, Matt. xxi. 33), into which the grapes were collected from the surrounding vineyard, and there trodden underfoot by several persons (Neh. xiii. 15; Isa. lxiii. 3; Lam. i. 15), whose movements were regulated by singing or shouting (Isa. xvi. 10; Jer. xlviii. 33), as among the Greeks (see 'Athen.,' v. p. 199, *a*; Anacreon, 'Od.,' xvii. 1. lii.; cf. Theocritus, vii. 25) and Egyptians (Wilkinson, 'Man. and Cust.,' vol. ii. pp. 152—157); and the *yekev*, used here, which was a trough of corresponding size, dug into the ground, or cut out of a rock, at a lower level, to receive the must. The *yekev* corresponded with the Greek ὑπολήνιον, mentioned in Mark xii. 1, and the Latin *lacus* (Ovid, 'Fasti,' v. 888; Pliny, 'Epist.,' ix. 20; 'Colum. de Rust.,' xii. 18); Cajeterus, indeed, reads, *lacus torcularii*. The word *yekev* is, however, used for the wine-press itself in Job xxiv. 11 and 2 Kings vi. 27. *Shall burst out* (*yiph'rotsu*); literally, *they shall extend themselves*; i.e. shall overflow. *Parats*, "to break," is here used metaphorically in the sense of "to be redundant," "to overflow" (cf. 2 Sam. v. 20). It is employed intransitively of a people spreading themselves abroad, or increasing, in Gen. xxviii. 14; Exod. i. 12. *New wine* (*tirosh*); Vulgate, Arabic, and Syriac, *vino*; LXX., οἴνῳ; properly, as in the Authorized Version, "new wine;" Latin, *mustum* (see Deut. xxxiii. 28; Isa. xxxvi. 17; lv. 1).

Ver. 11.—**My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord.** The teacher, in vers. 11 and 12, passes to another phase of life. The thought of prosperity suggests the opposite one of adversity. Abundant prosperity shall flow from honouring Jehovah, but he sometimes and not unfrequently sends affliction, and, indeed, without this life would be incomplete. The object of the exhortation is, as Delitzsch states, to show that, as in prosperity God should not be forgotten, so one should not suffer himself to be estranged by days of adversity. Submission is counselled on the ground that, when Jehovah afflicts, he does so in the spirit of love, and for good. The "chastening" and "correction," though presenting God in an attitude of anger, are in reality not the punishment of an irate God. The verse before us is evidently copied from Job v. 17, "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth, therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty;" and the whole passage is cited again in the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. xii. 5, 6). It has been said that ver. 11 expresses the problem of the Book of Job, and ver. 12 its solution (Delitzsch). *Despise not* (*al-timas*); Vulgate, *ne abjicias*; LXX., μὴ ὀλιγώρει. The verb *maas* is first "to reject," and then "to despise and contemn." The Targum Jonathan puts the thought in a stronger form, *ne execreris*, "do not curse." They despise the chastening of Jehovah who, when they see his hand in it, do not humbly and submissively bow, but resist and become refractory, or, as it is expressed in ch. xix. 3, when their "heart fretteth against the Lord." Job, notwithstanding his bitter complaints, was on the whole, and in his better moments, an example of the proper state of mind under correction (see Job i. 21; ii. 10). Jonah, in treating contemptuously the procedure of God, is an exemplification of the contrary spirit, which is condemned implicitly in the text (Wardlaw). *Chastening* (*musar*); i.e. correction not by reproof only, as in ch. vi. 23 and viii. 30; but by punishment also, as in ch. xiii. 24; xxii. 15. The meaning here is expressed by the LXX. παιδεία, which is "instruction by punishment," discipline, or schooling (cf. Vulgate, *disciplina*). **Neither be weary** (*al-takots*); *i.e.* do not loathe, abhor, feel disgust nor vexation towards. The expression, "do not loathe," is a climax to the other, "despise not." It represents a more deeply seated aversion to Jehovah's plans. Gesenius takes the primary meaning of *kuts* to be that of vomiting. The word before us certainly denotes loathing or nausea, and is used in this sense by the Israelites in their complaints against God and against Moses in Numb. xxi. 5 (cf. Gen. xxvii. 46). The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in quoting the passage, adopts the LXX. reading, μὴ ὀκλύου, "nor faint;" Vulgate, *ne deficias*, i.e. "do not give way to despondency." **Correction.** This word, like *musar* above, has a twofold meaning of either punishment or chastening, as in Ps. lxxiii. 14; or reproof, as in ch. i. 23; xxv. 30; v. 12; xxvii. 5; xxix. 15, where it also occurs. It is here used in the former sense. To loathe the correction of Jehovah is to allow it to completely estrange us from him. We faint under it when, by dwelling on or brooding over, or bemoaning the trial, the spirit sinks to faintness. To faint at correction ignores the belief in the truth that "all things work together for good to them that love God."

Ver. 12.—In this verse the motive for submissiveness to Jehovah's corrections is brought forward. They are corrections, but they are the corrections of love. One of the most touching relationships of life, and that with which we are most familiar, viz. that of father and son, is employed to reconcile us to Jehovah's afflictive dispensations. A comparison is drawn. God corrects those whom he loves after the same manner as a father corrects ("correcteth" has to be understood from the first hemistich) the

son whom he loves. The idea of the passage is evidently taken from Deut. viii. 5, "Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee." The idea of the paternal relationship of God to mankind is found elsewhere (Jer. xxxi. 9; Mal. ii. 10), and especially finds expression in the Lord's prayer. When the truth of this passage is learned, we shall be drawn to, rather than repelled from, God by his corrections. The gracious end of earthly trials is expressed in Heb. xii. 6, 2; cf. Rom. v. 3—5; 2 Cor. iv. 17 (Wardlaw). "These gracious words (Heb. xii.) are written in Holy Scripture for our comfort and instruction; that we should patiently and with thanksgiving bear our heavenly Father's correction, whensoever by any manner of adversity it shall please his gracious goodness to visit us" (see Visitation Office). **Even as a father the son in whom he delighteth** (*vuk'av eth-ben yir'tseh*); literally, *even as a father the son he delighteth in.* Various renderings have been given to this passage. (1) Delitzsch, De Wette, *et al.*, agree with the Authorized Version, and take ו *vau*, as explicative, and *yir'tseh*, "in whom he delighteth," as a relative sentence. The ו is used in this explanatory sense in 1 Sam. xxviii. 3 (see Gesenius, § 155. 1 *a*). The relative *asher*, "whom," is omitted in the original, according to the rule that the relative is omitted, especially in poetry, where it would stand as a pronoun in the nominative or accusative case (comp. Ps. vii. 16, "And he falls into the pit (which) he made;" and ch. v. 13). We have the same elision of the relative in the English colloquial expression, "the friend I met" (see Gesenius, § 123. 3, *a*). (2) Hitzig and Zöckler translate, "and holds him dear as a father his son." This, though grammatically correct, does not preserve the parallelism. It serves only to expand the idea of love, whereas the predominant idea of the verse is that of correction, to which love is an accessory idea (see Delitzsch). For similar parallels, see Deut. viii. 5 as before, and Ps. ciii. 13. In the comparison which is instituted, *yir'tseh*, "in whom he delighteth," corresponds with *eth asher ye'hav y'hovah*, "whom the Lord loveth," and not with *yokiah*, "correcteth." (3) Kamph translates, "and (dealeth) as a father (who) wisheth well to his son." This is substantially the same as the Authorized Version, except that in the relative sentence "son" is made accusative after *yir'tseh*, here translated, "wisheth well to," and the omitted relative (*asher*) is placed in the nominative instead of the accusative case. (4) The variation in the LXX., *μαστιγοῖ δὲ πάντα ὑἱον ὃν παραδέχεται*, "and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth," cited literally in Heb. xii. 5, evidently arises from the translators having read יַכֶּאֶב (*yakev*), "he scourgeth" for וּכְאָב (*vuk'av*), "even as a father." It will be seen that this alteration could be easily effected by a change in the Masoretic pointing. (5) The Vulgate renders, *et quasi pater in filio complacet sibi. He delighteth; yir'tseh* is from *ratsah*, "to be delighted" with any person or thing.

Vers. 13—18.—The teacher here enters upon the last part of this discourse. In doing so, he reverts to his main subject, which is Wisdom, or the fear of the Lord (see ver. 7 and ch. i. 7), and pronounces a panegyric upon her, comparing her, as in Job xxviii., with treasures whose value she exceeds, and showing wherein that value consists, viz. in the gifts which she confers on man.

Ver. 13.—**Happy is the man** (*ash'rey adam*); literally, *blessings of the man.* The plural of "excellence" used here, as in Job v. 17, to raise the sense. The man who has found Wisdom is supremely blessed. Bede connects this blessedness immediately with God's chastisements in the preceding verse. So Delitzsch. That **findeth** (*matsa*); properly, *hath found.* "The perfect expresses permanent possession, just as the imperfect, *yaphik*, denotes a continually renewed and repeated attaining" (Zöckler). The Vulgate also uses the perfect, *invenit*, "hath found;" LXX., ὃς εὗρε, "who found"—the aorist. **The man that getteth understanding** (*adam yaphik t'vunah*); literally, *the man that draweth out understanding*, as in the margin. *Yaphik* is the hiph. future or imperfect of *puk*, the primary meaning of which is *educere*, "to draw out," "to bring forth." This verb is used in two widely different senses. In the first place, it is equivalent to "bring forth" or "draw out" in the sense of *imparting*, as in Isa. lviii. 10, "If thou *draw out* thy soul to the hungry," *i.e.* impart benefits to them; and Ps. cxliv. 13, "That our garners may be full, *affording* all manner of store," *i.e.* yielding, giving out, presenting for our benefit. Its second sense is that of attaining, drawing out from another for one's own use. In this sense it occurs in ch. viii. 35; xii. 2; xviii. 22, where it is rendered "obtain." The latter sense is the one that suits the present passage, and best agrees with the corresponding *matsa*. The man is blessed who draws forth, *i.e.* obtains, understanding from God for himself. The Vulgate renders, *qui affluit prudentiâ*, "who overflows with understanding," or, has understanding in abundance; LXX., ὃς εἶδε, equivalent to "who saw."

Ver. 14.—**The merchandise** (*sakh'rah*);

Vulgate, *acquisitio*; LXX., ἐμπορεύεσθαι. The gain arising from trading in wisdom is better than that which arises from trading in silver. *Sakh'rah* is the gain or profit arising from merchandise, *i.e.* from trading. It denotes the act itself of gaining. The root *sakrah*, like the Greek ἐμπορεύεσθαι, signifies "to go about for the sake of traffic," *i.e.* to trade. There may be an allusion here, as in ch. ii. 4, to the new commerce (Plumptre). **The gain thereof** (*t'vuathah*); *i.e.* the gain existing in, and going along with, Wisdom herself; gain, therefore, in a different sense from that indicated in *sakh'rah*. Gesenius takes it as "gain resulting from Wisdom," as in ch. viii. 19 and Isa. xxiii. 3. The word is used of the produce of the earth, the idea apparently embodied in the Vulgate *fructus*. In this case there may be a reference to ver. 18, where Wisdom is said to be a "tree of life." The LXX. omits the latter clause of this verse. The sense is, "The possession of Wisdom herself is better than fine gold." **Fine gold** (*karuts*); Vulgate, *aurum purum*; Syriac, *aurum purissimum*. *Kharuts* is the poetic word for gold, so called, either (1) from its brilliancy, and then akin to the Greek χρυσός (Curtius); or (2) from its being dug up, from the root *kharats*, "to cut into or dig up," "to sharpen." It evidently means the finest and purest gold, and is here contrasted with silver (*keseph*). The word is translated "choice gold" in ch. viii. 10; "gold" simply in ch. xvi. 16; "yellow gold" in Ps. lxviii. 13; and "fine gold" in Zech. ix. 3. In the Version Junii et Tremellii it appears as *effosum aurum*, "gold dug up," *i.e.* gold in its native, unalloyed state. The Targum Jonathan understands it of "molten gold" (*aurum conflatum*).

Ver. 15.—**Rubies** (Khetib, *p'niyim*; Keri, *p'ninim*). No unanimous opinion has been arrived at as to the real signification of the word here translated "rubies." The majority of the rabbins (among them Rashi), and Bochart, Hartman, Bohlen, Lee on Job xxxviii. 18, and Zöckler, render it "pearls." Its meaning seems to lie between this and "corals," the rendering adopted by Michaelis, Gesenius, and Delitzsch (following Fleischer), who says that the Hebrew *p'ninim* corresponds with the Arabic word whose root-idea is "shooting forth," and means "a branch." The peculiar branching form in which coral is found favours this opinion, which is strengthened by the passage in Lam. iv. 7, where we get additional information as to colour, "They [the Nazarites] were more ruddy in body than rubies," a description which would apply to "coral," but is scarcely applicable to "pearls." The various versions suggest the further idea that *p'ninim* was a descriptive word used to denote precious stones in general. The LXX. renders, "She is more precious than precious stones (λίθων πολυτελῶν)." So the Targum Jonathan, Syriac, and Arabic. The Vulgate renders, "She is more precious than all riches (*cunctis opibus*)." The word *p'ninim* only occurs here (Keri) and in ch. viii. 11; xx. 15; xxxi. 10; and in Job and Lamentations as above. This passage, as well as ch. viii. 11, which is an almost literal repetition of it, are imitations of Job xxviii. 18. The identification of *p'ninim* with "pearls" may have suggested our Lord's parable of the pearl of great price (Matt. xiii. 45, 46). **All the things thou canst desire** (*kal-khaphatseyka*); literally, *all thy desires*. Here everything in which you have pleasure, or all your precious things; LXX., πᾶν τίμιον; Vulgate, *omnia, quæ desiderantur*. The comparison, which has risen from the less to the more valuable, culminates in this comprehensive expression. There is nothing, neither silver, gold, precious stones, nor anything precious, which is an equivalent (*shavah*) to Wisdom in value. How it shows, when everything is put before us to choose from, that, like Solomon at Gibeon, we should prefer wisdom (1 Kings iii. 11—13)! In the second half of this verse the LXX. substitutes, "No evil thing competes with her; she is well known to all that approach her."

Ver. 16.—The remaining three verses (16—18) state in what respects Wisdom is incomparable in value. **Length of days**; *orek yamim*, as in ver. 2. Wisdom is here represented as holding in her right hand that which is previously promised to obedience. Length of days is the blessing of blessings, the condition of all prosperity and enjoyment, and hence is placed in the right hand, the chief place, for among the Hebrews and other Oriental nations, as also among the Greeks the right hand was regarded as the position of highest honour (Ps. cx. 1; 1 Kings ii. 19; 1 Macc. x. 63; Matt. xxii. 24); cf. Ps. xvi. 11, in which the psalmist says of Jehovah, "In thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." The two hands, the right and the left, signify the abundance of Wisdom's gifts. **Riches and honour** stand here for prosperity in general. The same expression occurs in ch. viii. 8, where riches are explained as "durable riches." A spiritual interpretation can, of course, be given to this passage—length of days being understood of eternal life; riches, of heavenly riches; and honour, not "the honour that cometh of men," but honour conferred by God (1 Sam. v. 44; John xii. 26); see Wardlaw, *in loc.* The thought of the verse is, of course, that Wisdom not only holds these blessings in her hands, but also confers them on those who

seek her. The LXX. adds, "Out of her mouth proceedeth righteousness; justice and mercy she beareth upon her tongue;" possibly suggested by ch. viii. 3. The words of the teacher remind us of the saying of Menander, Ὁ διαφέρων λογισμῷ πάντ' ἔχει, "He who excels in prudence possesses all things."

Ver. 17.—**Ways of pleasantness** (*dar'khey noam*); Vulgate, *viæ pulchræ;* LXX., ὁδοὶ καλαί. Wisdom's ways are those in which substantial delight may be found. They are beautiful and lovely to look upon, and afford happiness. **All her paths are peace** (*v'kal-n'thivo-theyah shalom*); literally, as in the Authorized Version. "Peace," *shalom*, is not genitive as "pleasantness." The character of peace is stamped upon her paths, so that in speaking of Wisdom's paths we speak of peace. She brings tranquillity and serenity and blessedness. Her paths are free from strife and alarm, and they lead to peace. (On the distinction between "ways" and "paths"—the more open and the more private walks—see ch. ii. 15.)

Ver. 18.—**A tree of life** (*ets-khayyim*); Vulgate, *lignum vitæ;* LXX., ξύλον ζωῆς. This expression obviously refers to "*the* tree of life" (*ets-hakayyim*), which was placed in the midst of the garden of Eden, and conferred immortality on those who ate of its fruit (Gen. ii. 9; iii. 22). So Wisdom becomes equally life-giving to those who lay hold on her, who taste of her fruit. She communicates life in its manifold fulness and richness (so the plural "lives" indicates) to those who seize her firmly. What is predicated of Wisdom here is predicated in other passages (ch. xi. 30; xiii. 12; xv. 4) of the fruit of the righteous, the fulfilment of desire, and a wholesome tongue. Each of these, the teacher says, is "a tree of life." Elster denies that there is any reference to "*the* tree of life," and classes the expression among those other figurative expressions—a "fountain of life," in ch. xiii. 4 and xiv. 27, and a "well of life," in ch. x. 11; but if it be once admitted that there is such a reference, and it be remembered also that Wisdom is the same as "the fear of the Lord," the point insisted on in the Proverbs and in Job, it seems difficult to deny that the teacher has in view the blessed immortality of which the tree of life in Paradise was the symbol. In this higher sense the term is used in the Revelation (ii. 7; xxii. 2, 14). Wisdom restores to her worshippers the life which was lost in Adam (Cartwright). It is remarkable that the imagery here employed is confined to these two books. After the historical record in Genesis, no other sacred writers refer to the tree of life. Old ecclesiastical writers saw in the expression a reference to Christ's redeeming work. "The tree of life is the cross of Christ," *lignum vitæ crux Christi* (quoted by Delitzsch). The symbol, Plumptre remarks, entered largely into the religious imagery of Assyria, Egypt, and Persia. **To them that lay hold upon** (*lam-makhazikim*, hiph. participle); Vulgate, *his, qui apprehenderint;* LXX., τοῖς ἀντεχομένοις. The Hebrew verb חָזַק (*khazak*), "to tie fast," is in hiph. with בְּ (*b'*), "to take hold of," "to seize any one." **Happy** is every one **that retaineth her.** In the original, the participle, "they retaining her" (*tom'keyah*), is plural, and the predicate, "happy" or "blessed" (*m'ushshar*), is singular. The latter is used distributively, and the construction is common (cf. ch. xv. 22). The Authorized Version aptly renders the original. The necessity for "retaining" as well as "laying hold" of Wisdom is pointed out. The verb תָּמַךְ (*tamak*) is "to hold fast something taken." Such will be blessed who hold Wisdom tenaciously and perseveringly.

Vers. 19—26.—5. *Fifth hortatory discourse. Wisdom, the creative power of God, exhibited as the protection of those who fear God.* The teacher in this discourse presents Wisdom under a new aspect. Wisdom is the Divine power of God, by which he created the world, and by which he sustains the work of his hands and regulates the operations of nature. This eminence of Wisdom, in her intimate association with Jehovah, is made the basis of a renewed exhortation to keep Wisdom steadily in view. The elevated thought that Wisdom has her source in Jehovah might seem in itself an adequate and sufficient reason for the exhortation. But another motive is adduced intimately bound up with this view of Wisdom. Jehovah becomes the ground of confidence and the protection in all conditions of life of those who keep Wisdom.

Ver. 19.—**The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth.** The emphatic position of the word *Jehovah*, "the Lord," at the beginning of the sentence (cf. Ps. xxvii.; xcvii.; xcix.), as well as the nature of the discourse, indicates a new paragraph. The description of the creative Wisdom of Jehovah may have been suggested to the mind of the teacher by the mention of the tree of life, in ver. 18 (Zöckler); but the connection between this and the preceding passage has to be sought for in something deeper. The scope of the teacher is to exhibit, and so to recommend, Wisdom in every respect, and after showing her excellence in man, he now

brings her forward as the medium of creation, and hence in her relation to God. *By wisdom* (*b'khokhmah*); Vulgate, *sapientiâ;* LXX., τῇ σοφίᾳ. It is evident that Wisdom is here something more than an attribute of Jehovah. "By Wisdom" means "by, or through, the instrumentality of Wisdom." While the corresponding and parallel expressions, "understanding," "knowledge," militate against the idea of an hypostatizing of Wisdom, *i.e.* assigning to Wisdom a concrete and objective personality, yet the language is sufficiently strong, when we connect this passage with ch. i. and viii., to warrant our regarding Wisdom as something apart from yet intimately connected with Jehovah, as an active agency employed by him, and hence this description may be looked upon as an anticipation of that which is more fully developed in ch. viii., where the characteristics which are wanting here are there worked out at length. The rabbins evidently connected the passage before us, as well as ch. i. and viii., with Gen. i. 1, by rendering *b'reshith*, "in the beginning," by *b'kokhmah*, "by Wisdom." Our Lord identifies himself with the Divine Sophia, or Wisdom (Luke xi. 49). And the language of St. John, "All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made" (John i. 3), which assigns to the Logos, or Word of God, *i.e.* Christ, the act of creation (cf. John i. 10, and especially the language of St. Paul, in Col. i. 16), argues in favour of the view of some commentators who understand Wisdom to refer to the Second Person of the Trinity. The Logos was understood by Alexandrian Judaism to express the *manifestation* of the unseen God, the Absolute Being, in the creation and government of the world; and the Christian teachers, when they adopted this term, assigned to it a concrete meaning as indicating the Incarnate Word (see Bishop Lightfoot, in Col. i. 15). For the passage, see Ps. xxxiii. 6; civ. 24; cxxxvi. 5; and especially Jer. x. 12, "He hath established the world by his wisdom," etc.; li. 55; Ecclus. xxiv. 2, *seq.* *Hath founded* (*yasad*); Vulgate, *fundavit;* LXX., ἐθεμελίωσε. The same verb is used in Job xxxviii. 4; Ps. xxiv. 2; lxxviii. 69, of the creation of the earth by God. While the primary meaning of *yasad* is "to give fixity to," "to lay fast," that of *konen*, rendered "he hath established," is "to set up," "to erect," and so "to *found*," from *kun*, or referring to the Arabic and Ethiopic cognate root, "to exist," "to give existence to." The marginal reading, "prepared," corresponds with the LXX. ἑτοίμασε. The Vulgate is *stabilivit*, "he hath established."

Ver. 20.—**By his knowledge the depths are broken up.** This is usually taken to refer to that primary act in creation, the separation of the waters from the earth, when "the waters were gathered together unto their own place," as recorded in Gen. i. 9. So Munster, Zöckler, Wardlaw. But it seems better to understand it (as Mercerus, Lapide, Delitzsch, and Authorized Version) of the fertilization of the earth by rivers, streams, etc., which burst forth from the interior of the earth. In this sense the correspondence is preserved with the second hemistich, where the atmospheric influence is referred to as conducing to the same end. The teacher passes from the creation to the wonderful means which Jehovah employs through Wisdom to sustain his work. *The depths* (*t'homoth*); Vulgate, *abyssi;* LXX., ἄβυσσοι, are here "the internal water stores of the earth" (Delitzsch), and not the depths of the ocean, as in ch. viii. 24, 27, 28, and in Gen. i. 2. *Are broken up* (*niv'kau*); properly, *were broken up*, niph. perfect of *baka*, (1) to cleave asunder, (2) to break forth, as water, in Isa. xxxv. 6. The perfect describes a past act, but one that is still continuing in effect. Cf. Vulgate *eruperunt*, "they burst forth;" LXX., ἐῤῥάγησαν, aorist 2 passive of ῥήγνυμι, "to burst forth," Targum, *rupti sunt;* and Syriac, *ruptæ sunt*. The idea of division or separation is present, but it is not the predominant idea. There seems to be no allusion here either to the Deluge (Beda), nor to the cleaving of the waters of the Red Sea (Gejerus), though both of these historical events were undoubtedly well known to the teacher. **And the clouds drop down the dew.** *The clouds* (*sh'khakim*) are properly the *ether*, the higher and colder regions of the atmosphere, and then "the clouds," as in Ps. lxxvii. 15, which are formed by the condensation of vapours drawn by solar influence from the surface of the earth—seas, rivers, etc. The singular *shakhak* signifies "dust," and secondly "a cloud," evidently from the minute particles of moisture of which a cloud is composed. *Drop down* (*yir'aphu*, kal future of *raaph*, used as a present or imperfect); LXX., ἐῤῥύησαν, "let flow." The clouds discharge their contents in showers, or distil at evening in refreshing dew. Modern science agrees with the meteorological fact here alluded to, of the reciprocal action of the heavens and the earth. The moisture drawn from the earth returns again "to water the earth, that it may bring forth and bud, to give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater" (Isa. lv. 10). *Dew; tal*, here used not only of dew, but of rain in gentle and fructifying showers. The Arabic word signifies "light rain;" LXX., δρόσους, "dew." Moses, in describing the blessing of Israel, says, "His heavens shall drop down dew" in the same sense (Deut. xxxviii. 28; cf. Job xxxvi. 28). The fertilization of the earth is ordered by the Divine Wisdom.

Ver. 21.—**My son, let not them depart from thine eyes.** After the description of the power of Wisdom exhibited in creating and sustaining the earth, the exhortation to keep Wisdom steadily before the eyes, and the promises of Divine protection, appropriately follow. Since Wisdom is so powerful, then, the teacher argues, she is worthy of being retained and guarded, and able to protect. *Let them not depart* (*al-yaluzu*); *i.e.* "let them not escape or slip aside from your mind (cf. Vulgate, *ne effluant hæc ab oculis tuis*). They are to be as frontlets between your eyes, as a ring upon your finger. *Yaluzu*, from *lûz*, "to bend aside," *deflectere, a viâ declinare*, which see in ch. ii. 15, ought probably to be written *yellezu*, on the analogy of the corresponding passage in ch. iv. 21. The LXX. renders absolutely μὴ παραῤῥύῃς, "do not thou pass by," from παραῤῥύω, "to flow by," "to pass by, recede" (cf. Heb. ii. 1, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to these things, lest at any time we should let them slip (μή ποτε παραῤῥυῶμεν)," quoted probably from the LXX. of this passage). The Targum Jonathan reads, *ne vilescat*, "let it," *i.e.* wisdom, "not become worthless." *Them*, included in the verb *yaluzu*, of which it is subject in the original, is to be referred either to "sound wisdom and discretion" of ver. 21*b*—so Gejerus, Cartwright, Geïer, Umbreit, Hitzig, Zöckler, Plumptre (a similar trajection occurs in Deut. xxxii. 5, and is used, as here, to give vividness to the description); or to "wisdom, understanding, knowledge," of the preceding verses—so Delitzsch and Holden. The first view in every way seems preferable, and it is no objection to it that "sound wisdom" (*tushiyyah*) and "discretion" (*m'yimmah*) are feminine, while the verb "depart" (*yaluzu*) is masculine (see Gesenius, 'Gram.,' § 147). The Syriac reads, "Let it not become worthless (*ne vile fit*) in thine eyes to keep my doctrine and my counsels." **Keep sound wisdom and discretion.** *Keep; n'zor*, kal imperative of *nâtsār*, "to watch, guard." For "sound wisdom" (*tushiyyah*), see ch. ii. 7. Here used for "wisdom" (*kokhmah*), as "discretion" (*m'zimmah*) for "understanding" (*t'vunah*), to contrast the absolute wisdom and insight of God with the corresponding attributes in man (see Zöckler, *in loc.*). They belong to God, but are conferred on those who seek after Wisdom, and are then to be guarded as priceless treasures. The Vulgate reads, *custodi legem et consilium;* and the LXX., τήρησον δὲ ἐμὴν βουλὴν καὶ ἔννοιαν, "guard my counsel and thought."

Ver. 22.—**So shall they be life to thy soul, and grace to thy neck.** *So shall they be* (*n'yikva*); *and they shall be.* The "soul" and "neck" stand for the whole man in his twofold nature, internal and external. Life is in its highest and widest sense given to the soul (see ch. ii. 16, 18; iv. 22; viii. 35), and favour is conferred on the man, *i.e.* he becomes acceptable to his neighbours, if he has wisdom. The latter expression is very similar to ch. i. 9, where the same promise is expressed, "grace" (*hon*) being equivalent to "ornament of grace" (*liv'yath hon*). Others understand "grace to thy neck" (*hon l'garg'grotheyka*), as *gratia gutturis*, in the sense of "grace of the lips," as in Ps. xlv. 3 and ch. xxii. 11, that is, as the grace of speaking, power of eloquent and effective utterance (Gejerus, Bayne, Lapide). It is better to take it as referring to the adornment of the personal character, and so by metonymy of the favour and kindness which it procures.

Ver. 23.—**Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely.** The first of the promises of protection, which follow from vers. 23—26. He who keeps "sound wisdom and discretion" shall enjoy the greatest sense of security in all situations of life. *Safely* (*lavetakh*); either in confidence, as Vulgate *fiducialiter*, i.e. confidently, because of the sense of security (cf. LXX., πεποιθὼς ἐν εἰρήνῃ, and ver. 26); or in security: the adverb *lavetakh* is equivalent to *betakh* in ch. i. 30 and x. 9. The allusion is obvious. As he who is accompanied by an escort proceeds on his way in safety, so you protected by God will pass your life in security; or, as Trapp, "Thou shalt ever go under a double guard, 'the peace of God' within thee (Phil. iv. 7), and the 'power of God' without thee (1 Pet. i. 5)." **And thy foot shall not stumble**; literally, *and thou shalt not strike thy foot. Stumble* in the original is *thiggoph*, 2 singular kal future of *nagaph*, "to smite," "strike against with the foot." So in Ps. xci. 12. The Authorized Version, however, correctly gives the sense. The LXX., like the Authorized Version, makes "foot" the subject, Ὁ δὲ ποῦς σου οὐ μὴ προσκόψῃ, "(That) thy foot may not stumble." For a similar assurance, see ch. iv. 12. The meaning is: You will not stumble, because you will be walking in the way of wisdom, which is free from stumbling-blocks (Lapide). You will not fall into sin.

Ver. 24.—**When thou liest down thou shalt not be afraid.** This is beautifully illustrated by what David says in Ps. iv. 8, "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety." No fear is to be apprehended where Jehovah is Protector (see Ps. iii. 5, 6; xlvi. 1—3; xci. 1—5; cxxi. 5—8). *When* (*im*) is rendered "if" by the Vulgate, LXX., Targum Jonathan. *Thou liest down; tish'kav*, "thou shalt lie down," kal future,

like *shakavta*, kal perfect, in the corresponding hemistich, is from *shakav*, "to lie down," specially to lay one's self down to sleep, as in Gen. xix. 4; Ps. iii. 6. Vulgate, *si dormieris*; cf. ch. vi. 22, "when thou sleepest" בְּשָׁכְבֶךָ, *b'shok'b'ka*). The LXX. rendering, "if thou sittest" (*κάθῃ*), arises from reading תֵּשֵׁב (*teshev*) for תִּשְׁכַּב (*tish'kav*). **Yea, thou shalt lie down**; *b'shok'b'ta*, as before, with ו prefixed, equivalent to the future, as in the Authorized Version; LXX., *καθεύδῃς*. **Shall be sweet**; *arvah*, from *arav*, "to be sweet," or "pleasant," perhaps "well mixed," as *arev*, equivalent to "to mix." Thy sleep shall be full of pleasing impressions, not restless, as in Deut. xxviii. 66 and Job vii. 4, but sweet, because of the sense of safety, and from confidence in God, as well as from a good conscience (cf. Job xi. 18, "Thou shalt take thy rest in safety," from which the idea is probably taken).

Ver. 25.—**Be not afraid**; *al-tirah*, is literally "fear thou not," the future with *al* preceding being used for the imperative in a dehortative sense, as in Gen. xlvi. 3; Job iii. 4, 6, 7 (see Gesenius, 'Gram.,' § 127. 3, *c*); Vulgate, *ne paveas*. Others, however, render, as the LXX., *οὐ φοβηθήσῃ*, "Thou shalt not be afraid," in the sense of a promise. The verb *yare*, from which *tirah*, is here followed by *min*, as in Ps. iii. 7; xxvii. 1, and properly means "to be afraid from or before" some person or thing. **Sudden**; *pithom*, an adverb used adjectively (cf. like use of adverb *khinnam* in ch. xxvi. 2). **Fear** (*pakhad*); as in ch. i. 16, the object which excites terror or fear, as any great disaster. **The desolation of the wicked** (*shôath r'shâim*) may be taken either (1) as the desolation made by the violence of the wicked, the desolation or storm which they raise against the righteous (so the LXX., Vulgate, Mariana, Michaelis, Hitzig, and others); or (2) the desolation which overtakes the wicked, the desolating vengeance executed upon them (so Doderlein, Lapide, Stuart, Muensch., Delitzsch, Wardlaw). The latter is probably the right interpretation, and agrees with the threatening language of Wisdom against her despisers, in ch. i. 27, where *shôath* also occurs. In the desolation which shall overwhelm the wicked he who has made Wisdom his guide shall be undismayed, for the Lord is his confidence. The passage was probably suggested by ch. v. 21, "Neither shalt thou be afraid of desolation when it cometh." Lee, in *loc. cit.*, says the places are almost innumerable where this sentiment occurs. Compare the fearlessness of the man of integrity and justice, in Horace—

> "Si fractus illabatur orbis,
> Impavidum ferient ruinæ."
> (Horace, 'Od.,' iii. 3. 7, 8.)

> "Let Jove's dread arm with thunders rend the spheres,
> Beneath the crush of worlds undaunted he appears."
> (Francis's Trans.)

Ver. 26.—**Thy confidence** (*v'kis'lekhâ*); literally, *as thy confidence*. *Kesel*, primarily "loin" or "flank," as in Lev. iii. 14; x. 15; Job xv. 27, is apparently used here in its secondary meaning of "confidence," "hope," as in Job viii. 14; xxxi. 24; Ps. lxxviii. 7. The ב (*v'*) prefixed is what is usually termed the ב *essentiæ*, or ב *pleonasticum* (equivalent to the Latin *tanquam*, "as"), and serves to emphasize the connection between the predicate "thy confidence" and the subject "Jehovah" (cf. Exod. xviii. 4; see Ewald, 'Lehrb.,' 217, *f.*; and Gesenius, 'Gram.,' § 154). Jehovah shall be in the highest sense your ground and object of confidence. Delitzsch describes *kesel* as confidence in the presence of evil: Jehovah in the presence of the "sudden fear," and of "the desolation of the wicked," the evils and calamities which overwhelm the wicked, shall be thy confidence. The sense of his all-encircling protection will render you undismayed. The meaning given to *kesel* as "foolhardiness" (Ps. xlix. 14) and "folly" (Eccles. vii. 25), and the connection of *kesel* with *k'silim* in ch. i. 22, comes from the root-idea *kâsâl*, "to be fleshly, or fat," the signification of which branches out on the one side into strength and boldness, and on the other into languor and inertness, and so folly or confidence in self (Schultens, *l.c.*). The Talmudic rendering of the Rabbi Salomon approximates to this meaning, "and the things in which you seemed to be foolish (*desipere videbaris*) he will be at once present with you." Others, as Ziegler, Muentinghe, give *kesel* its primary meaning, and translate, "Jehovah shall be as thy loins," the loins being regarded as the emblem of strength. Jehovah shall be your strength. But *kesel* does not appear to have this local application here. Wherever it is used in this sense, as in Job and Leviticus cited above, there is something in the context to point it out as a part of the body. Compare, however, the Vulgate, *in latere suo*, "in thy side or flank." The LXX. renders, *ἐπὶ πασῶν ὁδῶν σου*, "over all thy ways." **From being taken** (*milláked*); Vulgate, *ne capiaris*, "lest thou be taken." The meaning is, Jehovah will be your protection against all the snares and traps which the impious lay for you. *Lékéd*, "a being taken," is from *lâkâd*, "to take or catch animals" in a net or in snares. It only occurs here in the Proverbs. Its unusual appearance, together with other reasons, not tenable, however, has led Hitzig to reject vers. 22—26 as an interpolation

The LXX. reads, πτόησιν, *pavorem*. Πτόησις, in Plato, Aristotle, and Plutarch, is used subjectively, and means "any vehement emotion." The word only occurs once in the New Testament in 1 Pet. iii. 6, μὴ φοβούμενη μηδεμίαν πτόησιν, where it is evidently quoted from the passage before us, in an objective sense, and designates some external cause of terror (cf. Authorized Version, "and be not afraid with any amazement;" see also Book of Common Prayer: 'Solemnization of Matrimony,' *ad fin.*).

Vers. 27—35.—6. *Sixth admonitory discourse.* In this discourse the teacher still carries on his object, which is to demonstrate the conditions upon which true wisdom and happiness are to be attained. The discourse differs from the preceding in consisting of detached proverbs, and may be divided into two main sections—the first (vers. 27—30) enjoining benevolence, that love to one's neighbour which is the fulfilling of the Law; the second warning against emulating the oppressor and associating with him, because of the fate of the wicked (vers. 31—35). It is observable that all the maxims have a negative form, and thus present a striking contrast to the form adopted by our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v.), and to the admonitions at the close of St. Paul's Epistles. In one instance in particular (ver. 30), the teaching does not reach the high moral standard of the gospel (see Delitzsch and Lange).

Ver. 27.—**Withhold not good from them to whom it is due.** This precept indicates the general principle of beneficence, and not merely, as the words at first sight seem to imply, restitution (as Cajet.). We are to do good to those who are in need or deserving of it, whenever we have the means and opportunity. *From them to whom it is due* (*nib'âlâyv*); literally, *from its owner*, from *bâal*, *dominus*, "lord" or owner of a thing. Cf. ch. xvi. 22, "Prudence is a fountain of life to its owner (*b'âlâyv*);" i. 19; xvii. 8; and also Eccles. viii. 8; vii. 12;—in all of which passages proprietorship in the thing or quality mentioned is expressed. The owners of good are those to whom good is due or belongs either by law or by morality, whether by desert or need. The latter qualification is the one emphasized in the LXX., Μὴ ἀπόσχῃ ἓν ποιεῖν ἐνδεῇ, "Abstain not from doing good to the needy." So the Arabic *pauperi*. The Targum and Syriac put the precept in more general terms, "Cease not to do good," without indicating in particular any one who is to be the recipient of the good. But the Jewish interpreters generally (*e.g.* Ben Ezra) understand it of the poor, *egentibus*. The Vulgate puts an entirely different interpretation on the passage: *Noli prohibere benefacere eum qui potest; si vales, et ipse benefac*, "Do not prohibit him who can from doing good; if you are able, do good also yourself." It thus implies that we are to put no impediment in the way of any one who is willing to do good to others, and enjoins the duty on ourselves also. *Good* (*tôv*); *i.e.* "good" under any form, any good deed or act of beneficence. The principle brought forward in this passage is that what we possess and is seemingly our own is in reality to be regarded as belonging to others. We are only stewards of our wealth. **In the power of thine hand** (*l'êl yâd'yka*); literally, *in the power of thine hands*. For the dual, *yâd'yká*, the Keri substitutes the singular, *yâd'ká*, to harmonize it with the similar expression, *l'êl yâdi*, "in the power of thy hand," which occurs in Gen. xxxi. 27; Deut. xxviii. 32; Neh. v. 5; Micah ii. 1. But there is no grammatical need for the emendation. Both the LXX. and Targum employ the singular, "thy hand." *Power* (*êl*); here "strength" in the abstract. Usually it means "the strong," and is so used as an appellation of Jehovah, though, as Gesenius says, those little understand the phrase who would render *êl* here "by God." The ל prefixed to *êl* indicates the condition. The meaning of the phrase is, "While it is practicable, and you have the opportunity and means of doing good, do it." Do not defer, but do good promptly. The passage receives a remarkable illustration in the language of St. Paul, "While we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men" (Gal. vi. 10).

Ver. 28.—The precept of this and that of the preceding verse are very closely related. The former precept enjoined the general principle of benevolence when we have the means; this carries on the idea, and is directed against the postponement of giving when we are in a position to give. In effect it says, "Do not defer till to-morrow what you can do to-day." This "putting off" may arise from avarice, from indolence, or from insolence and contempt. These underlying faults, which are incompatible with neighbourly good will, are condemned by implication. **Unto thy neighbour**; *l'rêăykâ*, "to thy friends," the word being evidently used distributively. *Rêêh* is "a companion" or "friend" (cf. Vulgate, *amico tuo*; Syriac, *sodali tuo*), and generally any other person, equivalent to the Greek ὁ πλησίον, "neighbour." The Authorized Version correctly renders "come again," as *shûv* is not merely

"to return," but to return again to something (so Delitzsch); cf. Vulgate, *revertere;* and as the words, "to-morrow I will give thee," show. The LXX. adds, "For thou knowest not what the morrow may bring forth," probably from ch. xvii. 1. If viewed in respect of the specific claims which servants have for work done, the precept is a re-echo of Lev. xxix. 13 and Deut. xxiv. 15. In illustration of the general scope of the passage, Grotius quotes, "A slow-footed favour is a favour without favour." Seneca says in the same spirit, "Ingratum est beneficium quod diu inter manus dantis hæsit," "The benefit is thankless which sticks long between the hands of the giver" (Seneca, 'Benef.,' i. 2); cf. also *Bis dat qui cito dat.*

Ver. 29.—**Devise not evil against thy neighbour.** This precept is directed against abuse of confidence. *Devise not evil* (*āl tākhărôsh râăh*). The meaning of this expression lies between "fabricating evil" and "ploughing evil." The radical meaning of *khârāsh*, from which *tâkhărôsh*, is "to cut into," "to inscribe" letters on a tablet, cognate with the Greek χαράσσειν, "to cut into." But it is used in the sense of "to plough" in Job iv. 18, "They that plough iniquity (*khar'shey âvĕn*)," and Ps. cxxix. 3, "The ploughers ploughed (*khar'shim khar'shim*) upon my back" (cf. Hos. x. 13). This also appears from the context to be the meaning in ch. vi. 14. With these we may compare such expressions as "to plough a lie" (μὴ ἀροτρία ψεύδος, rendered in the Authorized Version, "Devise not a lie"); see ch. vii. 12, and "to sow iniquity," ch. xxii. 8—a cognate figure. "To plough evil" is to devise evil, to prepare for it, just in the same way as a ploughman prepares the land for sowing. In this sense the verb is understood by the older commentators and by Ewald and Delitzsch. On the other hand, the verb may be used in its other signification, "to fabricate," and hence "to contrive." The noun *khârâsh* is an artificer of iron, etc. (Exod. xxxv. 35; Deut. xxvii. 15). "To fabricate evil" is, of course, as the Authorized Version "to devise evil." The LXX., μὴ τεκτήνῃ, from τεκταίνομαι, "to build," inclines to this sense. The Vulgate, *ne moliaris*, does not clear up the point, though *moliri*, usually "to contrive," is used by Virgil, 'Georg.,' i. 494, "moliri terram," of working or tilling the ground. The verb also occurs in ch. vi. 19; xii. 20; xiv. 22. **Seeing he dwelleth securely by thee;** *i.e.* as the Vulgate, *cum ille in te habet fiduciam*, "when he has confidence in thee;" so the LXX.; or, as the Targum and Syriac, "when he dwells with thee in peace." *To dwell* (*yâshār*) is in Ps. i. 1 "to sit with any one," *i.e.* to associate familiarly with him (cf. Ps. xxvi. 4, 5); but it also has the meaning "to dwell," and the participle *yôshĕv*, here used; in Gen. xix. 23; Judg. vi. 21, means "an inhabitant, a dweller." *Securely* (*lâvĕtāh*); *i.e.* with full trust (see on ver. 23). Devising evil against a friend is at any time reprehensible, but to do so when he confides in and is altogether unsuspicious of you, is an act of the greatest treachery, and an outrage on all law, human and Divine. It implies dissimulation. It is the very sin by which "the devil beguiled Eve through his subtlety" (Wardlaw).

Ver. 30.—The meaning of the precept in this verse is clear. We are not to strive or quarrel with a man unless he has first given us offence. So Le Clerc, "Nisi injuriâ prior lacessiverit." The admonition is directed against those who, from spite, jealousy, or other reasons, "stir up strife all the day long" with those who are quiet and peaceable. **Strive.** The Keri here reads *tariv* for the Khetib *taruv*, but without any change of meaning. The verb *rûv*, from which *taruv*, is "to strive or contend with the hand and with blows," as in Deut. xxxiii. 7; or with words, as in Ps. ciii. 9 (cf. the Vulgate, *ne contendas;* and the LXX., μὴ φιλεχθήσῃς, "Do not exercise enmity," from the unusual φιλεχθρέω. *Rûv* is here followed by עִם (*im*), as in Job ix. 3; xl. 2; and Gen. xxvi. 30. Its forensic sense, "to contend with in law," does not strictly apply here, though the precept may be taken as discouraging litigation (Lapide). **Without cause** (*khînnām*); LXX., ματήν, equivalent to δωρεάν in John xv. 25; Vulgate, *frustra;* further explained in the concluding clause (see on ch. i. 17). **If he have done thee no harm.** The phrase, *gâmāl râăh*, is to bring evil upon any one (Schultens). The verb *gâmāl* signifies "to do, to give, to show to any one." Holden renders, "Surely he will return thee evil," in the sense that unprovoked attack ensures retaliation. But this is to ignore the negative force of *im-lô*, "if not." The verb sometimes means "requiting," but not in the passage before us, nor in ch. xi. 17; xxxi. 12. The Vulgate renders as the Authorized Version, *Cum ipse tibi nihil mali fecerit.* It is to be remarked that this precept falls below the moral standard of the New Testament teaching (see Matt. v. 39—41; Rom. xii. 17—21; 1 Cor. vi. 6—8), and of the example of our Lord, of whom it was predicted that "When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not" (see Isa. liii.).

Ver. 31.—**Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways.** The thought of strife in the preceding verse leads to that of oppression, and the precept is directed against fellowship with those who outrage the general law of benevolence and justice.

*Envy not;* i.e. as Stuart, "Do not anxiously covet the booty which men of violence acquire." Success and wealth may follow from severity and extortion, but the man who acquires prosperity by these means is not to be envied even by the victim of his oppression (for the verb, see ch. xxiii. 17; xxiv. 1, 19). *The oppressor* (*ish khâmâs*); literally, *a man of violence* (see margin). The expression occurs in ch. xiv. 29; Ps. xviii. 41, and in its plural form, *ish khămâmîm*, "man of violences," in 2 Sam. xxii. 49; Ps. cxl. 1, 4. The man of violence is one who "grinds the faces of the poor," and whose conduct is rapacious, violent, and unjust. *And choose none of his ways;* literally, *and choose not all his ways*, i.e. with a view to acquire the same wealth, greatness, and power. The LXX. renders this verse, "Do not acquire the hatred of evil men, neither be jealous of their ways," evidently from having taken *tiv'khar*, "choose," in the second hemistich, for *tiłł'khar*, "be jealous."

Ver. 32.—This verse gives the reason for the previous warning. The oppressor is here included under the more general term, "the froward." **The froward**; *nâlôz*, hiph. participle from *lûz*, "to bend aside," and hence a perverted or wicked man, one who turns aside from the way of uprightness, a transgressor of the Law (cf. LXX., παράνομος); and so the opposite of "the righteous," *y'shârîm*, "the upright," those who pursue the path of justness, or the straightforward. **Abomination** (*tôêvâh*); *i.e.* an abhorrence, something which, being impure and unclean (cf. LXX., ἀκάθαρτος), is especially abhorrent to Jehovah. In some passages it is connected with idolatry, as in 1 Kings xiv. 24 and 2 Kings xxiii. 13, but is never used in this sense in the Proverbs, where it occurs about twenty times (see ch. xxviii. 9; xxi. 27; xi. 1, 20, etc.). The passage shows that prosperity and worldly success are not always a true measure of Divine favour. **His secret** (*sôdô*); Vulgate, *sermocinatio*. Here *sod* probably means "familiar intercourse," as in Job xxix. 4 and Ps. xxv. 14; and hence the special favour with which Jehovah regards the upright, by revealing to them what he conceals from others, or his friendship (compare what our Lord says in John xv. 14, 15). Dathe translates, "probis vero est familiaris." Gesenius says *sod* properly means "a couch," or *triclinium*, on which people recline; but Delitzsch derives it from the root *sod*, "to be firm," "compressed," and states that it therefore means properly "a being together, or sitting together." The LXX. continues the "froward man" (παράνομος) as the subject, and renders, "Every transgressor is impure before God, and does not sit together with (οὐ συνεδριάζει) the just."

Ver. 33.—**The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked.** From ver. 33 to the end of the discourse the contrast is continued between the condition of the wicked and the just, the scornful and the lowly, the wise and the fools. In the verse before us a further reason is given why the prosperity of the wicked is not enviable. The curse of Jehovah dwells in and rests upon his house. *The curse; m'êrâh*, from *arav*, "to curse." This word only occurs five times in the Old Testament—once in Deuteronomy, twice in Proverbs (here and in ch. xxviii. 27), and twice in Malachi. The nature of the curse may be learned from Deut. xxviii. 20, where it is the infliction of temporal misfortunes ending with the "cutting off" of the wicked (see Ps. xxxvii. 22). It is a hovering evil, the source of constant misfortune. LXX., κατάρα. Cf. "the cursing" (*âlâh*) against thieves and swearers in Zech. v. 4. **But he blesseth the habitation of the just.** The contrast to the former, as in Deut. xxviii. 2—6. *He blesseth;* i.e. both temporarily and spiritually. Blessing does not exclude affliction, but "trials" are not "curses" (Wardlaw). Both the LXX. and the Vulgate render, "But the habitations of the just shall be blessed," the LXX. having read the pual future (*y'vôrâk*), "they shall be blessed," for the piel future (*y'vârik*), "he shall bless," of the text. *The habitation; nâvêh*, from *nâvâh*, "to sit down," "to dwell." A poetic and nomad (Fleischer) word usually understood of a small dwelling is *tugurium*, the shepherd's hut or cottage, "the sheepcote" of 2 Sam. vii. 8. The LXX. ἔπαυλις, and the Vulgate *habitaculum*, favour the suggestion of Gejerus, that a contrast is here made between the large house or palace (*bâyith*) of the wicked and the small dwelling of the just. In ch. xxi. 20 and xxiv. 15 the word is rendered "dwelling."

Ver. 34.—**Surely he scorneth the scorners;** literally, *if with regard to the scorners he scorneth* (*im lâlêtsim hû yalîts*); *i.e.* he repays scorn with scorn; or, as Rabbi Salomon, "He renders to them so that they fall in their own derision (*reddit ipsis ut in suâ derisione corruant*)." He renders their schemes abortive. He resists them. *The scorners* (*lêtsim*) are those who treat with scoffing regard the precepts and truths of God; the arrogant, proud, insolent, here placed in contrast with "the lowly." Vulgate, *derisores;* LXX., ὑπερήφανοι, "the overbearing." The ל for לְ (*l'ha*), prefixed to *lêtsim*, signifies "with regard to," as in Job xxxii. 4 (cf. Ps. xvi. 3, "With regard to the saints (*lik'lôshim*), in them only I delight"). **But he giveth grace unto the lowly;** or, *on the other hand*, the ל prefixed to *lâănâyim*, "to the lowly," having

that antithetical force here as in Job viii. 20. *The lowly* (*anâyyîm*); Vulgate, *mansueti*; LXX., ταπεινοί; properly, "the afflicted," with added notion of submission and lowly demeanour, and hence the meek, gentle—the gentle towards man, and the abased and lowly before God. St. James (iv. 6) quotes the LXX. of this passage, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." With the exception of substituting Κύριος for Θεός (cf. 1 Pet. v. 5), our Lord's parable of the Pharisee and publican illustrates the teaching of this verse (Luke xviii. 9—14).

Ver. 35.—**The wise shall inherit glory.** Ch. xi. 2 indicates that "the wise" here are to be identified with "the lowly" of the preceding verse. *Inherit;* succeed to it as a matter of course by hereditary right as sons. *Heirship* implies *sonship*. *Glory* (*kâvôd*); or, *honour;* not merely earthly distinction and splendour, the glory of man, but the "glory of God." **But shame shall be the promotion of fools;** or, as margin, *shame exalteth the fools.* The rendering of the original, *vuk'sîlîm mêrîm kâlôn*, depends upon the meaning to be given to *mêrîm*, the hiph. participle of *rûm*, hiph. "to lift up, exalt;" and whether the plural, *k'sîlîm*, in a distributive sense, as in ver. 18, or *kâlôn*, is the subject. Various interpretations have been given of the passage. (1) The Vulgate renders, *stultorum exaltatio ignominia;* i.e. as in the Authorized Version, "shame exalts fools." They "glory in their shame" (Phil. (ii. 19); or shame renders them conspicuous as warning examples (Ewald); or, as Dathe explains it, "Stulti infamiâ sunt famosi," "Fools become famous by infamy;" or as Rabbi Levi, "Shame exalts them as into the air, and makes them vanish away." (2) The LXX. renders, Αἱ ἀσεβεῖς ὕψωσαν ἀτιμίαν, *i.e.* "Fools exalt shame, prize what others despise" (Plumptre). (3) Umbreit, Bertheau, Zöckler, render, "Shame sweeps fools away," *i.e.* lifts them up in order to sweep away and destroy them (cf. Isa. lvii. 14). (4) The true rendering seems to be given by Michaelis, "Fools carry away shame" as their portion. So the Targum, Delitzsch, Hitzig, Wordsworth. They look for "promotion." They attain such as it is, but the end of their attainments is "shame and everlasting contempt." As the wise inherit glory, so fools get as their portion shame and ignominy.

## HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—4.—*Making the heart a treasury of good principles.* I. THE TREASURE. Innumerable impressions are constantly being made upon our minds, and as constantly transferring themselves into memories. Frivolous thoughts, false notions, corrupt images, once harboured, take up their abode in the soul, and ultimately modify its character to the likeness of themselves. It is most important for us to guard our memories from such things, and to fill them with more worthy stores. Consider, therefore, the best subjects for contemplation and memory. 1. *The Law of God.* Divine truth is the highest truth, the noblest theme of meditation, the supreme guide to conduct. Truth concerning our actions, the revealed will of God, is for us the most valuable Divine truth. Other forms of truth may please and help us, but this is essentially needful as a lamp to our feet. We can afford to lose sight of the stars if the harbour light shines clear on the waters over which we have to sail. This practical Divine truth—not our dreams and fancies, but utterances of God's will—we are called to remember. Hence the importance of studying the Bible, which contains it. It is well for children to store their minds with passages of Scripture. These will afford strength in temptation, guidance in perplexity, comfort in sorrow. 2. *Mercy and truth.* "The letter killeth." It is superstition that merely treasures up the words of Holy Writ, and repeats them parrot-like, as though a spell were to be wrought by the very utterance of them. The truth contained within these ancient words is what we need to recollect. And it is not the exact verbal bearing of the Law, but the wide-reaching principles underlying it, that Christians are called upon to treasure; not rules of sacrifice, but principles of mercy; not merely the prohibition, "Thou shalt not steal," but the higher precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." 3. *Christ.* Christ is the Truth; he is the incarnation of mercy, our great exemplar, the visible manifestation of God's will, the perfect Ideal of our life. If we are weary of reading dry legal rescripts, and fail in contemplating bare abstract truths, we have a better way of treasuring good principles, by cherishing the vision of Christ.

II. THE TREASURY. This is the heart. It is not enough that the Law has been once for all revealed, that we come under it and under the institutions of the Church, that we treasure the Bible in our library, that we hear it read in hasty moments.

Much superstition prevails on these points. People seem to think that there is a virtue in the mere act of reading a chapter from the Bible, and some seem to go through the task as a sort of penance, imagining that they thus score some points to their credit in heaven. The Bible is valuable to us only in so far as it influences us. To influence us it must be known and remembered. The Law graven on stone, locked in the ark, and hidden behind the thick curtains of the sanctuary, could do the people of Israel little good. It needed to be written on the fleshy tables of the heart. This involves: 1. *An intelligent understanding* of Divine truth, so that it comes to us, not as a mere string of words, but as clear ideas. 2. *A good memory* of it. 3. *A love* of it, so that it is treasured thoughtfully, and becomes part of our very being, moulding our character, colouring our thoughts and affections, and directing our conduct. It is not difficult to see that such a treasury of such treasure will secure favour with God and ultimately also favour with men.

Vers. 5, 6.—*Divine guidance.* I. THE NEED OF DIVINE GUIDANCE. Several considerations force this upon us; *e.g.*: 1. *The complexity of life.* The longer we live, the more do we feel the profound mystery that touches us on every side. Innumerable avenues open out to us. Innumerable claims are made upon us. Conflicting duties perplex us. We feel as autumn leaves before the driving winds. We are helpless to choose and follow the right. 2. *Our ignorance of the future.* Like Columbus, we set our sails to cross unknown seas. We know not what a day will bring forth, yet we must boldly face the next day, and plan for many a day in advance. Our whole life must be arranged with respect to the future. We live in the future. Yet the future is hidden from us. How needful, then, to be guided on to that unknown land by One who sees the end from the beginning! 3. *The claims of duty.* We need a guide if we have only our own interests to consider. Much more is this the case when we are called to serve God. We are not free to choose our own path, even if we have light to do so. The servant must learn the will of his master before he can know what he is to do. Our prayer should be not so much that God should guide us safely, as that he should show us his way.

II. THE CONDITION OF DIVINE GUIDANCE. This is trust. The lower animals are guided by God through unconscious instincts. But having endowed us with a higher nature, God has given to us the dangerous privilege of a larger liberty, and the serious responsibility of voluntarily choosing or rejecting his guidance. But then he vouchsafes this great help on the simplest of all conditions. We have not to deserve it, to attain to it by any skill or labour, but simply to trust with the most childlike faith. Consider what this involves. 1. *Self-surrender.* "Lean not to thine own understanding." We sometimes pray for God's guidance insincerely. We want him to guide us into our own way. But his guidance is useless when we should go the same way without it. It is only when human wisdom diverges from Divine wisdom that we are called expressly to follow the latter; we do so unconsciously under easier circumstances. This does not mean, however, that we are to stultify our intellect; we must rather seek God's Spirit to enlighten it—not lean to our understanding, but to God for the strengthening of that understanding. 2. *Whole-hearted faith.* "Trust in God with all thine heart." It is useless to have certain faint opinions about the wisdom of God. Every thought, affection, and desire must be given over to his direction; at least, we must honestly aim at doing this. The more completely we trust the more surely will God guide us. 3. *Active faith.* God guides, but we must follow his directions. The traveller is not carried up the mountain by his guide; he follows of his own will. It is vain for us to pray for a Divine leading unless we consent to follow the directions indicated to us.

III. THE METHOD OF DIVINE GUIDANCE. 1. *Through our own conscience.* Conscience is our natural guide. It is not, therefore, the less Divine; for God is the Author of our nature. Conscience, clear and healthy, is the voice of God in the soul. But conscience is liable to corruption with the rest of our nature. Hence the need of prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit to purify, enlighten, and strengthen it. 2. *Through inspired teaching.* God guides one man through his message to another. Prophets and apostles are messengers of Divine guidance. We need such direction outside our own consciences, especially in our present imperfect condition, or we may

mistake the echoes of old prejudices and the promptings of self-interest for voices of God. God's word in the Bible is "a lamp to our feet." 3. *Through the disposition of events.* God guides us in his overruling providence, now closing dangerous ways, now opening up new paths.

Vers. 9, 10.—*Consecrated property.* I. WE CAN HONOUR GOD WITH OUR PROPERTY. It is not to be supposed that because religion is a wholly spiritual power it has no bearing on material things. Our religion is a mockery unless it affects the way in which we spend our money, as well as all other concerns of life. Property can be consecrated to God by being spent in conscious obedience to his will and by being used for the promotion of his glory, as in the maintenance of worship, the extension of missions, the relief of the poor, the sick, the widow and orphan.

II. GOD HAS CLAIMS UPON OUR PROPERTY. 1. It originally came from him. He created the materials and powers of nature. He gave to us our faculties. We sow the seed, but God gives the increase. 2. It is only lent to us for a season. Till recently it was not ours; soon we must leave it. While we have it, it is a talent to be used in our great Master's service, and for which we shall have to give an account. Rich men will be called to a Divine audit, where all their wealth will be reckoned and their method of spending it apprised. But so also will the poor; for we are all answerable for the use we make of our possessions, whether they be much or little. The one talent must be accounted for as well as the five talents.

III. OUR WHOLE PROPERTY SHOULD BE CONSECRATED TO GOD. It was *all* given to us by God. We shall have to give account of the use we make of *all* of it—of the substance or capital and of the increase or yearly income. We cannot compound for the abuse of the larger part of our goods by sacrificing to God a small proportion of them. If we give a tithe of our possessions to God, we do not thereby receive a dispensation to give the rest to Mammon. Is the mendicant friar, then, the typical Christian? No. An enlightened Christianity will teach us how to consecrate our possessions to God, while retaining the control of them. We are to be stewards, not beggars.

IV. THE BEST OF OUR PROPERTY SHOULD BE MORE DIRECTLY OFFERED TO THE SERVICE OF GOD. While all we have should be held sacred to God, some should be spent on objects that plainly involve self-sacrifice, and that manifestly concern the kingdom of heaven. We must not make the lofty thought of the consecration of all our property an excuse for low selfishness in spending the whole on ourselves. God expects the best. He should have the firstfruits; his claims should be recognized before all others. People often give to religious objects what they think they can spare after satisfying all other calls. They should give to these first, and see afterwards what is spared for more selfish things.

V. IT IS WELL TO DISPOSE OF OUR PROPERTY ON A CERTAIN METHOD. People who give to religious and philanthropic objects on a system of setting apart a certain portion of their income for such purposes, find that they can thus give most readily and justly. It is for each to settle in his own conscience and before God according to what proportion he should give. One may find a tithe too much, considering his duty to his family, etc. Another may find it far too little, considering his ease and affluence and the needs of the world.

VI. THIS CONSECRATION OF PROPERTY TO GOD BRINGS A BLESSING ON THE OWNER. If it is not always rewarded with temporal riches, it is repaid in better treasures—pleasures of sympathy and benevolence and the smile of God.

Vers. 11, 12.—*Chastening.* I. GOD CHASTENS HIS CHILDREN WITH SUFFERING. All suffering is not chastening. Some trouble is the pruning of branches that already bear fruit, in order that they may bring forth more fruit (John xv. 2). But when it meets us in our sins and failings, it is to be regarded as a Divine method of correction. It is not then the vengeance of a God simply concerned with his own outraged anger; before this we should tremble with alarm. It is not the chance product of the unconscious working of brute forces; such a materialistic explanation of suffering might well induce blank despair. The teaching of revelation is that suffering comes with a purpose, and that the purpose is our own good; it is a rod to chasten us for our faults, that we may be led to forsake them, and a pruning-knife to fit us for larger fruitfulness.

II. THE MOTIVE WITH WHICH GOD CHASTENS HIS CHILDREN IS FATHERLY LOVE. 1. *God must be angry with us for our sin.* His anger, however, is not the fruit of malignant hatred, but the expression of grieved love. For love can be angry, nay, sometimes must be, if it is pure and strong. The weak kindliness which is a stranger to indignation at wrong-doing is based on no deep affection. 2. *If God chastens in love, it is for our own good.* Weak love seeks the present pleasure of its objects; strong love aims at the highest welfare, even though this involve misunderstandings and temporary estrangement. 3. *God's paternal relation with us* is the ground of his chastening in love. We do not feel called upon to correct in strange children the faults for which we chastise our own family. The very love we bear to our children rouses indignation at conduct which we should scarcely heed in others. True love is not blind to the faults of those who are loved, it is rather rendered keen-sighted by sorrowful interest. Hence we may take the chastening as a proof of the love and Fatherhood of God. If we were not children, God would not thus put us to pain. Instead of regarding trouble as a proof that God has deserted us, we should see in it a sign that God is owning us and concerning himself with our welfare. The worst curse a man can receive is to be deserted by God and left unchecked in pursuit of folly and sin (Heb. xii. 8).

III. TO RIGHTLY RECEIVE DIVINE CHASTENING WE MUST NEITHER DESPISE IT NOR GROW WEARY OF IT. The good it will do to us depends on the reception we give it. Like other graces, the grace of correction may be received in vain, may be abused to our own hurt. We must not be satisfied, therefore, with the mere fact that we are being chastened. Two evils must be avoided. 1. *Despising* chastening. Cynical indifference and stoical hardness will render the chastening inefficacious. We must open our hearts to receive it. It blesses the broken heart. The very sorrow it induces is of the essence of its healing grace. 2. *Growing weary* of chastening. This is the opposite failing. We may despair, complain, show impatience, and rebel. Then the chastening loses its utility. The right reception is evidently to feel its grievousness, but to submit humbly and to seek to learn its bitter but wholesome lessons. The two all-essential thoughts, that suffering is for our own good, and that it is sent in love and is a proof of God's fatherly care for our welfare, should help us neither to be indifferent to it nor to rebel against it, but thus humbly to accept it.

Vers. 13—20.—"*More precious than rubies.*" We must bear in mind that the wisdom here commended to us is not mere knowledge, science, philosophy. It has two important characteristics. First, it is *religious;* it is based on the fear of God. Second, it is *practical;* it assumes the direction of human conduct. It is the knowledge of Divine truth, and the application of it to life. Why is this to be accounted most precious?

I. WISDOM IS VALUABLE ON ACCOUNT OF ITS OWN INHERENT QUALITIES. (Vers. 13—15.) Paper money is worthless unless it can be exchanged for something else; but gold coins have a value of their own. If they are not used in the purchase of other things, the precious metal is valuable, and can be fashioned into objects of use and beauty. Wisdom is like solid specie. If she brings nothing else, she is a treasure in herself. While men are asking what advantages will religion give them, they should see that she is "the pearl of great price," for which all other good things may be sold, and yet the profit remain heavily on the side of him who purchases her. This is an inward treasure, a possession of the soul. It has many advantages over material treasures. 1. It is *exalted and elevating.* Its character is pure, and it raises those who possess it. There are earthly treasures that defile by contact with them, and others that materialize—make a man hard, worldly, ignoble. 2. It is *satisfying.* A man cannot live on gold, but on bread alone. There are desires of the soul that money and food do not quiet. Books, pictures, music, all works of art, all triumphs of civilization, leave a void unfilled. It is the mission of the thoughts of God in the soul to fill this void. 3. It is *never wearying.* Many things that never satisfy soon satiate. We are not full, yet we turn away with disgust, having had enough of them. The sea is beautiful, but the sailor grows tired of the endless monotony of waves. Divine wisdom never tires us. It is infinite, endlessly varied, eternally fresh. It is true that we may become wearied of religious occupations, religious books, etc. But then we have the

imperfections of the human embodiment of wisdom to annoy us. 4. It is *secure*. No thief can steal it. No moth nor rust can consume it. The thief may take a man's jewels, but never his inner treasure. He may be stripped of property, home, choicest possessions, and left to bare beggary; yet if he have precious thoughts of God in his heart, no thief can touch them. They are a safe, an eternal possession.

II. WISDOM IS VALUABLE BECAUSE IT MINISTERS TO OUR EARTHLY WELFARE. (Vers. 16—18.) The temporal advantages of religion are here described with that prominence and positiveness which are characteristic of the Old Testament, and of the Book of Proverbs in particular. We have learnt to see more limitations upon these things, and, at the same time, we have had revealed to us much larger spiritual and eternal beatitudes than those of the Jewish faith. But we may make the mistake of ignoring the truth contained in the old view. There are earthly advantages in religion. It has promises for this life as well as for that to come. 1. *Length of days.* Many good people die young; many bad men grow hoary in sin. If it were not so, we should lose the discipline that comes by our having to walk by faith. But on the whole, wisdom tends to length of days by preserving the constitution sound and healthy. A wise way of living falls in with the laws of health. Reckless folly saps the energies of life, induces disease, decrepitude, premature old age and death. 2. Ways of *pleasantness and peace.* The road is pleasant as well as the end. Religion may bring a cross, but she also brings grace for bearing it. All her rewards are not reserved for the future. There is a peace of God that passeth all understanding, which the world can neither give nor take away, and which will make the wilderness of the saddest life blossom like the rose. 3. A *tree of life.* Length of days is a poor blessing unless the life preserved is worth living. What boon would it be to an exile in Siberia, a convict on Dartmoor, a paralytic in an infirmary? Long existence without a source of worthy life is the curse of the Wandering Jew, not the blessing of eternal life. Wisdom—*i.e.* Divine truth, religion—supplies fruits for holy sustenance and leaves for the healing of the nations. To know God is eternal life (John xvii. 3).

III. WISDOM IS VALUABLE BECAUSE IT IS A LINK OF CONNECTION BETWEEN MAN AND GOD. (Vers. 19, 20.) Our heart is restless till it finds rest in God. All our highest life, all our deepest peace, all our truest thought, all our noblest effort, all our purest joy, depend on our union in and with God. But wisdom is an essential Divine attribute. By it God first created the earth and the heavens (ver. 13). By it he now controls all things (ver. 20). The wisdom of God is reflected in nature. All our knowledge is just the reflection of this wisdom; it is thinking into the thoughts of God; thus it is a communion with him. Spiritual knowledge brings us nearest to God, who is Spirit. Christ as the incarnate "Word," by whom all things were made, and the Wisdom of God, is our Mediator, and unites us to God.

Vers. 27, 28.—*Dilatoriness in the payment of just debts.* I. THIS DILATORINESS IS MORALLY CULPABLE, AND MOST INJURIOUS TO SOCIETY. Through thoughtlessness in some cases, through deliberate meanness in others, many people postpone the payment of their just debts as long as possible, though they have the money by them, and are perhaps turning it to account for their own advantage. Such needless delay of justice should be regarded as a moral offence. A sad laxity prevails in this matter. It is said that preachers direct their admonitions respecting the business habits of the day too much to one side of the case. The tradesman is accused of greed, dishonesty, deceit, while little is said of the conduct of the customer. But here is an instance where the failing, nay, the sin, lies with the buyer. Most of us little know how much the trading classes suffer from delay and difficulty in calling in the money that is owing to them; how often they pinch themselves and suffer in silence for fear of losing a customer by giving offence in too much pressing for payment, knowing that the common selfishness of others will readily lead them to court the patronage of the offended client. This delay is grossly unjust to more conscientious people who pay promptly, and yet are made to suffer from the high prices necessitated by the bad debts and postponed payments of others. It is also a direct temptation to those shifty practices which all of us deprecate when we meet with them in trade. Feeling that he cannot recoup himself readily in the regular way, the tradesman is tempted to try some less straightforward method for making his business, thus heavily handicapped, to some extent profitable.

A new moral tone is requisite in this matter. People should see that to delay to execute justice is to commit injustice. Time is as valuable as coins. He who robs a man of time is a thief, and should wear the brand of a thief.

II. THE REMEDY FOR THIS DILATORINESS MUST BE FOUND IN A FULLER RECOGNITION OF THE CLAIMS OF HUMAN BROTHERHOOD. It is not enough to prove the abstract justice of prompt payment. The selfishness which withholds it will find some casuistic excuse for further delay. This selfishness, which is at the root of the evil, must be overcome. The spirit of Cain is dishonest as well as murderous. We are too ready to treat those with whom we have merely business dealings according to an entirely different code from that which controls our conduct with our friends. Commercial rules are so much more lax than social laws. The mere business relation is too often robbed of all human consideration, treated from a purely selfish standpoint, almost on a principle of enmity, as though it belonged to a state of war. Does a man cease to be our brother because we buy and sell with him? When he was a stranger, we felt some tie of common humanity with him. After we have entered into relations of mutual convenience, is the tie broken, and does he become as a heathen and a publican? We must remember that it is our "neighbour" who claims just payment; and are we not required to love our neighbour as ourselves? The golden rule of Christ, that we must do to others as we would that they should do to us, must be applied to business, or we have no right to profess ourselves to be Christians.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—10.—*Precepts and promises of wisdom.* I. THE CONNECTION OF PRECEPT AND PROMISE. 1. Precept needs confirmation. We cannot but ask—*Why* should we pursue this or that line of conduct in preference to another? *Why* should men be God-fearing, honest, chaste? We are rational creatures, not "dumb driven cattle," to be forced along a given road. We must have reasons; and it is to reason in us that the Divine reason ever makes appeal. 2. The confirmation is found in *experience.* This is the source of our knowledge; to it the true teacher must constantly refer for the verification of his principles, the corroboration of his precepts. The tone assumed by the teacher is indeed that of *authority,* but real authority always rests upon experience. Experience, in short, is the discovery and ascertainment of law in life. Precepts are its formulation. 3. The experience of the past enables the prediction of the future. Just as we know the science of the astronomer, *e.g.,* to be sound, because we find that he can predict with accuracy coming events, appearances of the heavenly bodies, eclipses, etc., so do we recognize the soundness of moral teaching by its power to forecast the future fates of men. Precepts are the deductions from the actual; promises the forecasts of that which, because it has been constant in the past, may be expected in the future. In science, in morality, in religion, we build on the permanence of law; in other words, on the constancy of the eternal God.

II. PARTICULAR EXAMPLES OF THIS CONNECTION. 1. *Obedience ensures earthly happiness.* (Vers. 1, 2.) The connection is first stated generally. "Extension of days," or long life, is the one aspect of this happiness; inward peace of heart, denied to the godless, the other (Isa. xlviii. 22; lvii. 21). Prolongation of days, life in the good land, dwelling in the house of the Lord, are the peculiar Old Testament blessings (Deut. iv. 40; v. 33; vi. 2; xi. 9; xxii. 7; xxx. 16; Ps. xv. 1; xxiii. 6; xxvii. 4). (1) The desire for long life is *natural,* and religion recognizes it. (2) Without *inward satisfaction,* long life is no blessing. (3) While the Old Testament promises *formally* cover the finite life only, they do not exclude the infinite. In God and faith in him the infinite is *germinally* contained. 2. *Love and good faith ensure favour with God, good will with men.* "Mercy," or "love;" the word denotes the recognition of *kinship,* fellowship in men, and the duty of *kindness* therein implied. "Truth," in the sense in which we speak of *a true man;* sincerity and rectitude, the striving to make the *seeming* and the *being* correspond to one another; the absence of hypocrisy. St. Paul gives the ideas, "dealing *truly* in *love*" (Eph. iv. 15). Let these virtues be bound about the neck, like precious objects, for the sake of security; let these commands be engraven in the only indelible way—upon the heart. Let the mind be fixed and

formed, and the result will be favour in the sight of God, and a "good opinion" in the minds of men. The two relations form a *correlation*. There is no true standing with God which does not *reflect* itself in the good opinion of good men; no worthy opinion of a man which does not furnish an *index* to God's view of him. Both were united in the case of the youthful Jesus. 3. *Trust in God ensures practical direction.* (Vers. 5, 6.) (1) This trust must be *whole-hearted*. An exception to it destroys it, as one faulty link will cause the chain to break, one rotten plank the ship to leak, etc. (2) The fallacy of confidence is when we separate the particular in our intelligence from the universal. This is intellectual egoism. There is a dualism in consciousness—the private self-seeking intelligence, and the Divine mind in us. (3) Trust is *abandonment to the Divine mind*, to the universal intelligence which carries us out of self. (4) Such trust implies the "taking cognizance" of God in all we do. Of bad, unjust men, like Eli's sons, it is said that they take no cognizance of Jehovah (1 Sam. ii. 12). To ask of every action not—Is this what the generality of men would do in my position? but—Is it what God would have me to do? Not—Is it "natural"? but—Is it Divine? Such a habit ensures practical direction. All our *égarements* and stumblings arise from following the isolated intelligence, which is a true guide only for immediate sensuous relations, cannot light us for life's complex whole. Hence the way in which selfish and cunning people constantly outwit themselves, while the man who is set down by them as a fool for neglecting his own interests comes out safely in the long run. 4. *Simple piety secures health.* (Vers. 7, 8.) (1) *Conceit is opposed to piety.* This we have already seen. For what is conceit but the lifting of the merely individual into a false generality? In its extreme, the worship of self is a little god. (2) Simple piety has a positive and a negative pole: positive, reverence for God; negative, aversion from evil. The pious man affirms and denies, both with all his might. His life is emphatic, includes an everlasting "Yes" and an everlasting "No"! (3) Simple piety is the source of health. (*a*) *Physical.* It tends to promote right physical habits. It certainly reacts against the worst disorders, viz. the nervous. (*b*) *Spiritual.* It is in the mind what the sound nervous organization is in the body. The mind thus centrally right digests, enjoys, assimilates, the rich food which nature, books, and men afford. 5. *Consecration of property ensures wealth.* (Vers. 9, 10.) (1) *Ancient custom commanded this.* The consecration of the firstling of firstfruits was not confined to Israel. It was an ancient custom of the world generally. The part represents the whole, for all is God's. There seems to be no objection to the private practice of the custom by Christians still. In any case, let it be recognized that *property*, in the legal sense, is but an expression of convenience; that *really* our temporary possessions, along with ourselves, are the property of God. If this be not recognized, we merely *consume* them, or hoard them, do not use them. (2) *Plenty falls to the lot* of the giver. The exceptions to the rule are *apparent*, and perhaps language does not suffice for their statement and elucidation. The rule is *comprehensively* true, and a *comprehensive view* is necessary for its application. Rich and poor are *subjective terms*. There is a rich poverty and a miserable affluence. The promise is only truly fulfilled in the man who *feels* he has abundance, and enjoys it.—J.

Vers. 11, 12.—*Patience in affliction.* Well does this lesson contrast with the preceding picture of prosperity and opulence.

I. THE RELIGIOUS VIEW OF SUFFERING. 1. *It is not a dark doom*, a cruel fate, a blind necessity of things. Such were the ideas of the heathen. 2. *Its cause may be known.* This is ever a great solace—to be persuaded that our troubles lie in the reason of things, that nothing is chance or caprice. 3. That cause is *in the Divine mind and will.* The power of God is manifested in our suffering; we are but as the clay on the potter's wheel. Still more the love of God is manifested in our suffering. There is always some mitigation accompanying it. "It might have been worse" may be said of every pain. It serves as the foil to set off some greater good. "The ring may be lost, but the finger remains," as the Spanish proverb says. 4. *The object or final cause of suffering.* Purification from inward evil; correction of faults. The mind grows of itself; the schoolmaster can do little more than point out and correct faults. So with life's education from the religious point of view. And the most fertile minds need most the discipline of suffering. The pruning-knife is not applied to the puny plant; and

languid minds are the least touched by affliction. In these adjustments, love is still revealed. 5. *Suffering must be viewed under the analogy of the parental and filial relation.* Let these words once become clear, *Father, son,* in their application to God's relation to us, and ours to him, and the theory of suffering is mastered (comp. Deut. viii. 5; Ps. cxviii. 18; Lam. iii. 31—33).

II. THE RELIGIOUS TEMPER UNDER SUFFERING. 1. *Humility.* No indignant questioning, scornful recalcitration, proud efforts of stoical fortitude. These will but *defeat* or *delay* the end. The medicine benefits not if the patient sets his mind against it as unneeded. 2. *Patient endurance.* Perseverance in a passive, receptive, attitude is far more difficult than perseverance in activity. We haste to snatch at good. But God is never in haste. His processes are slow. And to receive their benefit we must learn the wisdom of the word "wait." While we are thus waiting, things are not at a standstill; God is working, producing a spiritual shape out of the passive material.

> "Maker, remake, complete,
> I trust what thou shalt do!"
> (R. Browning's noble poem, 'Rabbi Ben Ezra.')
> J.

Vers. 13—18.—*Wisdom the best investment.* I. WISDOM COMPARABLE WITH THE MOST PRECIOUS THINGS. Silver, gold, precious stones, everything eagerly coveted and warmly prized by the senses and the fancy, may illustrate the worth of the pious intelligence. Every object in the world of sense has its analogy in the world of spirit. The worth of the ruby is due to the æsthetic light in the mind of the observer. But wisdom is the light in the mind itself.

II. WISDOM INCOMPARABLE WITH ALL PRECIOUS THINGS. For by *analogy* only can we put wisdom and precious minerals side by side, on the principle that mind is *reflected* in matter. But on the opposite principle, that mind is diverse from matter, rests the *incomparableness* of wisdom. Mere matter can breed nothing; spiritual force only is generative. When we talk of "money breeding money," we use a figure of speech. It is the mind which is the active power.

III. WISDOM MAY BE VIEWED AS THE BEST LIFE INVESTMENT. All the objects which stimulate human activity to their pursuit are derivable from this capital. Life in health and ample and various enjoyment, riches and honour, pleasure and inward peace; blessings that neither money nor jewels can purchase, are the fruit, direct or indirect, of the cultivation of the spiritual field of enterprise, the whole-hearted venture on this Divine speculation, so to say. For religion *is* a speculation; faith is a speculation in the sense that everything cannot be made certain; some elements in the calculation must ever remain undefined. (For further, see the early part of the chapter; and on ver. 17, South's 'Sermons,' vol. i. ser. 1.) The summary expression, "a tree of life," seems to symbolize all that is beautiful, all that is desirable, all that gives joy and intensity to living (comp. ch. xiii. 12; xv. 4).—J.

Vers. 19, 20.—*Wisdom the principle of the creation.* Perhaps the mention of the tree of life has reminded the writer of the early account of the creation in Gen. i., ii. He thus traces the visible world and its order to its spiritual root in the mind of God. He gives a brief sketch of the construction of the *cosmos*, according to the ancient mode of thought. Both heaven and earth are fixed and made fast; and the water-masses divided into those above and those below the "firmament;" the consequence of which is the gushing forth of the clouds in rain. The modern scientific knowledge of the world may be used to impart a rich context to these simple conceptions of the early imagination.

I. THE WORLD IS AN ORDER. The Greeks expressed this idea in the beautiful word "cosmos." It includes symmetry, beauty, variety, harmony, adaptation of means to ends. To recognize these in the visible world is an intellectual delight, and a motive to the purest reverence.

II. THIS ORDER IS REDUCIBLE TO A UNITY. Formerly we looked upon the world as a collection of independent forces. Science showed us the correlation, interdepen-

dence, interaction of these forces. Now she has risen to the grand conception of the unity of all force; and thus arrives at the same goal with religious thought.

III. THAT UNITY OF FORCE IS GOD. It is often forgotten that the generalizations of science are but logical distinctions—cause, law, force, etc. What are these without Being, Personality, as their ground? Empty names. Religion fills these forms with life, and where the scientific man speaks of law, she bows before the living God.

IV. SCIENCE AND RELIGION ARE AT ONE. When we talk of their opposition, we are using a figure of speech. What they represent, these names, is two different directions of the spiritual activity of man. What needs to be cured is narrowness and partialism on the side of both scientific and religious *men*. For there is no real cleft in the nature of our knowledge. All genuine knowledge is essentially a knowledge of God, of the Infinite revealed in and through the finite.—J.

Vers. 21—26.—*Confidence and the sense of security in the ways of God.* In rich variation the religious habit of mind is presented. What has been spoken of as worthy to be hung about the neck as precious is now referred to as to be kept continually before the eyes of the mind. The designation of wisdom or its attributes is also varied, viz. "thoughtfulness and circumspection" (ver. 21). In the next, former modes of statement recur (comp. ver. 3, *sqq.*).

I. RELIGION STRENGTHENS AND STEADIES THE PERCEPTION. (Ver. 23.) Perfect *unconsciousness of danger*, as in the child, the somnambulist, etc., is often seen to be a condition of security in walking in dangerous places. And so may the mind be unconscious of danger through the full enfolding in God. But better is the safe step which is given by the perfect knowledge both of danger and the resources against it. This is found in religion. We know what is against us, still more who is for us, and so pass on with head erect and footstep firm.

II. RELIGION CONTROLS THE IMAGINATION. (Vers. 24, 25.) The indefinable in space and time continually besets the fancy, and, especially in certain temperaments, fills it with images of gloom and terror. The timid heart forebodes some sudden "tempest of the wicked," some onrush of malice and violence out of the dark. What a chapter of "imaginary terrors" could be filled from the experience of many such a one! But faith fortifies the imagination, preoccupying it with the thought of the almighty Defender (compare the beautiful Ps. xci.).—J.

Vers. 27, 28.—*Promptitude in good actions.* I. NEGATIVE UNKINDNESS. (Ver. 27.) 1. It consists in *withholding good* which it is in our power to impart. 2. It is analogous to *the refusal to pay a just debt.* Kindness is the "due" of our fellow-men. This does not imply the giving to every beggar or borrower. No act is required which, under the *show* of kindness, involves no real benefit to another or actually involves an injustice to ourself or another. We must carry these precepts to the light of the heart and of the discriminating intelligence. Speaking generally, sullenness, unsociability, extreme taciturnity, self-absorption, are forms of the sin.

II. PROCRASTINATION CONDEMNED. (Ver. 28.) Remember: 1. That to give promptly is to give twice; that the deferred gift loses its bloom; that unnecessary delay is a fraud on the time and temper of others; that of everything we intend to do we had best make the beginning at once, which, the Roman poet says, is "half the deed." 2. To defer a duty till to-morrow may be to defer it for ever. A lost opportunity of doing good is a sad sting in the memory. These *negative* warnings infer the positive lesson of promptitude. (1) Now is the acceptable time for ourselves and our own salvation. (2) It may also be the acceptable time for others' salvation. How admirable to be one of those who, amidst whatever pressure, can find time to listen, to comfort, to help their brethren, to-day, at once!—J.

Vers. 29—31.—*Odious passions.* Let them be held up in the clear exposure of Wisdom, that their very mention may suggest their hideousness.

I. MALICE AND ITS DEVICES. (Ver. 29.) Literally, "*Forge* not ill against thy neighbour." 1. Malice, like love, is all-inventive. But as the devices of the latter are the very instruments of progress and good, so those of the former are pernicious—burglar's tools, cunning instruments of torture. 2. Directed against unsuspecting

objects, malice is truly Satanic, an inspiration from hell. We have to beware of indulgence in curiosity about our neighbours; it is seldom free from some taint of malice in thought, which may pass over at any moment into action. Something in our neighbour's life may rebuke us and rouse the latent passion. How near are the angel and the devil to one another in the heart!

II. UNPROVOKED CONTENTIOUSNESS. (Ver. 30.) In other words, *quarrelsomeness*. The vicious habit and disposition to "pick quarrels," to invent occasions for fault-finding, for the exercise of pugnacity, and so on. The man of whom it is said that if left alone in the world he would fight with his own shadow. Let him contend with his own vices, of which this temper is a symptom, and expend his pugnacity upon the evils of society. There are men before whose presence all the sleeping germs of wrath start up into chaotic life. Could they but see themselves as others see them!

III. ENVY OF THE WICKED GREAT. (Ver. 31.) As emulation of the virtuous great is a noble passion, this, the *reverse side* of it, is correspondingly base. Imitation, again, is a powerful passion, the source of "fashion." The pure spirit knows nothing of fashion as such; and immoral fashion, born of mere imitation, it must avoid and denounce. 1. Every passion has its obverse and its reverse, its good and its evil side; malice may be turned to benevolence; idle quarrelsomeness to noble pugnacity; immoral envy to pure emulation. 2. Religion *intensifies, purifies, directs*, the passions to noble ends.—J.

Vers. 32—35.—*The discernment of Jehovah.* This is a leading thought of the Old Testament. In ordinary life, in civilized times, the character of individuals is concealed from us by the intermixtures of society and the complexity of its interests. Even in village life it is difficult to classify people; but God *distinguishes* in—

I. HIS VIEW OF INDIVIDUAL CHARACTER. 1. He abominates the *perverse*, the crooked, twisted, deceitful character. All in the spirit must be compared with that ideal geometrical rectitude of form, so to speak, which is the truth of his Being. 2. With the upright he "maintains good friendship" (ver. 32), or "is in secret alliance" (Job xxix. 4; Ps. xxv. 14). To enjoy the friendship of discerning minds, what greater privilege can there be? To live on such terms with God is the privilege of the true soul.

II. HIS PROVIDENTIAL ADMINISTRATION. "His curse dwells in the house of the wicked." A fatality of evil clings to him and his. But Jehovah blesses the tent of the righteous. He scoffs at the scoffer, but gives to the lowly grace (comp. Jas. iv. 6; 1 Pet. v. 5). The wise under this administration inherit glory, while ignominy carries away the fools. 1. These are, in the mode of their presentation, *generalized* or abstract truths, and as such must be understood. The study of apparent exceptions, even the admission of them, is foreign to this phase of Oriental thought. It was the presence of exceptions, insoluble to ancient thought, which excited the doubt and grief of Job and some of the psalmists. 2. While the truth must be stated, from the exigencies of language, in this sharp polar antithesis, actual human character is found, with all its merits and shades, in the intermediate region. 3. The subtle intermixtures of good and evil in human character, recognized by modern thought, defy complete analysis. We must suspend our judgment in particular cases, leaving all to him who brings to light the hidden things of darkness; conscious that there must be great "reversals of human judgment" upon the character of man (see Mozley's sermon on this subject).—J.

Vers. 1—4.—*Cherishing the truth.* We have here—

I. THE ESSENTIAL THING IMPLIED. It is implied that the Law of God has been heard and understood; also that it has been received as Divine, and taken as the true guide of life. The teacher or preacher has sometimes to assume this; but too often it is an assumption unjustified by the facts. When it *is* justified, there come—

II. TWO SPECIALLY VALUABLE VIRTUES INSISTED UPON. Mercy and truth (ver. 3) are to be exemplified. 1. *Mercy*, which includes (1) compassion, or the pity one should show to the unfortunate and the suffering; and (2) clemency, or a lenient view taken and a generous spirit shown in presence of error and wrong-doing, particularly of injury done to ourselves. 2. *Truth*, which includes (1) veracity in language; (2) sincerity of heart; (3) honesty and uprightness of action.

III. A MATTER OF GREAT MOMENT ENFORCED. This is *the* cherishing of the truth by the spirit which has received it in the love of it. "My son, forget not my law; . . . let thine heart keep," etc. (ver. 1); "Bind them about thy neck; write them upon the tablet of thine heart" (ver. 3). If these precepts are to be duly carried out, and there is thus to be a *continuance* in well-doing, and even a *growth* therein, then must there be: 1. The dwelling upon them by the mind; that must be a mental habit carefully cultivated. 2. The placing ourselves where they will be urged on our attention and commended to our affection (the sanctuary, the Lord's table, the society of the holy, etc.). 3. The wise study of them as illustrated in the lives of the worthiest of our race. 4. The use of any and every means by which they will be seen by us to be the beautiful and blessed things they are. The children of Wisdom will not only receive gladly the truth of God, but they will cherish it carefully; they will water with diligent hand the plant which has been sown and which has sprung up in the soul. "Let not the workman lose what he has wrought." If we *continue* in the word of Christ, then are we his disciples indeed (see John viii. 31; xv. 9; Acts xiii. 43).

IV. A LARGE BLESSING PROMISED. (Vers. 2, 4.) Under the Law, temporal blessings were more abundantly held in view; then the wise were promised long life, comfort, and human estimation, as well as the favour of God. Under the gospel, temporal prosperity takes the second place, spiritual and heavenly well-being the first. But we may urge that conformity to the will of God as revealed in his Word: 1. Tends to bodily health and strength; if that does not secure it, assuredly disobedience will not. 2. Tends to secure a life of tranquillity. "Peace," as well as "length of days," it is likely to add; equanimity of mind and the comfort which is the consequence of right and kind behaviour. 3. Tends to win the esteem and the affection of our neighbours. "Favour in the sight of man." 4. Ensures the love and the blessing of Almighty God.—C.

Vers. 5, 6, 7 (first part).—*Self-distrust and trust in God.* If we would realize God's thought concerning us, we shall—

I. CHERISH A DEEP DISTRUST OF OURSELVES. We are not to "lean unto our own understanding," or to "be wise in our own eyes" (vers. 5, 7). 1. We shall certainly have a sense of our own insufficiency if we *weigh our own human weakness;* if we consider how little we know of (1) human nature generally; and of (2) our own hearts in particular; of (3) the real character and disposition of those connected with us; of (4) the whole circle of law by which we are surrounded on every side; of (5) the events which are in the (even) near future; of (6) the ultimate effect of our decisions on our circumstances and our character. 2. So also if we *consider the disastrous results* that have followed presumption in this matter. How often have we seen men, confident of their own capacity, staking everything on their own judgment, and miserably disappointed with the issue! Men of this spirit, who carry self-reliance (which is a virtue) to an exaggerated and false assurance of their own sagacity, not only dig a deep grave for their own happiness, but usually involve others also in their ruin. Neither in (1) the affairs of this life, nor (2) in the larger issues of the spiritual realm, should we lean all the weight of our own and of others' prosperity on our own poor finite understanding.

II. LOOK DEVOUTLY UPWARD. We are to maintain: 1. A whole-hearted trust in God (ver. 5). A profound assurance that (1) he is regarding us; (2) he is divinely interested in our welfare; (3) he will see that we have all we need, and go in the way in which it is best for us to walk. 2. A continual acknowledgment (ver. 6). We are to acknowledge God (1) by referring everything to him in our own heart; (2) by consulting and applying his will as revealed in his Word; (3) by praying for and expecting his Divine direction; so shall we acknowledge him "in all our ways." This trust and acknowledgment are *inclusive* and *not exclusive* of our own individual endeavour. We are to think well, to consult wisely, to act diligently, and then to trust wholly. Whoso does the last without the first is guiltily and daringly presumptuous; whoso does the first without the last is guiltily irreverent and unbelieving.

III. RECKON CONFIDENTLY ON DIVINE DIRECTION. "He shall direct thy paths" (ver. 6). As a very little child, left alone in the streets of a great city, can but wander aimlessly about, and will surely fail of reaching home, so we, lost in the maze of this

seething, struggling, incomprehensible world—world of circumstance and world of thought—can but make vain guesses as to our true course, and are certain to wander far from the home of God. What the shrewdest and cleverest of men most urgently and sorely need is the guiding hand of a heavenly Father, who, through all the labyrinths of life, past all the by-paths of error and evil, will conduct us to truth, righteousness, wisdom, heaven. If we trust him wholly, and acknowledge him freely and fully, we may confidently expect that he will (1) lead our feet along the path of outward life; (2) guide our minds into the sanctuary of heavenly truth; (3) help our souls up the ennobling heights of holiness; (4) direct our steps to the gates of the city of God; and (5) finally welcome us within its "golden streets."—C.

Vers. 7 (second part), 8.—*A three-linked chain.* We have—

I. PIETY. "Fear the Lord." It is the faculty which distinguishes the meanest man from the noblest brute, which raises our race immeasurably above the next below it. Man can fear God. He can (1) recognize his Maker; (2) bow down in lowly but manly reverence before God; (3) render to him the gratitude of a heart mindful of his many mercies; (4) subject his will to the will Divine; (5) order his life according to the written Word.

II. MORALITY. "Depart from evil." The outcome of piety is morality. 1. The morality which rests not on the basis of piety (the fear of the Lord) is on an insecure foundation. Change of circumstance, of friends, of fashions, may blow it down. 2. The morality which depends on the "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not" of the Supreme is safe against all the winds that blow. For the dark hour of powerful temptation there is no such barrier against sin and ruin as the conviction, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" For the bright hour of obligation there is no such animating incitement as "that Christ may be magnified in me." The third link in this heaven-forged chain is—

III. HEALTH. "It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones." Sickness of body may be the portion of the best of men or women. Some are born to suffer until they die and pass to the blessed country where the inhabitant will never say, "I am sick." But the constant tendency of piety and its invariable accompaniment morality is to give (1) health and strength of bodily frame; the pure blood, the clear eye, the strong muscle, the steady nerve, the "green old age." It regularly gives (2) an active mind; and it necessarily imparts (3) a soul that is "in health" (3 John 2). The man who fears God and departs from evil is the man who is fitted and is likely to have the largest show of vigorous, robust, healthy life in all its forms.—C.

Vers. 9, 10.—*The Divine responsiveness.* There are two ways in which God blesses us—unconditionally and conditionally. We receive very much from him in virtue of his *originating and spontaneous goodness.* We may, if we will, receive much from him also as the result of his *faithful response* to our appeal. The text suggests to us the truth, which has manifold illustrations, that if we take toward him the attitude which he desires us to assume, he will visit us with appropriate and corresponding blessings.

I. IF WE LOVE HIM, HE WILL LOVE US. True, indeed, it is that "we love him because he first loved us" (1 John iv. 19), his own Divine beneficence is the source of all human affection; but it is also true that "if a man love me (Christ), he will keep my words, and my Father will love him" (John xiv. 23). Our love of God, of Jesus Christ, will meet with a large response in the outpouring of Divine affection toward us. God will love us with the fulness of parental, rejoicing love.

II. IF WE TRUST HIM, HE WILL TRUST US. Those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus become his sons (John i. 12), are the objects of his Divine trust. God does not prescribe to his reconciled children the hours, places, forms, methods, and means of service. He leaves these to the promptings of the filial spirit, to the decision of the understanding which has been consecrated to him. He makes known to us his will, that he should be served and his creatures blessed and saved; then he trusts us to put out our energies in all wise ways to fulfil his purpose. His treatment of us is in response to our attitude towards him.

III. IF WE HONOUR HIM, HE WILL HONOUR US. (1 Sam. ii. 30.)

IV. IF WE GIVE OF OUR SUBSTANCE TO HIM, HE WILL ENRICH US. This is the

illustration which our text supplies (see Deut. xxvi.). The children of Israel were encouraged to bring of their firstfruits and to present them unto the Lord, and to expect that, if they gave thus to God, he would give, in like way, to them, enlarging and enriching them (Mal. iii. 10—12). And not only were they taught thus to look on gifts of piety, but also of charity; these should be repaid by the observing and responsive Lord (ch. xix. 17). It may be asked how far we may go in anticipating like rewards at the hand of God now. And the answer is: 1. We are not to expect that God will enrich us in substance irrespective of other conditions (2 Thess. iii. 10). This would be a premium on idleness and imprudence. It will always be "the hand of the diligent that will make rich." 2. But labour and frugality being understood, the man who "seeks first the kingdom of God," who "acknowledges him in all his ways" (ver. 6), and who liberally gives to his cause (specially remembering his "little ones"—his poor), may look for large blessings at his hand. *At least* sufficiency now (Matt. vi. 33; Phil. iv. 19), and glorious abundance soon and for ever (John xiv. 13 14; xvi. 9).—C.

Vers. 11, 12.—*Wrong views of affliction, and the right one.* Sorrow is a very large ingredient in the cup of human life. It begins so early and lasts so long; it lies so near the surface and it strikes so deep into our nature; it is so certain that we shall meet with it before long, and so likely that we may renew our acquaintance with it very soon, that they must be unwise indeed who do not prepare for its coming, and they must be losers indeed who do not know how to treat it when it knocks at their door. There are—

I. MANY MISTAKES WE MAY MAKE ABOUT IT. 1. We may treat it thoughtlessly; we may "despise the chastening of the Lord" (ver. 11). We may allow ourselves to have "the sorrow of the world," of which Paul speaks (2 Cor. vii. 10); *i.e.* we may decline to consider what it means; content ourselves with the sullen thought that we have something that we must endure as best we can, not attempting to discover whence it comes or what it means. 2. We may conclude that it is only accidental. This is another way of "despising the chastening of the Lord." We may take that view which is intellectually the most easy and spiritually the most barren, and refer our trouble to the "course of events;" we may recognize no guiding hand, we may decide, with off-handed readiness, that we are the unhappy victims of unkind circumstances, and go on our way "grinding our teeth" with impatient spirit. 3. We may be crushed under the weight of it. We may (to use the words in Heb. xii. 5) "faint when we are rebuked." We may suffer a spiritual collapse, may meet affliction with an unmanly spirit of prostration, and, instead of bending bravely beneath the yoke and bearing it, break down utterly and miserably. 4. We may repine under long continuance of it. We may "be weary" of God's correction. Sometimes, when affliction is long-continued, men feel that either God has nothing to do with them at all, or that he is not regarding their prayer, or that he is punishing them above that which they are able to bear, and they repine; they are weary in their spirit, querulous in their tone, perhaps positively complaining in their speech. But there is—

II. THE ONE RIGHT WAY IN WHICH TO TAKE IT. And that is to accept it as *the correction of fatherly kindness.* "For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth," etc. (ver. 12). 1. We may be God's unreconciled children, and he is seeking to win us to himself. 2. Or we may have returned to him, but need fatherly correction. He may be rebuking us for some departure from his will. He may be desirous of removing the spirit of pride or of selfishness, or of worldliness, and of leading us along paths of humility, self-surrender, spirituality. Certainly he is seeking our truest welfare, our highest good, our lasting joy. Let each afflicted heart ask—What is the lesson the Father wishes me to learn?—C.

Vers. 13—26.—*Wisdom's inestimable worth.* Here are found many strong recommendations of heavenly wisdom, and we might adopt the thirteenth verse as a refrain to each one of them: "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding."

I. POSSESSORS OF IT, WE ARE SHAREHOLDERS WITH GOD HIMSELF. (Vers. 19, 20.) Only by wisdom could the Divine Founder of all visible things make them what they

are. His wonder-workings in the heavens above and on the earth beneath, in sun and star, in grain and grass, in coal and iron, in rain and dew,—all are the product of Divine wisdom.

II. POSSESSORS OF IT, WE HAVE A WELL-BEING THAT ENDURES. "Length of days is in her right hand" (ver. 16). "She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her" (ver. 18). They who fear God are more likely than others to "be satisfied with long life" (Ps. xci. 16). For the secret of strength is with those who are obedient to law; but though they should die before old age, yet (1) so long as life lasts their well-being will continue, and (2) when their earthly life is taken, their heritage is in the everlasting life beyond, where there is "length of days" indeed.

III. IT IS THE SOURCE OF GENUINE ESTEEM. "In her left hand . . . honour" (ver. 16). It may, indeed, be that the children of wisdom are disregarded or even despised. But that is the painful exception to the rule. The rule is, everywhere and in every age, that those who consult God's will in the guidance of their life are honoured of their brethren, enjoy the esteem of the worthiest of their neighbours, live and die in the fragrance of general regard.

IV. IT IS THE ONE SECURITY AGAINST SIN. (Ver. 23.) How many are "the stumblers," those who trip and fall as they ascend or descend the hill of life! And how serious, sometimes, are these falls! Character, reputation, joy, the light of other hearts, the happiness of the home,—all gone through the one false step! We have urgent need of some security. In what shall this be found? Not in hedgings and fencings which will take away every possible danger, but in the wisdom of the wise, which will teach us where to go and how to tread the path of life, in the "wisdom which is from above."

V. IT GUARANTEES THE GUARDIANSHIP OF GOD, AND THUS ENSURES CONFIDENCE AND PEACE. (Vers. 24—26.) There are those whose life is full of slavish fear; by day they dread the evils which assail the wicked, by night the perils of the darkness. But he who keeps God's Word enjoys the guardianship of his Almighty arm. "The Lord is his confidence;" his days are spent in quietness and calmness, and "his sleep is sweet" (Ps. cxii. 7).

VI. IT IS THE PERENNIAL SPRING OF PEACE AND JOY. (Vers. 17, 18.) Other sources of gratification are to be found, but some of them do not carry the sanction of conscience, some of them are out of the reach of the lowly, others are only open to the learned or the favoured; most, if not all of them, are short-lived, and become of less worth as they are more frequently employed. The wisdom which comes from God and which leads to him, which makes the human spirit the friend and follower of the Son of God, brings a "peace which passes all understanding," the "peace of God," and "joys which through all time abide."

VII. IT IS THE REALIZATION OF HUMAN LIFE. Wisdom is a "tree of life" (ver. 18); wisdom and discretion "shall be life unto our soul" (ver. 22). Any existence which is not illumined, ennobled, sanctified, beautified (ver. 22, "grace to thy neck"), by these, is *something less than life* in the sight of God. Only with these and by these do we attain to a state of being which the Wise One who sees things as they are recognizes as the life of man.

Wherefore: 1. Count it worth while to secure this heavenly wisdom at all costs whatsoever (vers. 14, 15). Its value cannot be estimated in gold; the price of wisdom is above rubies (Job xxviii. 18). *Nothing* is to be compared with it. Part, if necessary, with the largest fortune to obtain it (Mark x. 21; ch. xxiii. 23). 2. Take care to cherish and retain it (ver. 24). Let the most precious pearl fall, but hold this with a hand that will not unclasp.—C.

Vers. 27—32.—*Four valuable virtues.* There are some graces which, though not of the first importance, are yet far from being unimportant. Many men so fashion their lives that while, upon the whole, they are rightly reckoned among the wise and good, they are much less happy, less honoured, and less useful than they might become if they heeded a few small things. If we had regard to some of the minor moralities which we are apt to neglect, there would be less friction and more beauty in our lives than is now seen of God and felt of man.

I. PUNCTUALITY IN THE PAYMENT OF THAT WHICH IS DUE. (Vers. 27, 28.) These

dues may be (1) the wages of the workman; (2) the debt contracted with the tradesman; (3) the sum promised to the relative or friend. This may be denied, even when it could be easily rendered, through an "avaricious reluctance" to part with money or a culpable disregard of other men's necessities and claims. Such default is not worthy of a godly, a Christian man.

II. CONSCIENTIOUSNESS TOWARDS OUR FRIENDS. (Ver. 29.) Too many men are inclined to abuse the confidence their kindred or friends put in them, or the generosity they are prepared to show them. Such men draw unscrupulously on the trust or the bounty of others. It is a serious departure from perfect rectitude, and should be disallowed to themselves by all who fear God and would follow Christ. Those who "dwell securely by us," who have confided in us, are those whom every principle of honest self-respect demands that we should treat with scrupulous integrity.

III. PEACEABLENESS OF SPIRIT. (Ver. 30.) The lives of many are embittered by the quarrelsomeness of their neighbours. Offence, never intended, is taken, bitter words are spoken, a hostile attitude is assumed, all friendly relations are broken off, malicious insinuations are thrown out; in fact, "there is war between the house" of this man and that man, when there is positively nothing on which to found a complaint. A very small allowance of charity would cure this evil spirit, if only taken in time. Charity would hide a multitude of sins in the sense of *preventing them altogether*, if men would but attribute kind motives to their neighbours, or inquire sufficiently before they condemn, or even wait a while before they strike, to see if there is no other and better way of arranging a dispute. If it be possible—and it very often *is* possible, when men imagine it is not—we should "live peaceably with all men" (Rom. xii. 18).

IV. FREEDOM FROM FRETTING ENVY. Many good men are, upon the whole, what God would have them to be, and they have from him all that they can reasonably ask at his hand; their well-being is such as to constitute the condition of thankfulness and joy. Yet the cup of their life is made bitter and unpalatable because they are envious of the successful oppressor (ver. 31); they "fret themselves because of evil-doers," and are envious against the workers of iniquity (Ps. xxxvii. 1, 8; lxxiii. 3). They think, perhaps, that if bad men are as prosperous as they seem to be, they (the good) ought to be far more successful than they find themselves to be. Surely this is both sinful and foolish. 1. It is discontentment with God's arrangement, and a querulous challenging of his administration of human affairs. 2. It is forgetfulness of the fact that God's severest anger rests on the oppressor, and that he is therefore the last man to be envied; he is "abomination to the Lord" (ver. 32). Would we change places with *him*? 3. It overlooks the fact that the righteous man is enjoying the friendship of God—surely an advantage that immeasurably outweighs the wealth or honour which the oppressor has stolen. "The secret of the Lord" is with him. He is God's trusted servant, Christ's intimate friend (see Ps. xxv. 14; John xv. 14, 15; xiv. 23).—C.

Vers. 33—35.—*The height of well-being and the depth of ill-being.* The issues of righteousness and unrighteousness are here very broadly stated. These verses indicate to us the long and large results of wisdom on the one hand and of folly on the other.

I. THOSE WHOM GOD FAVOURS AND THAT WHICH HE APPORTIONS THEM. There are three epithets by which they are here characterized; they are called "the just," "the lowly," and "the wise." In those whom God loves and means to bless there are found (1) the spirit of humility,—they are conscious of their own demerit and unworthiness; (2) the spirit of wisdom,—they are in the attitude of inquiry towards God, desirous of knowing his truth and doing his will; and (3) the spirit of conscientiousness,—they are the "just," wishful to do that which is right toward their fellows, to act honestly, fairly, considerately, in the various relations they sustain. These God loves, and on them he will bestow his Divine benediction. 1. He will give them "grace"—his own royal favour and that which draws down upon them the genial and gracious regard of men. 2. He will bless them in their home life. He "blesseth the habitation of the just." He will give them purity, love, honour, affection, peace, joy in their most intimate relations; so that their homes shall be blessed. He will be known as the "God of the families of Israel." 3. And He will give them exaltation in the end. "The wise shall inherit glory." "Unto the upright there will arise light in the dark-

ness." Present gloom shall give place to glory, either now on this side the grave, or hereafter in "that world of light."

II. THOSE WITH WHOM GOD IS DISPLEASED AND HIS AWFUL MALEDICTIONS ON THEM. These are also thrice characterized here; they are "the wicked," "the scorners," "fools." These are they who (1) in their folly reject the counsel of God; who (2) in their guilt yield themselves up to sin in its various forms; who (3) in their arrogance scoff at all sacred things—the "scorners;" this is the last and worst development of sin, the treatment of things holy and Divine with flippant irreverence. These God regards with Divine disapproval; them he strongly condemns and visits with fearful penalty. 1. His wrath is on themselves. He "scorneth the scorners." "He that sitteth in the heavens laughs" at them, he "has them in derision" (Ps. ii. 4). His feeling toward them and his power over them are such that they have reason to apprehend overthrow and ruin at any hour (see Ps. lxxiii. 19, 20). 2. His curse is on their house (ver. 33). They may expect that in their domestic relations they will have, as in fact they do have, saddest occasions of sorrow and remorse. 3. His hand is against their hope. They may be anticipating great things for themselves in the future, their castles are high and strong in the air, their hope is great; but "lo! sudden destruction," the wind of heaven blows, and all is brought into desolation. God touches their fine structure with his finger, and it is in ruins. "Shame is the promotion of fools."—C.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER IV.

Vers. 1—27.—7. *Seventh admonitory discourse.* We here enter upon the second group of admonitory discourses, as is indicated by the opening address, "my children," and which occurs again in ch. v. 7 and vii. 24. This group extends to the end of ch. vii. Its prevailing tone is that of warning rather than of positive exhortations, which have been the rule hitherto. The general aim of the discourse before us, as of those preceding, is to exalt Wisdom, to exhibit her as a subject worthy of all earnest endeavour and sacrifice, but it is noticeable that the teacher introduces a fresh feature into his teaching or mode of instruction, in order to procure attention to, and acceptance of, his precepts on the part of his hearers. He has already spoken in his own name and with his own authority; he has brought forward Wisdom personified as making her appeal; he now adduces the authority of his own father's advice to himself. But as the mode of emphasizing his admonitions varies, so Wisdom is many-sided, and the aspect under which she is now presented seems to be especially that of discipline and obedience. The key-note of the discourse seems to be struck in the word "instruction," *i.e.* discipline, in the original, *musar*, thus recalling the admonition in ch. i. 8, "My son, hear the instruction of thy father." Bohlius, in his 'Ethica Sacra,' disp. vi. p. 65, *sqq.*, assigns "discipline" (*musar*) to this chapter; and Melancthon describes the admonitions of the chapter before us as "adhortationes ad studium obedientiæ." Discipline rising into obedience seems to be the predominant thought to which all others are made subordinate. The discourse is an enlargement or amplification of this aspect of Wisdom. In structure the discourse consists mainly of the father's advice (vers. 4—19), preceded and followed by the teacher's own admonitions in vers. 1—3 and 20—27. The chief topics touched upon are (1) the supreme importance of Wisdom as being "the principal thing" to be obtained before everything else (vers. 7—9); (2) the two ways that lie open to the choice of youth, distinguished respectively as the way of light and the way of darkness (vers. 14—19); and (3) the guarding of the heart with all diligence, as being the seat of conscience and the fountain of life in its moral sense (vers. 23—27). The first part of the discourse is characterized by exhortations accompanied by promises; the latter part takes the form of warning, and warning of an alarming nature. The harmony which exists between the allusions in the discourse and the facts recorded in the historical books of Samuel and Chronicles serves to indicate that we have before us, in substance at least, the advice which David gave to

Solomon, and that the discourse is Solomonic. Compare especially ver. 3 with 1 Chron. xxviii. 5 and xxii. 9, and ver. 18 with the last words of David in 2 Sam. xxiii. 4.

Ver. 1.—**Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father.** This exhortation is identical with that in ch. i. 8, except that the address, "ye children," indicating a new departure, is now used instead of "my son," which has been hitherto employed (see ch. i. 8; ii. 1; iii. 1, 21), and "of thy father" is altered to "of a father." The verb is the same, occurring here, of course, in the plural number. The appeal is evidently intended to rouse attention. Attention is especially necessary to secure a knowledge of Divine truth. *Ye children* (*bhânim*). This address occurs again twice in the second group of admonitory discourses—in ch. v. 7 and vii. 24, and also in the appeal of Wisdom personified in ch. viii. 32, and, with these exceptions, nowhere else in the Proverbs. It is used by David, and it is possible that when the teacher penned these words he had in mind Ps. xxxiv. 11, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord." The similarity in the address serves to connect the teacher of wisdom with David, and thus to identify him with Solomon, while it also leads to the conclusion that the advice which follows in vers. 4—19 is in substance that which David had given his son. On "instruction," see ch. i. 8. *Of a father* (*âv*). It is difficult, owing to the want of the pronominal suffix, to determine accurately whether the teacher is referring to himself or to his own father in the expression. The following verse (2) would indicate that he is speaking of *himself* in his capacity as a teacher or instructor of youth. But it is quite possible that he may be referring to *his own father*, whose advice he had received, and which he is now about to lay before others in vers. 4—19. Though attention to paternal advice in general, *i.e.* instruction given by any father to his children, is not intended here, still the passage may be regarded as embodying the principle that attention to parental advice is incumbent on children, and a disregard of it is the mark of ingratitude and depravity. Rabbi Levi understands the phrase as referring to our heavenly Father. **Attend** (*hakshivu*, hiph. imperative of *kâshâv*). On the force of this verb as signifying "earnest, absorbed attention," see ch. i. 24. **To know understanding** (*lâdâ'ath bînâ*); *i.e.* in order that you may know or gain understanding. The infinitive marks the design or object of the attention (cf. the Vulgate, *ut sciatis*). The expression corresponds with *lâdâ'ath khokmah* in ch. i. 2, and just as this signifies "to appropriate to yourself wisdom," so the one before us has the same force, and signifies the gaining or appropriation of understanding, *i.e.* the faculty of discernment or discrimination. Hitzig renders, "to know with the understanding;" *i.e.* to know intelligently, but this does not seem to be the meaning of the phrase.

Ver. 2.—**For I give you good doctrine.** This, while stating the reason for the exhortation in the previous verse, signifies that what the teacher has given and is giving, he has received from his father. *I give; nâthâti*, literally, "I gave," is the kal perfect of *nâthân*, "to give," but the perfect is here used for the present, as denoting not only a past action, but one that is still continuing (Gesenius, 'Heb. Gram.,' § 126. 3). *Good doctrine* (*lĕkâkh tôv*). The doctrine or instruction is "good," not only intrinsically, but as to the source from which it was derived, and in its effects. *Lĕkâkh* is, according to its root *lâkâkh*, "something which is received or taken." From the standpoint of the teacher it is that instruction which he had received of his father. With respect to his hearers it is the instruction which is communicated to them, and which they receive (see on ch. i. 5). The LXX. renders, δῶρον ἀγαθὸν; similarly the Vulgate, *donum bonum*, "a good gift." **Forsake ye not**; *âl-tâ'ăzôvû*, from *âzâv*, "to leave, forsake" (compare the corresponding phrase, *âl-tiltôsh*, from *nâtâsh*, "to leave, forsake," in ch. i. 8). **Law** (*tôrâh*); as in ch. i. 8.

Ver. 3.—**For I was my father's son.** This is more than the mere statement of a physical fact. It indicates that the teacher was in the highest degree an object of endearment to his father, just as he states in the second hemistich that he held a unique position in the affection of his mother. The statement agrees with the historical record. Solomon would be more than ordinarily dear to his father, as being a child of promise, as "the beloved of the Lord," and as the son whom the Divine will had pointed as the successor to his throne, and the one on whom was to devolve the building of the temple (see 2 Sam. vii. 12, 13; xii. 24; 1 Chron. xxii. 9). Bertheau explains, "I also once stood in the relation to my (actual) father in which you stand to me your paternal instructor," thus giving prominence rather to the consecution of the passage, and preparing the way for the reception of the father's advice which is to follow. But this rather loses sight of what appears an important element in the instruction, that not only was it "good," but that it was dictated by affection. The writer is fortifying and strengthening his instruction by the authority of his father, showing that what he was laying before others he had had placed before him; and

as *his* father's advice was the outcome of affection, so he addresses his hearers in the same spirit. Dathe and others connect "tender" (*rāk*) with "son" (*bên*), and render, "I was a son dear to my father." So the LXX., which, however, understands "tender" in the sense of "tractable," "obedient:" "For I was an obedient son to my father"—a meaning which the word *rāk* can only bear as indicating the susceptibility of the young to receive impressions. In general, *rāk* means "tender," "soft," and has reference to the weakness and helplessness of the young; comp. Gen. xxxiii. 13, "My lord knoweth that the children are tender (*rakkîm*)." Combined with *yâkhîd*, which follows, it signifies, in the passage before us, that the teacher was an object of tender care or love. The Vulgate *tenellus*, the diminutive of *tener*, as signifying "somewhat tender or delicate," reproduces the idea of the Hebrew *rāk*. In the word the teacher recalls his early life and the instruction in wisdom which he received in it. **Only** beloved; literally, *only* (*yâkhîd*), as "beloved" does not occur in the original. The Vulgate renders, *unigenitus;* Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, *μονογενής*, *i.e.* "only begotten;" but this was not literally the fact, as Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon, had other sons (2 Sam. v. 14; 1 Chron. iii. 5). Both the Hebrew *yâkhîd*, "only," and the Vulgate *unigenitus*, "only begotten," consequently signify what is expressed by the LXX. *ἀγαπώμενος*, *i.e.* "beloved." Solomon was so beloved of his mother as if he were an only child. So *yâkhîd* is used of Isaac in Gen. xxii. 2, 12 in the same way, since at the time that Isaac was so designated, Ishmael, the other son of Abraham, was still living. The word *yâkhîd* occurs in Ps. xxii. 20, where it is rendered "darling," and may possibly refer to Solomon. Jennings, in Ps. xxii. 20, understands it, however, of the life besides which the psalmist has no other—*unicam meam*, as the Vulgate, *i.e.* "his only life" (cf. Ps. xxxv. 17; and for the word *yâkhîd*, see Jer. v. 26; Amos viii. 10; Zech. xii. 10). **In the sight of my mother** (*liph'ne immî*); literally, *ad facies matris meæ*, or, *before my mother;* Vulgate, *coram matre meâ*, i.e. in her estimation (cf. Gen. xvii. 18). The mention of the mother is probably introduced here for the sake of poetic parallelism; cf. ch. i. 8 (Zöckler).

Ver. 4.—From this verse to ver. 19 inclusive, the teacher quotes the instruction which he had received of his father. His object in doing so is to show that his own teaching was in harmony with it, and therefore worthy of attention. His precepts, admonitions, and warnings are not his only, but those of his father. Other examples of David's instructions to Solomon are found in 1 Kings ii. 2; 1 Chron. xxii. 12, 13; xxviii. 9. **And he taught**; *i.e.* his father, for *vâyyorênî* is masculine. The LXX. renders, "They said and taught me (*οἱ ἔλεγον καὶ ἐδίδασκόν με*)," as if the precepts which follow were the combined teaching of David and Bathsheba. This variation is due to the mention of both parents in the preceding verse. **Retain**; *yith'mōk*, kal future, used imperatively, of *thâmāk*, "to take hold of," and metaphorically, as here, "to hold fast" (see ch. iii. 18). The LXX. renders *ἐρεῖδέτω*, imperative of *ἐρείδω*, "to fix firm." Symmachus has *κατεχέτω*, "give heed to." **And live**; *i.e.* and thou shalt live, as the kal imperative, *kh'yêh*, from *khâyâh*, "to live," has here the force of the future (cf. Vulgate, *et vives*). The meaning is, "And thou shalt enjoy a long and happy life." Temporal life alone seems to be indicated, as in ver. 10 (cf. ch. iii. 2). The Syriac addition, "And my law as the apple of thine eye," is probably borrowed from ch. vii. 2, where we meet with the same admonition.

Ver. 5.—After the general exhortation given above, the father's instruction becomes more specific, and deals with the acquirement of wisdom. This subject seems to be continued in ver. 13, where the second and concluding branch of the instruction begins, which consists mainly of warning, as the first part does with exhortation. We are thus furnished with an example how to teach. In our teaching it is not sufficient simply to point out what is to be done, but we must show what is to be avoided. **Get wisdom, get understanding.** The father urges the acquirement of wisdom in the same way and with the same importunity as the trader or merchant presses his goods upon buyers. Wisdom and understanding are put forward as objects of merchandise; for the verb *kânâh*, from which the imperative *k'nêh*, signifies not only "to acquire for one's self," or "to possess," but especially "to buy." The verb occurs again in the same sense in ver. 7, "Get [*k'nêh*, i.e. buy] wisdom;" and in ch. xxiii. 23, "Buy (*k'nêh*) the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding" (cf. also ch. xv. 22; xvi. 16; xix. 9, where we also meet with the same verb). The reiteration of the word "get," as Umbreit remarks, is "an imitation of the exclamation of a merchant who is offering his wares." The importunity of the father measures the value he sets upon wisdom as an inestimable treasure, a pearl of great price (see ch. iii. 14). **Forget it not,** etc.; rather, *forget not, neither turn from the words of my mouth*,—so Zöckler, Delitzsch, Hodg., and others; Vulgate, *ne obliviscaris, neque declines à verbis oris mei.* There is no

need to supply "it" after the verb *al-tish'kakh*, "forget not," as Holden states, and as appears in the Authorized Version, since *shâkâkh* is found with *min* (מִן), "of" or "from," in Ps. xii. 4 (5). "I forgot to eat (*shâkâkh'ti méâkol*)," and the same construction may obtain here. The two verbs, "forget" and "decline from," are not so very wide in meaning, since the former, *shâkâkh*, is to "leave" something from forgetfulness, and the latter, *nâtâh*, rendered here "decline from," is "to turn away" from something. **The words of my mouth** represent as it were the means by which wisdom may be purchased.

Ver. 7.—**Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom.** The older versions, such as the Alexandrian LXX. (the verse is omitted by the Vatican LXX.), Targum, and Syriac, agree in rendering this verse, "The beginning of wisdom is get wisdom," which is equivalent to saying that the beginning of wisdom consists in the acquisition of wisdom, or, as Umbreit explains, "in the resolution to get wisdom." That this rendering, which is adopted by Luther, Delitzsch, and Umbreit, may be correct appears from ch. i. 7 and ix. 10, where we have the same construction, only in inverted order. Seneca's aphorism is conceived in much the same spirit: "Magna pars boni est velle fieri bonum"—"A large part of good is the wish to become good;" *i.e.* that the beginning of being good depends to a large extent upon the wish to become so. The objections to this rendering are: (1) That it is difficult to see how the beginning of wisdom can be the acquisition of it. (2) That elsewhere, as in ch. i. 7 and ix. 10, the beginning of wisdom is represented as the fear of the Lord. (3) That it does not fall in well with the context or with the aim of the father's teaching, which is to hold up wisdom as pre-eminently a blessing, as the most excellent and highest thing attainable. On the other hand, Hitzig, De Dieu, Doderlein, Zöckler, render as in the Authorized Version, "Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom;" *i.e.* wisdom is the highest good, and therefore ought to be obtained. The word *reshith* is found with this signification in ch. xxiv. 20; 1 Sam. ii. 29; Job xl. 19; Jer. xlix. 35; Amos vi. 1—6. **And with all thy getting get understanding.** This does not mean, as the Authorized Version seems to imply, that while you are acquiring other things, you are to acquire wisdom, but that wisdom is to be purchased with all you have acquired or gotten. "Getting" (*kin'yon*) is the purchase money. No price is too high to be paid for her, no sacrifice too great; cf. the parables of the hidden treasure and goodly pearl (Matt. xiii. 44; Luke x. 42), in both of which the man sold "all that he had" to obtain the prize. There is a play upon the words in the original (*kin'yân'ki k'nêh*), which is preserved in our translation.

Ver. 8.—**Exalt her, and she shall promote thee.** The father here proceeds to point out some of the benefits which follow from the pursuit of Wisdom. *Exalt her* (*sâl's'lêâh*); Vulgate, *arripe illam*; LXX., περιχαράκωσον αὐτήν; Targum, *diligo eam*; Syriac, *blandire illi*; Arabic, *circumsepi eam*. The Hebrew, *sâl's'lêâh*, is the pilpel imperative of *sâlâl*, "to lift up, exalt." It is equivalent to the kal form. The pilpel form only occurs here, but the kal participle is met with in ch. xv. 19, where it has the meaning of "to raise up as a causeway" (see marginal reading *in loc.*). Gesenius renders, "exalt her," *sc.* with praises. The meaning of the verb, as Delitzsch says, is to be determined by the corresponding "she shall promote thee" (*th'rôm'mêk*), and this verb *rômêm* is (1) to raise or make high; (2) to exalt by bestowing honours upon one of low estate, *i.e.* raising them in general estimation; it is so used in 1 Sam. ii. 7 by Hannah, in her song of thankfulness, "He (Jehovah) bringeth low and lifteth up (*m'rômêm*);" (3) to extol by praises, as in Ps. xxx. 2. The radical meaning of *sâlal* seems to be "to heap up," as a road is prepared by embankments, and by the filling up of inequalities (cf. Isa. lxii. 10). In this sense the passage before us is explained by Levi ben Gersom, "Prepare the way of Wisdom, and walk assiduously in it." But the context, wherein the idea of buying is evidently used, favours Böttcher's interpretation, "Hold it or her high in price, bid high for her as a purchaser who makes offer upon offer, to secure what he wants." So Pi, *in pretio habe*. The LXX. rendering, "Circumvallate her, enclose her with a wall or hedge," which is reproduced in the Arabic, *circumsepi eam*, "hedge her around," seems out of place with the context. The Talmudists understand the verb as signifying "to examine closely," "to scrutinize, meditate, or reflect" upon Wisdom constantly, just as the Roman poet says, "Nocturna versate manu, versate diurna"—"We exalt Wisdom when we follow her precepts," *i.e.* when we esteem her—the idea which is presented to us in the Targum and Syriac cited above. The sentiment of the verse agrees with what Jehovah says in the message of the man of God to Eli, in 1 Sam. ii. 30, "Them that honour me I will honour." **She shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her.** The LXX. reverses the order of ideas, "Honour her in order that she may embrace thee." *Embrace her*; i.e. in a loving and affectionate manner, as a husband does his wife, or a son his mother. (For the verb *khâvâk*, see ch. v. 20; Cant. ii. 6; viii. 3.) There are only three

other instances where this verb occurs in the pilel form, *khibbêk*. Esteem and honour, the confidence of others, elevation to offices of trust and consequence, are some of the rewards with which Wisdom repays those who esteem and love her. Others follow in the next verse.

Ver. 9.—**An ornament of grace** (*liv'yath khên*). (On this, see ch. i. 9.) **A crown of glory shall she deliver to thee**; or, as margin, *she shall compass thee with a crown of glory. Deliver.* The verb *miggên*, piel, since the kal, *mâgān*, is not used. is, however, properly, "to give, or deliver," as in Gen. xiv. 20; Hos. xi. 8. That this is the meaning is clear from the corresponding "she shall give" (*tittên*, but cf. *nâthān*, "to give"). It is commonly found with an accusative and dative, but here takes two accusatives. Both the LXX. and the Vulgate render, "With a crown of glory or delights shall she protect (*ὑπερασπίσῃ, proteget*) thee;" as if it were connected with *mâgên*, "a shield," but a crown is not usually associated with protection or defence. "A crown of glory," in the New Testament, is always associated with the everlasting honours of heaven, as in Heb. ii. 9; 2 Tim. iv. 8; 1 Pet. iv. 4; Rev. ii. 20. The meaning is here, "Wisdom shall confer on thee true dignity."

Ver. 10.—Many commentators, *e.g.* Jerome, Bede, Ewald, Bertheau, and Hitzig, suppose that the father's instruction closes in the preceding verse, but it seems more appropriate to consider the father as here passing to another branch of his instruction, which is to point out the way of wisdom, and so to prepare for his warnings which follow from ver. 14 to ver. 19. **Receive**; *kākh*, from *lâkāh*, "to receive" (on the force of this verb, see ch. i. 3). He who shows a delight or willingness in admitting the words of Wisdom—for such a character the father claims for his teaching, as we see from the next verse—shall receive a blessing. It is a sign of grace when any even show themselves open to listen to instruction; but it is a greater sign when this instruction is received with readiness and pleasure (Muffet). **The years of thy life** (*sh'nôth khâyyîm*); literally, *years of thy lives.* The plural "lives" expresses the idea of life in the abstract. There is no absolute statement of a *future* life here, though by the Christian this idea may be indulged in on the ground of a fuller revelation. The promise is one that not only implies the prolongation of life, but also a life of prosperity and enjoyment. **Shall be many**; literally, *shall be multiplied.*

Ver. 11.—The perfects, **I have taught** and **I have led**, in the original seem to have here the absolute signification of the past. The father recalls the instruction which he has given in times past. So Delitzsch. But Gejerus gives them the combined force of the past and future, "I have taught and I will more fully teach," and so with the other verb. The Vulgate renders, *monstrabo*, "I will show," and *ducam*, "I will lead." **In the way of wisdom** (*b'dērĕk khŏk'mâh*) may mean "in the way that leads *to*, or by which you come to Wisdom; I have taught you the manner in which Wisdom may be attained;" or "the way in which Wisdom walks" (Zöckler). The ways of Wisdom are described in ch. iii. 17 as "ways of pleasantness." The next clause seems to indicate that the latter explanation is to be preferred. The ב (*b'*) indicates the subject in which instruction has been given. **In right paths** (*b'mâ-g'lê yôshĕr*); literally, *in the paths of rectitude*; i.e. of straightness, paths of which the characteristic is uprightness. (On "paths," as signifying a carriage-way, see ch. ii. 9.) *Instruction* and *direction* have formed the two elements in the father's teaching. These present us with a model of education. "To teach *duty* without *truth* is to teach *practice* without *motive*; to teach *truth* without *duty* is to teach motive without the practice to which it should lead" (Wardlaw).

Ver. 12.—In this verse the father depicts the benefits and advantages which shall follow from "receiving his words" (ver. 10), *i.e.* from attending to his counsels and imbibing the principles of wisdom. The whole course of life shall be freed from obstacles or impediments, from anxiety, perplexity, or difficulty, or from vacillation. **When thou goest** may refer to the daily walk, to the common and ordinary events or circumstances incidental to life, just as the corresponding **when thou runnest** may refer to cases of emergency when promptness and decisive action are called for. In both cases Wisdom, by inspiring unity of principle, gives freedom of movement; in ordinary cases it removes embarrassment and perplexity arising from conflicting interests drawing now in one direction, now in another, and in extraordinary cases it supplies a rule of conduct which prevents our falling into mistakes and errors. Or the verse may refer to the prosperity which shall attend all the undertakings of those who are in Wisdom's ways, whether they advance slowly or rush forward with the impetuosity of youth, whether they act with deliberation or with haste. **Shall not be straitened** (*lō-yêtsār*); i.e. shall not be narrowed or confined; Vulgate, *non arctabuntur*; LXX., *οὐ συγκλεισθήσεται.* The future *yêtsar* only occurs four times in the Scriptures—here, and Job xviii. 7; xx. 22; Isa. xlix. 19. It is usually derived from the root *yâtsār*, which, however, is not found, cognate with *tsûr*, "to straiten," "to be narrow." *Yêtsār*, however, always occurs in the

passive sense, though an active signification is given it by the Rabbi Nathan ben Jechiel, quoted by Delitzsch, *in loc.*, who renders, "Thou shalt not need to bind together, or hedge up thy way." The roots *yâtsâr* and *tsûr* partake more or less of the idea of binding up, oppressing, putting into narrow and confined circumstances and limits. By the expression that "the steps are straitened" we may understand, therefore, that there is a want of freedom for their movements, and consequently that they are impeded or cramped. The Arabic expression, "to contract the feet," signifies the diminishing of good fortune. Compare the similar expression in Job xviii. 7, "The steps of his strength shall be straitened." The psalmist presents the idea of the verse under a different form, "Thou hast *enlarged* my steps under me, so that my feet did not slip" (Ps. xvii. 36). **Thou shalt not stumble**; *lô-thik-kâshêl*, hiph. future. The niph. *nikshâl*, equivalent to the kal *kâshâl*, signifies properly "to totter," "to sink down," used of one about to fall. The primary idea, however, usually disregarded, of *kâshâl*, is "to totter in the ankles," equivalent to the Latin *talipedare*. It occurs again in ch. iv. 16, and is a different verb from "stumble" in ch. iii. 23 (which see).

Ver. 13.—The short but urgent admonitions in this verse may be explained by the knowledge which the father has of the temptations to which youth is exposed and the liability of youth to fall into them, as well as by the fact that Instruction, or Wisdom, is the bestower of life. This latter conviction is the reason why he urges "taking fast hold" of Wisdom. The tenacious grasp with which the shipwrecked sinking sailor lays hold on any spar or plank floating near will illustrate the kind of grasp with which Wisdom is to be held. It is no less a virtue to keep and hold fast a good thing than to get it at the first beginning (Muffet). **Instruction** (*musar*), usually of a disciplinary nature (see ch. i. 3), here more particularly the instruction of the father, but in a wider sense wisdom generally, with which it is synonymous, as appears from the feminine, "let *her* not go, keep *her*," *musar* being masculine; or the feminines may refer back to "Wisdom" in ver. 11. So Mercerus and Buxtorf. **For she is thy life** (*ki-hi khâyyêkâ*); i.e. she brings life to thee. Wisdom is represented as the bestower of long life, in ch. iii. 2, 16, 18. Just in proportion as Wisdom is retained and guarded, so is life secured, and so far as the hold upon her is lost, so are the hopes of life diminished. Life depends upon the observance of her precepts.

Ver. 14.—From admonition the father passes to warning. The connection with the preceding section is obvious. There are two ways diametrically opposite—the way of wisdom and the way of evil; the one the way of life, the other fraught with death, because a way of darkness and violence. As the father has dealt with the former, so now he deals with the latter. With these warnings we may also comp. ch. i. 10—15 and ii. 10—15, where much the same warning is given, and the way of the wicked is described in almost the same terms. The warning of the father takes a threefold form: (1) enter not; (2) go not; (3) avoid. In effect he says this is the only course to be adopted in order to keep a firm hold of Wisdom which he has counselled in the preceding verse (13). **Enter not**; *âl-tâvô*, from *bô*, "to come in," "to enter," *i.e.* do not even enter. The Vulgate renders, "Delight not in," evidently from reading *tôvê*, which occurs in ch. i. 10. But our reading is to be preferred, as *âvâh*, "to acquiesce in," from which *tôv'ê*, is not used with בְּ, here denoting place, but with לְ. **Go not** (*âl-t'âshshêr*); *i.e.* do not walk in. The two verbs "to enter" (*bô*) and "to go" (*ishshêr*) stand in the relation of *entering* and *going on—ingressus* and *progressus*. So Gejerus and Delitzsch. The piel *îshshêr*, here used, is properly "to go straight on," like the kal, *âshâr*, of which it is an intensive (cf. ch. ix. 6). It is the bold, presumptuous walk, the stepping straight out of the evil, which is here indicated, and against this the father warns his son. The sense is, "If you have entered the way of the wicked, do not continue or persevere in it." The other meanings of the verb *âshâr*, viz. "to guide straight" (ch. xxiii. 19), "to esteem happy and prosperous" (ch. xxxi. 28), are not in place here, as they destroy the parallelism of thought, and on the same ground the LXX. and Syriac renderings, "envy not" and μηδὲ ζηλώσῃς, are to be rejected. **The wicked** (*ishaim*), *i.e.* the godless (cf. Ps. i. 1), is parallel with "evil men" (*râim*), *i.e.* the habitually wicked.

Ver. 15.—**Avoid it**; *p'râêhu*, the kal imperative of *pârâ*, properly, "to let go," hence "to reject, or abhor." (On the verb, see ch. i. 25, where it is rendered, "set at naught.") The same verb also occurs in ch. viii. 33; xiii. 18; xv. 32. *It;* i.e. the way. The suffix of the verb in the original is feminine, "avoid *her*;" *dêrêk*, "the way," being common. **Turn from it** (*s'têh mêâlâyv*). The original is a pregnant expression equivalent to "turn aside from it, so that you do not come to stand upon it." The word *mêâlâyv*, equivalent to the Latin *desuper ea*, has much the same force as the French *de dessus* and the Italian *di sopra* (Delitzsch). The verb *sâtâh* is, as in the Authorized Version, "to turn, or go aside." **Pass away**; *âvôr*, kal

imperative of *âvār*, "to pass over," equivalent to Latin *transire*, here means "to pass on, or along," "to go beyond," like the German *Ger weiter gehn*. The counsel of the father is not only "turn aside from," but "put the greatest possible distance between you and it." The injunction, so absolutely stated, to have nothing to do with sin, is required, if not indeed prompted, by the knowledge of the fact that youth, confident in its own power of resistance, frequently indulges in the fatal mistake of imagining that it can dally with sin with impunity. The only course compatible with safety is to entirely avoid it.

Ver. 16.—This verse exhibits the extreme depravity and debasement into which "the wicked" (*r'shaim*) and "the evil" (*râim*) of ver. 14 have fallen. Their sins are not sins of frailty, but arise from premeditation and from their insatiable desire to commit wickedness. Sin has become to them a kind of second nature, and, unless they indulge in it, sleep is banished from their eyes. **They sleep not**; *lo-yish'nu*, future of *yâshān*, "to fall asleep;" the future here being used for the present, as is frequently the case in the Proverbs, and denoting a permanent condition or habit. **Unless they cause some to fall**; *i.e.* "unless they have betrayed others into sin," taking the verb in an ethical sense (Zöckler), or, which is preferable, owing to ver. 16*a*, unless they have done them some injury (Mercerus); Vulgate, *nisi supplantaverint*. For the Khetib *yik'shûlû*, kal, which would mean "unless they have stumbled or fallen," the Keri substitutes the hiph. *yāk'shîhi*, "unless they have caused some to fall." The hiph. is found without any object, as here, in 2 Chron. xxv. 8). (On the verb *khâsāl*, from which it is derived, see ch. iv. 12.) With the statement of the verse we may compare David's complaint of the persistent persecution of his enemies (Ps. lix. 15), "If they be not satisfied, then will they stay all night" (margin). A similar construction to the one before us occurs in Virgil: "Et si non aliqua nocuisses, mortuus esses"—"And had you not, by some means or other done him an injury, you would have died" ('Eclog.,' iii. 15); cf. also Juvenal: "Ergo non aliter poterit dormire; quibusdam somnum rixa facit"—"Therefore, not otherwise, would he have slept; contention to some produces sleep." Hitzig rejects vers. 16 and 17 against all manuscript authority.

Ver. 17.—**For** (*ki*, equivalent to the Greek γάρ) is here explanatory. It serves not so much to introduce another independent statement, as one which accounts for the statement made in the preceding verse, that the wicked sleep not unless they have done mischief, *i.e.* it states the reason why they are so conditioned. There is no comparison expressed in the original, as the rendering adopted by Schultens and others implies, "For wickedness do they eat as bread, and violence do they drink as wine," which is evidently based on Job xv. 16, "Which drinketh up iniquity like water," and Job xxxiv. 7, "Who drinketh up scorning like water." The literal rendering is, *for they eat the bread of wickedness, and the wine of violence do they drink*. **The bread of wickedness** (*lĕkhĕm rēshā*) is not bread which consists in wickedness, but bread which is obtained by wickedness, just as **the wine of violence** (*yēyin khâmāsim*) is not the wine which produces violence, but the wine that is procured by violent deeds. Their support, what they eat and drink, is obtained by wickedness and injustice. They live by wrong. For such expressions as "the bread of wickedness" and "the wine of violence," cf. Deut. xvi. 3, "the bread of affliction;" Ps. cxxvii. 2, "the bread of sorrows;" and Amos ii. 8, "the wine of the condemned." There is a change of tense in the verbs, the first being perfect, "they have eaten," and the second future, "they shall drink," which Delitzsch explains as representing the twofold act—first eating the bread, and then washing it down with wine.

Ver. 18.—A contrast is drawn in this and the following verse between the path of the just and the way of the wicked. The former is, by an extremely beautiful image, likened to the light at dawn, which goes on increasing in brightness and intensity as the day advances, until at length it reaches its meridian splendour and glory. An exactly similar figure is found in David's last words (2 Sam. xxiii. 4). **The path of the just**; *i.e.* their moral course. **As the shining light** (*k'ôr nôgāh*); *i.e.* as the light of dawn. The word *nôgāh*, from *nāgāh*, "to shine," is a noun, and properly signifies "brightness," "shining," "splendour." It is used also to designate the dawn, the light of the sun when it first mounts the horizon, and sheds its beams over the landscape, as in Isa. lx. 3, "Kings (shall come) to the brightness (*nôgāh*) of thy rising;" and Isa. lxii. 1, "Until the righteousness thereof go forth as the brightness (*nôgāh*)" (cf. 2 Sam. xxiii. 4, where the same word also occurs). Michaelis and Schultens refer *nôgāh* to "the path," and render, "The path of the just is splendid as the light." So Dathe and others; and in this sense it was understood by the LXX., "The path of the just shall shine as the light shines." The Vulgate renders, *quasi lux splendens*. **That shineth more and more** (*hôlêk vâôr*); literally, *going and shining*—a common Hebrew idiom denoting progression or increase. The construction of the participle *hôlêk*, from *hâlāk*, "to go," with the

participle of another verb, is found in 1 Sam. xvii. 41, "The Philistine came nearer and nearer (*hôlêk v'hârêv*);" 1 Sam. ii. 26, "The child Samuel grew on more and more (*hôlêk v'hâdêl*)" (cf. 2 Chron. xvii. 12; Jonah i. 11). **Unto the perfect day** (*ăd-n'kôn hăyyôm*); Vulgate, *usque ad perfectam diem.* The Hebrew, *n'kôn hăyyôm*, corresponds to the Greek, ἡ σταθερὰ μεσημβρία, equivalent to "the high noon," when the sun seems *to stand still* in the heavens. The figure, as Fleischer remarks, is probably derived from the balance, the tongue of the balance of day, which before or after is inclined either to the right or the left, being at midday perfectly upright, and as it were firm. So *kûn*, the unused kal, from which *n'kôn*, the niph. participle, is derived, is "to stand upright," and in hiph. "to be set," "to stand firm," "to be established," and hence the expression might be rendered, "until the steady, or established day," which, however, refers to the midday, or noon, and not to that point when day succeeds dawn, as Rosenmüller and Schultens on Hos. vi. 3 maintain. The comparison is not extended beyond the midday, because the wish of the father was to indicate the full knowledge which the just attain in God, and which can know of no decline. A similar figure of gradual development is found in our Lord's parable of the seed growing secretly (Mark iv. 28), and is visible in Ps. lxxxiv. 7, "They grow from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." The verse illustrates the gradual growth and increase of the righteous in knowledge, holiness, and joy, all of which are inseparably connected in the career of such.

Ver. 19.—**The way of the wicked is as darkness.** In contrast with the path of the just is the way of the wicked, which is described as darkness itself; *i.e.* so deeply enveloped in gloom that the wicked are not able even to see the obstacles and impediments against which they stumble, and which are the cause of their ruin. It is a way dark throughout—a *viâ tenebrosa* (Vulgate)—terminating at length in "the blackness of darkness." As light is emblematical of knowledge, holiness, and joy, so darkness represents ignorance, unholiness, and misery (see Isa. viii. 22). *Darkness* (*ăphêlâh*); strictly, *thick darkness*, midnight gloom, the entire absence of light. It is the word used of the plague of "thick darkness" that settled over all the land of Egypt, even a darkness that "might be felt," when the Egyptians "saw not one another, nor any arose from his place for three days" (Exod. x. 21—23). It occurs again in ch. vii. 9, "in the black and *dark* night." In this darkness the wicked cannot help but stumble. Compare our Lord's teaching, "But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him" (John xi. 10; cf. xii. 36). The expression, **they know not at what they stumble**, carries with it the idea that they are so ignorant that they neither know wickedness as wickedness, nor do they apprehend the destruction which it involves. "Sins, however great and detestable they may be, are looked upon as trivial, or as not sins at all, when men get accustomed to them" (St. Augustine, 'Enchiridion,' cap. 80). On "stumble" (*kâshâl*), see ver. 12; and on the destruction of the wicked implied in the stumbling, see ch. i. 27, *seq.*; ii. 18—22; iii. 35.

Ver. 20.—The teacher here resumes his admonitions after thus citing the example of his father's teaching, and showing how it resembled the tenor of his own precepts, which, upon such a consideration, were most worthy of attention.

Ver. 21.—**Let them not depart from thine eyes**; *i.e.* keep them constantly in view as the guide of the whole conduct. These words are a repetition of ch. iii. 21, just as the latter part of the verse reproduces the thought of ch. ii. 1. *Depart.* The hiph. *yâllîzû* is here used instead of the kal *yâlûzû* of ch. iii. 21, but has the same force. **In the midst of thine heart**; *i.e.* in its inmost recesses; there the words and sayings are to be guarded as a man guards a treasure stowed away in the inmost chambers of a house. The expression implies cherishing them with an internal affection. The terms of the verse may be illustrated by Deut. vi. 6, 8, "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. . . . And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes."

Ver. 22.—**They are life**; *i.e.* they bring life (*khâyyîm;* the plural, as usual). **Unto those that find them**; *i.e.* to those who by effort get possession of and procure them; the verb *mâtsâ*, "to find," embodying the idea of activity. **Health**; *mâr'pê*, derived from the root *râphâ*, "to heal" (like *riph'ûth* of ch. iii. 8, which see), and hence rather "the means of health" than "health," "healing," or, as margin, "medicine," "that which restores to health;" LXX., ἴασις; Vulgate, *sanitas.* The moral condition is regarded as enfeebled by sickness, from which it may be restored to health and soundness by the words of wisdom. The effect of these, however, is not only to restore to health, but to maintain in health. Their tendency is to promote "a sound mind in a sound body." **To their flesh**; literally, *to his flesh;* the singular, *b'sârô*, being used instead of the plural, which we should have expected, because what is said applies to

each one of those who receive the precepts of wisdom. The all implies the completeness of the restoration; it is not confined to one part, but pervades the whole body.

Ver. 23.—**Keep thy heart with all diligence**; properly, *above all things that have to be guarded, keep or guard thy heart.* So Mercerus, Gesenius, Delitzsch, Zöckler. This seems to be the right meaning of the phrase, *mikkol-mish'mar*, rendered in the Authorized Version "with all diligence," *mish'mar*, from *shâmâr*, "to guard," being the object of guarding; that which is to be guarded. It is as if the teacher said, "Guard riches, property, health, body, everything, in short, in which you have a legitimate interest, or which is advantageous; but before and above everything else, keep a guard on your heart. The rabbins Jarchi, Ben Ezra, Rashi, however, give a different rendering, "From everything which is to be avoided (*ab omni re cavendâ*) guard thy heart;" but the objection to this is that it ignores the radical meaning of the verb *shâmâr*, from which *mish'mar* is derived, as stated above, which is not that of *avoiding*, but of *guarding*. A third rendering is, "Keep thy heart with all keeping;" so the Vulgate, *omni custodiâ serva cor tuum;* and the LXX., *πάσῃ φυλακῇ τήρει σὴν καρδίαν*; on which the Authorized Version seems to be based. Another rendering, similar to the first, except that it gives *mish'mar* the active signification of guarding instead of the passive one of being kept or guarded, is, "Keep thy heart more than any other keeping (*præ omni custodiâ*)." Origen, 'Hex.;' Field. Again, Aquila and Theodotion render, "Keep thy heart by reason of every commandment (*διὰ παντὸς φυλάγματος*)," thus bringing into prominence the occasion and the obligation of keeping the heart, which is that we are so commanded. *Heart* (*lev*); here the affections and the moral consciousness. **For out of it are the issues of life.** The conjunction "for" introduces the reason. The fact here stated is that the moral conduct of life, its actions and proceedings, are determined by the condition of the heart. If the heart is pure, the life will be pure; if the heart is corrupt, the life will be corrupt. The heart is here compared with a fountain. The same idea which is affixed to it in its physical sense is also assigned to it in its ethical or moral sense. Physically, it is the central organ of the body; morally, it is the seat of the affections and the centre of the moral consciousness. From this moral centre flow forth "the issues of life;" *i.e.* the currents of the moral life take their rise in and flow forth from it, just as from the heart, physically considered, the blood is propelled and flows forth into the arterial system, by which it is conveyed to the remotest extremities of the body. And as the bodily health depends on the healthy action of the heart, so the moral health depends on and is influenced by the state in which this spring of all action is preserved. *Issues; tôtsâôth*, from *yâtsâr*, "to go forth," are the place from which anything goes forth, and hence a fountain. For "the issues of life," the LXX. reads, *ἔξοδοι ζωῆς*, the Vulgate, *exitus vitæ*. With this passage compare our Lord's teaching (Matt. xv. 19; Mark vii. 21—23; Luke vi. 43—45).

Ver. 24.—The following admonitions of this chapter bear reference to the outward conduct of life. They continue the subject of ver. 23 by showing how the guarding of the heart is to be done. There is the most intimate connection between the heart as the fountain of the moral life and of the conduct of life, which, though determined by the condition of the heart, in its turn reacts upon the heart as the moral centre, and keeps it pure. Thus the subject is treated from its two sides. On vers. 24 and 25 Hitzig remarks that they "warn against an arbitrary perverting of the moral judgment into which evil passions so easily betray, and admonish not to give misdirection to thought within the department of morality." **A froward mouth, and perverse lips**; literally, *perverseness of mouth and waywardness of lips* (*ikk'shûth peh vulzuth s'phâthâyim*). "Perversity of mouth" is fraudulent, deceitful speech; that which twists, distorts, perverts, or misrepresents what is true, and hence falsehood (ch. iv. 24; vi. 12; xix. 1). The *σκολιὸν στόμα* of the LXX., *i.e.* the "tortuous mouth," in a metaphorical sense. The phrase is very similar in meaning with the parallel "waywardness of lips," which means speech which turns aside from what is true and right, the noun *lâzûth* being derived from *lâzâh*, or *lûz*, "to bend aside." The tongue is the unruly member (Jas. iii. 2). Speech is the index of the mind (Lapide). Vigilance over the heart is vigilance over the mouth, inasmuch as "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. xii. 34). The admonition may have a twofold application, and may mean either do not indulge in this kind of speech yourself, exercise an unremitting jealousy over every propensity to it; or have no dealings with those who are guilty of it, as in Ps. ci. 5.

Ver. 25.—**Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.** "To look *right on*" and "to look straight *before* one" is to fix the eyes steadily and unswervingly upon an object before them, not to allow the gaze to deflect either to the right hand or to the left. As a noun, the word *nôkâkh*, rendered "right

on," signifies what is straight in front of one; adverbially, it has the same meaning as that given in the Authorized Version. The corresponding "before" (*nĕgĕd*) is substantively the side of any object which is opposite one, and as a preposition is equivalent to "before," "in the presence of," like the Latin *coram*. The versions (LXX., Syriac, Targum) take *nôkâkh* in the sense of "right things:" "Let thine eyes look at right things;" contemplate them, aim at justice and equity. This meaning is given to the cognate adjective *nâkôâkh* in ch. viii. 9; xxiv. 26; Isa. xxvi. 10; xxx. 10; lix. 14; but in the Proverbs the word *nôkâkh* only occurs twice (here and ver. 21), either as an adverb, "right on," "straightforwardly," or as a preposition, "before." *Look straight.* Gesenius takes this verb *yâshâr* in hiph., "to make straight," as used elliptically: "Let thine eyelids *direct* a way before thee;" but the meaning is the same as "Let them look straight before thee." The Syriac, Gejerus, and Holden render, "Let thine eyelids direct thy way before thee;" *i.e.* do nothing rashly, but everything with premeditation; examine thy conduct, and see that it is right. The verb *yâshâr* has this meaning, "to direct," in ch. iii. 6; xi. 5, but it is here used intransitively (Mercerus). *Eyelids* (*âph'âppîm*); so called from their fluttering, rapid motion, here used by way of poetic parallelism with "eyes." What the command inculcates is simplicity of aim or principle, singleness of motive. The moral gaze is to be steadily fixed, because if it wanders indolently, lasciviously, aimlessly, it imperils the purity of the soul. This verse may be understood, as Zöckler, as containing a command levelled against dishonest practices. The man who intends to cheat his neighbour looks this way and that how he may deceive him. Such an interpretation may be maintained on the ground that the former verse is directed against falsehood in *speech;* this against falsehood in *action.* But the former view is preferable. If you wish to keep the heart, you must be guided by simplicity of aim; look not aside either to the one hand or to the other, lest you may be led astray by the seductions and temptations which imperil the onward and upward progress of the soul. The passage reminds us of the "single eye" (ἁπλοῦς), "simple," *i.e.* intent on heaven and God, of Matt. vi. 22.

Ver. 26.—**Ponder the path of thy feet;** properly, *make straight or level the path of thy feet.* The command carries on the idea of the previous verse. Simplicity of aim in the moral life is to be accompanied by attention to the moral conduct. The sense is, remove every obstacle which may impede or render insecure the way of moral life, and thus avoid every false step. The meaning "to ponder," *i.e.* "to weigh," seems to be given to the verb *pâllĕs*, piel of the unused *pâlâs* here used only in Ps. lviii. 3 and possibly in ch. v. 21. Its ordinary signification is "to make level, or even," as in Isa. xxvi. 7; xl. 12; and ch. v. 6. The LXX. keeps this in view in rendering, "Make straight paths for thy feet" (cf. Heb. xii. 13). The Authorized Version would mean, "Weigh your conduct as in a balance; before acting, consider the consequences and nature of the act." The second clause, **and let all thy ways be established,** is in effect only a repetition of the preceding thought, since it signifies, "See that thy conduct is correct; let all thy ways be definite and fixed." The marginal reading, "And all thy ways shall be ordered aright," gives the literal rendering to the tense; *yikkonu* being the future hiph. of *kûn*, "to be established," "to stand firm." This would express the *result* of giving heed to one's conduct.

Ver. 27.—This verse, with which the teacher closes this discourse, is very closely connected with ver. 26, which it more fully explains. The command is the parallel of ver. 25. As in ver. 25, the gaze is to be concentrated. So here the feet are not to deflect nor turn aside to byways. Nothing is to be permitted to draw one off from the right way, neither adversity, nor prosperity, nor anything which can possess the power of temptation (Bayne and Wardlaw). **Remove thy foot from evil.** A fuller expression than "depart from evil," of ch. iii. 7. Both the LXX. and the Vulgate add, "For the Lord knows the ways which are on thy right hand; but they are perverse which are on thy left. He shall make thy paths straight, and shall advance thy ways in peace."

## HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—4.—*A family heirloom.* I. DIVINE WISDOM IS THE BEST OF FAMILY HEIRLOOMS. Solomon transmits to his son the instruction which he has received from his father. Thus he aims at making it an old household treasure. He also hands down royal power, great possessions, national fame. But wisdom is to him an inheritance more precious than all other things. The rest may go rather than that the entail shall be cut off this most prized part of the family estate. It would be well if

fathers and sons had a similar opinion of the best of treasures. One labours to leave heavy legacies in his will; another aims at securing good posts for his sons; a third is proud of the unsullied family honour; but many forget that which alone secures true welfare here and eternal life hereafter. It is beautiful to see this heirloom of piety carefully guarded in the cottage of the poor; but it is more interesting to see those who might be drawn aside to lower pursuits—as, alas! Solomon was in his later days—setting the same treasure before their family as the most valuable of all possessions.

II. DIVINE WISDOM WILL NOT REMAIN AS A FAMILY HEIRLOOM WITHOUT SPECIAL CARE IN RETAINING AND TRANSMITTING IT. The estate descends from father to son by laws of inheritance or by testamentary directions. The bodily likeness, the mental characteristic, the genius, the defect, the disease, often come down through successive generations. But religion is not found in the blood; no law of inheritance will secure the succession to Divine wisdom; you cannot ensure that your son will be pious by any clause in your will. This family heirloom will pass out of the household unless it is most carefully guarded. Bad sons may follow good fathers. The religion of our parents is no guarantee of our own spiritual state, nor does our religion contain within it the promise and potency of our children's faith.

III. DIVINE WISDOM MAY BE TRANSMITTED AS A FAMILY HEIRLOOM THROUGH INSTRUCTION AND EXAMPLE. We cannot absolutely secure the inheritance because we have to deal with that most ungovernable of all elements, the free-will of souls. But failure is often to be attributed to defective instruction. Home culture has been neglected, while public ministry has been most assiduous; or there has been a harsh, unwise restraint which has provoked a rebound of licence. On the whole, we may hope that good, sound home training will not be in vain. This involves two elements. 1. *Instruction.* There must be positive, definite teaching. We must not rely on the general influence of a wholesome Christian atmosphere, on casual words and passing advice, etc. Wisdom involves knowledge; religion depends on faith; and faith follows "hearing." It is most important that the main elements of the Christian truth should be understood and remembered by children. It is not enough to tell them to love Christ. They must know him if they are to trust and follow him. 2. *Example.* Without this instruction is futile. Our deeds then give the lie to our words. Instruction is the light to show the way; example, the impulse to urge us to walk in it. Succession in genius is rare. The two Plinys, the two Pitts, the two Mills, are exceptional instances. But by right instruction and example we have much more reason to expect a succession in piety, because genius must be born in a man, but the wisdom of godliness is offered to all who will seek it.

Ver. 9.—*A coronation.* Wisdom is here represented as standing forth with garlands and crowns, rewarding her votary. The whole picture suggested to us by this brief verse may be taken as illustrative of the blessed experience of the people of God.

I. THE CROWNING AUTHORITY. It is ridiculous to offer a crown except with the right and power to make the coronation effective. It was held that no one could be an emperor in the "holy Roman empire" of the Middle Ages unless he had been crowned by the pope, as Charles the Great had been crowned. In our picture we have a greater than the highest ecclesiastic. The Wisdom of God, ideally personified, offers crowns and garlands with her own hands. It is really an act of God. God's wisdom is subsequently revealed in Christ who bestows the best blessings on his people. Coronation from such an authority must be effective.

II. THE SUBJECT CROWNED. He is the votary of Wisdom, and it is on account of his allegiance to his heavenly mistress that he receives his honour. Solomon seems to be referring directly to himself (ver. 3). If so, it is the more remarkable that the most magnificent king of Israel should set less value on his regal dignity than on his fidelity to Wisdom. Even Solomon is here crowned, not because he is David's son and sits on the throne of a great nation, but because he is a loyal servant of Wisdom. The same honour is open to all who follow the same course. Wisdom, Divine truth, the knowledge of God, the following of Christ,—these things are the true grounds for honour, not birth, rank, power, or wealth.

III. THE ACT OF CORONATION. Wisdom stands forth and crowns her votary. She does it spontaneously. The pursuit of Divine Wisdom brings honour. Here we see

that there is more than bare deliverance from ruin for the people of God. They are invited to receive honours from above. This happens in a measure upon earth in the elevation of character, the loftiness of the whole course of life, and perhaps even the worthy reputation of a true Christian. Yet we must remember that the coronation is not the world's admiration, but God's approval. This will be perfected in heaven when the saints who have borne the cross on earth will receive their crowns—only to cast them at the feet of the Lord through whose grace alone they have won them (Rev. iv. 10).

IV. THE NATURE OF THE CROWNS. There is a garland as well as a crown. 1. *A recognition of victory.* A simple wreath has little inherent worth. But it is a token of victory. It is nobler to wear a true conqueror's wreath than an idle monarch's diadem. The pursuit of Divine Wisdom leads to victory over sin and the world. 2. *A possession of wealth and honour.* After the victor's wreath comes the regal crown. Observe how it is constructed. (1) Gold of truth. (2) Precious stones of heavenly experience. Precious stones are symbolical of celestial structures (Rev. xxi. 18—21). The follower of Wisdom has the heavenly mind; he minds spiritual things. (3) Pearls of purity. True wisdom leads to holiness.

Ver. 12.—*A free course.* Religion is looked upon too much in the light of a restraint, and the Christian is often regarded by the world as hampered and shackled by irksome bonds. But the very opposite is suggested by the words of our text. We see the servant of Divine Wisdom running with freedom on his course, and at the same time carefully guarded from misadventure.

I. THE TRUTH OF GOD GIVES LIBERTY. Christ promised that the truth should make men free (John viii. 32). 1. *The liberty of knowledge.* Ignorance is a bondage, because the ignorant man does not know how to shape his course. He is like a traveller lost in the African bush. Physical knowledge gives a certain liberty of action. Knowledge of nature helps the man of science to act where the layman would be helpless. The engineer's knowledge of his machine enables him to work it. When we know the way of peace and safety we can freely and fearlessly run in it. 2. *The liberty of obedience.* The wisdom of the Proverbs is practical; it is intimately connected with the fear of God. It implies more than knowledge in its followers; it requires also submission and obedience. Now, when we are in rebellion against the Law and will of God, we are continually arrested by his opposing action. But when we delight to do his will, we are perfectly free. There is no liberty so great as that which comes from harmony between our wills and the will of God. We desire the very things that God commands; it must follow that we are free to seek them. Then of a certainty God will give us our heart's desire.

II. THE TRUTH OF GOD SECURES SAFETY. The follower of Divine Wisdom will not stumble. 1. *He will not run in the way of danger.* The narrow path is the safe path. There are gins and snares in the broad road. Though the way of life may be rugged, it is not like the flowery path of sin, in the beauty of which a deadly serpent hides. 2. *God will remove the greatest impediments out of his path.* He is in the King's highway. Even this road may lead over steep places and through difficult passes. But still, as it is maintained by its Lord, it cannot be left to fall into the state of an impassable road in a neglected country. God is with his people while they are treading the path of righteousness, and he will prepare their way for them. 3. *There will be light to see the difficulties of the way.* It is possible to stumble even on the high-road. Christian men have fallen. We need to be prepared to face the difficulties which will surely meet us even while we are pursuing the Christian course. Now, God's truth is a lamp to guide us over such difficulties (Ps. cxix. 105). With the light of heavenly wisdom we safely pass them. 4. *There will be help at hand.* Christ is with his people on their pilgrimage. Like Peter sinking in the waves, they may cry, "Lord, save me: I perish!" and they will be delivered. "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe" (Ps. cxix. 117).

Ver. 13.—*Holding fast.* I. THE NECESSITY OF HOLDING FAST. This is to be in regard to instruction in Divine wisdom. There are difficulties in keeping to the truth of God. 1. *The knowledge of it is an attainment.* It is not innate; it does not come

by inevitable experience; it is not received without conscious effort. What has been won may be lost. That which is not naturally a part of our being may be detached from us. 2. *The truth is spiritual.* Therefore it belongs to a different region from that of everyday experience in the world, and it is in danger of being thrust aside by the rude demands of material facts. The rush and roar of outward life drown the whispers of the "still, small voice." 3. *It is morally exacting.* God's instruction concerns our conduct, and that in a way not always agreeable to ourselves. It urges us with lofty mandates, it seeks to regulate our lives by great principles. But weakness shrinks and self-will rebels against such a yoke. Therefore unless we hold fast to the instruction, we shall soon lose it. Mere negligence is enough to imperil the choice possession. By simple indifference we may let slip the truth of God (Heb. ii. 1).

II. HOW WE MAY HOLD FAST. 1. *Attention must be directed.* As we have a certain command of our thoughts in the power of fixing attention on certain topics in preference to others, we can turn our minds towards Divine truth by a voluntary movement. External aids are here of use. The reading of the Bible is most helpful, not merely to obtain fresh truth, but to impress and revive the truth we already know. The ordinances of public worship are also designed with this end in view. The Christian preacher has not merely to instruct the ignorant and to lead those who know some truth to higher regions of revelation. A great part of his work consists in impressing upon men what they already know, and aiding them to hold it fast. None of these means of directing attention are sufficient without the addition of personal prayer and meditation. 2. *Truth must be realized in practice.* There is no better way of holding fast to instruction than by obeying it. The greatest truths are vague ideas till we commence to put them in practice. We hold best those truths which we follow most closely in life.

III. THE ADVANTAGE OF HOLDING FAST. It is our duty to hold the truth which God has revealed to us, and to attend to the commandments which he has sent us. But it is also for our own soul's profit. This is a matter of life and death. Divine truth is not a mere luxury for the leisured classes. It is a necessary of life. 1. *This truth is a guide from the way of ruin.* God speaks words of the utmost moment to warn us from continuing in the old course of sin, and to show us the way of salvation. 2. *It is an immediate source of life.* God gives his Spirit through his truth, and the Spirit of God is the quickening power of our souls. Thus God's truth is the soul's food. To lose it is to starve. To hold it fast is to secure eternal life. The words that Christ speaks to us are spirit and life (John vi. 63).

Vers. 14, 15.—*Bad company.* I. THE DUTY OF AVOIDING BAD COMPANY. We are all more or less unconsciously affected by the tone of the society we frequent. Even the strongest, most independent spirit cannot wholly fortify himself against this influence. As water wears the hardest rock, the constant friction of social intercourse makes itself felt in course of time upon the most resolute character. We are naturally gregarious. Without knowing it, nay, even while protesting against it, we are carried away with the current through which our course lies. Salmon swim up against the stream; but men prefer to float with the stream. Hence the great reason for choosing society of good character. It is most essential that young men just entering business in a great city should bear this in mind. The class of companions they choose will very largely affect the whole future course of their lives. Christians are called to come out from the world; but our Lord showed his wisdom, as much as his kindliness, in instituting the Church as a fellowship of his people. Thus he sought to use the social influences of mankind in favour of purity and truth as a set-off against the strong current of a corrupt worldly society. It is always dangerous to be cut off from these good influences. Emigrants and others who go to the colonies and to foreign countries should be on their guard against the peculiar dangers of their isolated situation. Many a young man has been ruined for life by going friendless to a distant country, and there falling a prey to the corruptions of bad company.

II. DIFFICULTIES IN THE APPLICATION OF THIS DUTY. The early Church, seeing idolatrous rites associated with almost every political and social engagement, withdrew very considerably from public life. The logical outcome of her conduct was monasticism. We have not her peculiar difficulties to contend with. Yet the mere thought

of avoiding bad company might lead us to a similar course unless we weighed well other considerations of duty. Thus there are Christians who eschew all connection with national affairs because they hold that politics are closely wrapped up with worldly and wicked practices. But if the worst is true, it is rather our duty to seek to mend matters. Since we must have government, we should see that this is of the best possible character. If all the good people forsake it, they hand the government of the nation over to the wicked, and thereby tacitly sanction bad government. So if they put a ban on all amusement, they indirectly degrade every kind of amusement, and increase the temptation of the great mass of people, who naturally seek some sort of recreation, and will have the bad if they do not get the good. We must remember also that our Lord was accused of keeping the worst of company, and that he did this deliberately for the good of those with whom he had intercourse. We are not to be Pharisees, proud separatists, but brothers of all men, who are our *fellow*-sinners. The important point is the motive with which men enter bad company. If this be to discharge some duty, or to benefit those who are visited, it is pure, and may be expected to ward off harm. If it be done carelessly and for selfish pleasure, there is danger in it.

Ver. 18.—"*The path of the just.*" I. A SHINING LIGHT. 1 *It has all the great leading characteristics* suggested by light, viz. truth, purity, joy, life. Perhaps the leading idea is that of holy gladness. This is to be enjoyed here on earth in those pleasant ways and paths of peace through which Wisdom leads her votaries. The Christian may be a martyr, but he need not be a victim of melancholy. 2. *It is open to the day.* They who do evil love the darkness that hides their deeds. "The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." Goodness fears no exposure. Cato had no fear of his neighbours looking into his garden. Daniel could afford to let his habits be public. 3. *It is bright with reflected Divine light.* Here is the source of the brightness like that of the dawn that reflects the sun's beams. Christ shines on the soul, and it brightens under his love as the dark hills and darker valleys take on the colours of life before the rising sun. 4. *It is always giving out light around it.* It is a shining light, a glistening light; not mere colour, but radiance. The true Christian is a light of the world; it is his duty to let his light shine to the glory of God.

II. A GROWING LIGHT. We must not stumble at that word "just," as though it removed the whole subject to lofty regions far beyond all possible attainments of ours. The just man in the Old Testament, like the saint in the New Testament, is not necessarily a person of fully ripened perfection, but one whose course and aim and tendency are towards righteousness. Such a man will begin with many imperfections. His course, however, will be one of growing brightness. Unless there is growth there must be death. The stagnant Christian is the dead Christian, soon to become the corrupt Christian. It is for our encouragement that we may expect growth if we employ the right means. There is growth in personal piety. Every victory over sin is so much new light gained. There is growth in grace. The richest stores of God's grace are in the future. There is ever "more to follow," and the best wine is reserved for the last. There is growth in knowledge. The light of truth is a growing light. What we know not now we shall know hereafter. "Now we see as in a mirror darkly, but then face to face." There is growth in joy and peace. The best fruits of Christian blessedness take time to ripen. The young Christian is disappointed at finding them green and acid. Time must mellow them. Now, this growth is gradual like the dawn, so that the Christian is carried on from stage to stage. But the rate is not uniform. With some there is a long twilight. With others the day hastens on with tropical speed. He who has most of Christ will find his dawn spread most rapidly.

III. A LIGHT THAT LEADS TO PERFECT DAY. All that we now see is but the dull, chill twilight. It may be a cheerful dawn, but it is not to be compared with the rich splendour of the noon. The Christian progress is not to cease till it reaches perfection. It is far from that as yet. With some of us but a few grey streaks have as yet broken out of the old sad night. But all Christians may have the same glad hope of the full and perfect day. Heaven will be the coincidence of ripened character with perfected blessedness. And this day has no afternoon. There are no lengthening shadows to sadden us with threats of the chill evening and the dread darkness, for "there is no night

there." A greater than Joshua arrests the sun at the meridian. Or rather there will be no need of the sun, because we shall be beyond this world of successive changes in the life eternal of that new Jerusalem, where it is ever day, because "the Lord God is the Light thereof."

Ver. 19.—*The way of darkness.* The way of sin is in all respects one of darkness. It is dark in its origin, dark in its course, and dark in its end.

I. THE WAY OF SIN STARTS FROM A DARK ORIGIN. 1. *Ignorance.* Most criminals are deplorably ignorant. Vicious men are generally men whose mental cultivation has been neglected by others or by themselves. Ignorance of Divine truth leads the way to wickedness. The first preventative of evil is the religious teaching of children. 2. *Inherited tendencies to evil.* These awful consequences of a parent's sin are a dark heritage which heavily handicaps the child from the first. 3. *Satanic influences.* Temptations are all dark in their origin. Evil suggestions come up from the pit of darkness. 4. *The lower nature.* When a man gives way to sin he sacrifices his higher to his lower self. He sinks from the sunlit mountain heights of purity to gloomy depths of baser living.

II. THE WAY OF SIN PURSUES A DARK COURSE. It is a road that runs through sombre passes, like some of those Welsh paths far in the heart of the mountains, on which the sun never shines. This is worse than the Valley of the Shadow of Death, for in the fearful path of sin there is no guiding hand and no protecting staff. The darkness of this course is exhaled from the evil committed upon it. 1. *Perverted conscience.* Sin distorts a man's thoughts, blinds his eyes to the highest truth, raises a mist about the old landmarks of right and wrong, and plunges the soul into a stupor of moral indifference. From neglecting to follow the light of God, the sinner comes at last to be incapable of beholding it. 2. *Spiritual desertion.* God's Spirit will not always strive with the sons of men (Gen. vi. 3). There comes a time when God leaves the self-abandoned soul to its own devices. Then, indeed, a darkness as of winter midnight sinks upon the lost being. 3. *Corrupt conduct.* Following the way of evil, the sinner continues to blacken it with the guilt of his own misdeeds. He plunges into the spiritual darkness of wicked living—the degradation, the loss of the joy and purity of heavenly light that sin always induces.

III. THE WAY OF SIN ISSUES IN A DARK END. The sinner cannot see his way upon it, and therefore he is sure to stumble. Bruised and confused, he may still persist in his sombre career. But he has no prospect of light beyond. There are no Beulah heights for him at the further end of the gloomy valley. His night of sin will be followed by no dawn of blessed light. He presses on only to deeper and yet deeper darkness. If he will not return there is nothing before him but the darkness of death. The one way of escape is backwards—to retrace his steps in humble penitence. Then, indeed, he may see the welcome light of his Father's home, and even earlier the Light of the world, the Saviour who has come out into the darkness to lead him back to God. For the sinner who persists in his evil course there can be no better prospect than that described by Byron in his poem on "Darkness"—

> "The world was void,
> The populous and the powerful was a lump,
> Seasonless, herbless, treeless, manless, lifeless—
> A lump of death—a chaos of hard clay.
> The rivers, lakes, and ocean all stood still,
> And nothing stirred within their silent depths;
> Ships sailorless lay rotting on the sea,
> And their masts fell down piecemeal: as they dropped
> They slept on the abyss without a surge—
> The waves were dead; the tides were in their grave,
> The moon, their mistress, had expired before;
> The winds were withered in the stagnant air,
> And the clouds perished; Darkness had no need
> Of aid from them—she was the Universe."

Ver. 23.—*On guard.* I. WHAT IS TO BE KEPT. The heart. In the Bible the

"heart" represents what we call the "head" as well as the affections and conscience to which we confine the word "heart;" *i.e.* it stands for the whole inner nature, the life of thought, feeling, and will. This is the "Town of Mansoul," and it has the various constituents of a town. 1. *Entrance gates.* The soul is always receiving thoughts and impulses from without. It is important to see that no adulterated article, no poison, no subject of infectious disease comes in. Debased, false, and immoral impressions must be warded off. 2. *Ways of exit.* The broad river bears on her bosom argosies from the busy city to many a distant port. Let us see that the cargo is of good wares, in good measure, honestly realizing professions, containing no injurious things. Some hearts export only sham products, some deadly poisons. Deeds, words, even smiles and glances carrying thought and influences out of the soul must be carefully guarded. 3. *Internal thoroughfares.* The town is a network of streets and passages. Busy thoughts run to and fro in the heart. Let the traffic be orderly, the road well preserved, lest pure thoughts should be smirched with the mire of an unwholesome mental habit. 4. *Storehouses.* Memory has her treasuries, warehouses, granaries. Let us see that they are not crowded with rubbish, left in disorder, made fever-nests by the corruption of any unhealthy contents. Nourishing truths and beautiful ideas should stock them. 5. *Factories.* In the heart we weave fine webs of fancy—see that the pattern has the beauty of holiness; there, too, we forge great engines for future work—see that they are constructed on safe and serviceable principles. 6. *Halls of amusement.* Let them be places of recreation, not of dissipation. 7. *Shrines for worship.* See that no idol takes the place of the true God, no hypocrisy does service for the incense of spiritual prayer and praise. 8. *Graveyards* of dead hopes and loves; keep them beautiful with flowers of tender memory. Are there also graves of dead sins? Plant weeping willows of penitence over them.

II. WHY IT IS TO BE KEPT. 1. For its *own sake.* The heart is the centre of the life; the soul is the true being, the self. To care for the health of the body while the soul is diseased and dying in sin is like sending for the builder to repair the house, but leaving the sick inmate to perish without attention. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul"—life, heart? 2. For its *fruits.* "Out of it are the issues of life." In proportion as the heart is vigorous or feeble, healthy or diseased, all the organs of the body work well or ill. Take care of the heart first, cultivate right principles, see that the affections are set on things above, and then the practice of the details of morals will follow almost as a matter of course. It is a mistake to put casuistry in the forefront of moral teaching. The result of doing so is to weaken conscience, to confuse the sense of right and wrong. Let the condition of the heart be the first concern; see that truth, justice, purity, charity, are enshrined there. Let the love of God and the love of man be well cultivated, and the spiritual directory will be greatly simplified. But it is not even enough to cultivate right principles. Deeper than these is the life. Below the particular actions come general principles; beneath these lie the character, the life, the heart of all. The fundamental requisite is not to do this or that deed, nor to cherish one or another principle, but to possess the life eternal in the heart, out of which pure blood will flow through main arteries of principles to the most remote and minute and intricate capillaries of conduct.

III. HOW IT IS TO BE KEPT. 1. *Pure.* Let us see that the heart above all things is cleansed from sin and kept holy. We cannot do this for ourselves. But we can go to the fountain that is opened for uncleanness, and there wash and be clean. The blood of Christ, which cleanses from all sin, not only removes guilt, but purges out the corruption and power of evil. By faith in Christ and the indwelling of the Divine Spirit that is a consequence of faith, the heart can be cleansed and preserved in purity. 2. *True.* The Christian is to be a servant of God. Let him be loyal—frank, too, and ingenuous and simple. 3. *Tender.* One has well said that we want "tough skins and tender hearts." There is much in the world to harden them. Let us seek to have them soft to receive Divine influences and to feel human compassions. The heart must be kept, not as a prisoner under hard restraint, nor like the jewels at the Tower, in useless seclusion; but like a garden, well weeded, but also sown with good seed and bearing fruit and flowers. Keep the heart thus by watchfulness, by self-control (the New Testament "temperance"), by prayer, above all by entrusting it to the keeping of

God. Feeling that "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," knowing how powerful are the temptations of the world, we may well despair of keeping the heart pure and safe. God meets us in our helplessness, and offers to keep it for us if we will put our trust and love in him. "My son, give me thy heart."

Vers. 25—27.—*Spiritual drilling.* The whole man must be drilled into form and disciplined into orderly action, just as the whole armour of God is necessary for the protection of the soldier of Christ. It is not enough for safety to wear a helmet while the breast is exposed, nor to bare the head while the legs are covered; and it is not enough for service that part of our nature is trained to obedience. We must seek to have all in right order.

I. THE HEART. This must be guarded most sedulously, and before all else. We cannot have our actions right in the sight of God while the heart is perverted. The attempt to secure this only ends in hypocrisy. The first duty of the soldier is loyalty. The first duty of the Christian is fidelity. Nevertheless, though the fountain must be pure if the stream is to be pure, its purity will not secure the water against subsequent defilement. It is not enough to think of the state of the heart, we must also consider the course of our actions. A pseudo-spirituality ends in indifference to morals, and even in positive immorality. St. Paul did not think his work done when he had laid the foundation of the Christian character. He sought the "edification," the "building up," of it by detailed and earnest instruction in Christian morals.

II. THE LIPS. The first and most ready expression of the state of the heart is in our conversation. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Now, it is important to remember that we are responsible for our words. For "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matt. xii. 36). Words are deeds. They carry influence and linger in memories and are transmitted from one to another long after the speaker has forgotten them.

III. THE EYES. The eye is one of the chief gateways of knowledge. According to the objects on which we fix it, the class of our knowledge will be determined. It is the guide in our actions. Now, it is requisite that the Christian have: 1. *A straight and "single" sight* (see Matt. vi. 22), looking only at the truth, with no stray glances at the innumerable deceptions of low self-interest. 2. *A long sight*, looking at the end of the race—the Celestial City, neither allured by the fascinations of Vanity Fair nor distracted by the horrors of the Valley of the Shadow of Death. 3. *An upward gaze* fixed on God and Christ rather than on worldly loss or gain.

IV. THE FEET. All the life leads on to the outgoings of activity. The ultimate question is—In what way are we going? Here the requisite is that the feet should go straight on. There are many ways of wrong, only one of right; hence the breadth of the former and the narrowness of the latter. We must especially avoid the error of falling into extremes. While shunning the track to the left let us see that we do not go off on that to the right. The path of duty is between these extremes. Yet the way to find it is not by seeking for a mean and so only accepting a compromise, but by aiming at the true and the right and pressing straight on to them irrespective of all conflicting influences.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—13.—*The tradition of piety.* The writer, here and in ch. v. 7 and vii. 24, addresses his audience as children, thinking of himself as a son, who had been the object of fatherly counsels and warnings in his youth. He would hand on the torch of wisdom, the tradition of piety, to the next generation.

I. PIETY SHOULD BE A FAMILY TRADITION. (Vers. 1—3.) Handed down from father to son and grandson, or from mother to daughter and grandchild, from Lois to Eunice, till it dwells in Timothy also (2 Tim. i. 5). Tradition in every form is, perhaps, the strongest governing power over the minds of men in every department of life.

II. EARLY INSTRUCTION WILL BE RETAINED, RECALLED, AND REPRODUCED. As the twig is bent, so is the tree inclined; or, as Horace says so beautifully, "The cask will long preserve the odour with which when fresh it was imbued" ('Ep.,' i. 2. 69).

Every higher effort of the intellect rests on memory. Our later life is for the most part the reproduction in other forms of the deep impressions of childhood.

III. THE CONTENTS OF THIS TRADITION ARE SIMPLE, YET PROFOUND. (Vers. 4—9.) They are summed up in "the one thing needful." In opposition to the cynical maxim, "Get money, honestly if you can, but by all means get money," or the refrain of "Property, property" (Tennyson's 'Northern Farmer'), the teacher rings the exhortation out, like an old chime, "Get wisdom, get understanding."

IV. THE STYLE OR FORM OF THE TRADITION. 1. It is *iterative*. It may even seem to modern ears monotonous. But this form is peculiarly part of the habit of the stationary East. Thought is not so much expansive, travelling from a centre to a wide periphery; it swings, like a pendulum, between two extremes. Generally, for all, the best life-wisdom must be these iterations, "Line upon line, precept upon precept" or *stare super antiquas vias*—a recurrence to well-worn paths. 2. It has *variety of expression* with unbroken unity of thought. (1) In reference to the *object of pursuit*. "Wisdom" is the leading word; but this is exchanged for "training" and "insight" (ver. 1); "doctrine" and "law" (ver. 2); "words" and "commandments" (ver. 4); the same word often recurs. (2) In reference to the *active effort of the mind* itself. This is presented as "hearing" and "attending" (ver. 1); "not forsaking" (ver. 2); "holding fast in the heart," and "guarding" (ver. 4); "getting" and "not turning from" (ver. 5); "not forsaking" and "loving" (ver. 6); "holding her high" and "embracing her" (ver. 8); "receiving words" and "adhering to instruction" (vers. 10, 13). (3) In reference to the *accompanying promise*. "Thou shalt live" (ver. 4); "She shall guard thee;" "protect thee" (ver. 6); "exalt thee;" "bring thee to honour" (ver. 8); "give to thy head a chaplet of delight;" "hold out to thee a splendid crown" (ver. 9); "many years of life" (ver. 10); "Thy steps shall not be hindered" (ver. 12); "Thou shalt not stumble" (ver. 12); "She is thy life" (ver. 13).

V. THE ADVANTAGES OF THIS METHOD OF TEACHING. 1. It is simple, intelligible to all. 2. Of universal adaptation. Easily remembered by the young, impossible to forget in age. 3. It admits of infinite illustration from experience. It is a sketch or outline, given to the pupil; he fills it in and colours it as life progresses.—J.

Vers. 14—19.—*The two paths.* I. LIFE UNDER THE IMAGE OF A PATH. It is a leading biblical image. There is much suggestion in it. 1. Life, like a path, has a *starting-point, a direction,* and *an end.* 2. We have a *choice of paths* before us. The high-road may image holy tradition and custom, the bypaths the choice of caprice or personal aberration. 3. It is only safe to follow *beaten tracks.* What we call "striking out an original course" *may be* conceited folly. "Gangin' our ain gait" is a dubious expression. 4. The selection of the path must be determined by *whither we desire to arrive.* 5. We are ever drawing near to *some end.* It alone can disclose the prudence or the folly of our choice.

II. THE PATH OF THE WICKED. (Vers. 14—17, 19.) 1. Religion *passionately* warns against it. The language of *iteration* is the very language of urgency and passion. What a force there is in the mere repetition of the cry, "Fire! fire! fire!" or in the warning of the mother to the little one against some dangerous object, "Don't go near it; keep away; go further off!" Just so does Divine Wisdom deal with us children of a larger growth. Again and again she clamours, "*Enter not; go not; shun it; pass not over; turn away; pass by!*" (vers. 14, 15). This throbbing earnestness, this emotion of the Bible, gives it its hold on man; and should be shared by every teacher. 2. Religion describes it in *powerful invective* (vers. 16, 17). (1) The *sleepless malice* of the wicked. A common figure for the intense activity of the mind. As David had a sleepless ambition to build a temple for Jehovah; as the trophies of Marathon suffered not the glory-loving Themistocles to sleep; as care, or glowing study, or eager planning, breaks our nightly rest;—so the evil have no repose from their dark cupidities and pernicious schemes. (2) They are *nourished by evil* (ver. 17). To "eat bread and drink wine" is a Hebrew metaphor for living (Amos ii. 8; vii. 12). In a similar way, the "bread of misery" and the "wine of punishment" are spoken of (Deut. xvi. 3; Ps. CXXVII. 2; Amos ii. 8). They live upon villainy, as we might say. It is the root of their being. It is horrible, but true, that a man may, as it were, draw life and energy

out of a perverted consciousness, as the drunkard cannot live without the alcohol which is killing him.

III. THE PATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS. (Ver. 18.) There is a change of figure; for the image of the path, the image of the advancing light of morning is substituted. 1. Light as an image of moral goodness. It is universal, suggests itself to and strikes the fancy of all. It associates with it the images of beauty, of joy, of expansion, of futurity, of infinity. 2. The *growth of light* from dawn to noon as an image of moral progress. This is true of *knowledge* and of *practice*. The good man travels out of dimmer perceptions and out of doubts, into clear convictions of reason. At first he realizes little; his will is weak and untrained. But keeping his eyes upon the ideal of the good, true, and beautiful, he embodies more and more of it in conduct. As the sun rests not (to speak and think in the dialect of poetry) till it "stands" (see the Hebrew) in high noon, so the righteous is ever advancing towards the goal of a life in perfect unity with God. 3. The safety of the light is an image of the course of the righteous. Translated into distinctively Christian thought, this is *following Christ* (John xi. 9, 10). 4. The image serves to throw into contrast the course of the wicked. "Thick darkness" represents their mind and way. It is ignorant, full of peril, yet they are unconscious of it. Instead of *growth* and progress, their doom is *sudden extinction* (comp. ch. i. 27, *sqq.*; ii. 18, 22; iii. 35).—J.

Vers. 20—22.—*Self-preservation.* The instinct of self-preservation is the very root of all our activity. "Every individual existence strives to remain what it is," and would defend its integrity from all attack.

I. THE INSTINCT IS RECOGNIZED. As it must be by all genuine teachers. It is a fact, and cannot be properly ignored; a Divine fact, and ought not to be obscured. It includes (1) the desire to live, the sense of life's sweetness; (2) the desire for health and happiness.

II. THE INSTINCT IS DIRECTED. It needs direction; for all instinct is in itself blind, and men, in seeking health and happiness, ignorantly and viciously purchase disease and death.

III. THERE IS NO SECRET OF SELF-PRESERVATION BUT (IN THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE SENSE) GODLINESS. This teaches the renunciation of the immediate for the further and lasting good. A paradox is here involved, a seeming contradiction containing a unity. To lose life is to gain it; to gain it, to lose it. For in true conduct there is ever a denial of the lower contained in the affirmation of the higher, and in evil conduct *vice versâ* (compare on this section, ch. iii. 2, 8, 13, 16; iv. 13).—J.

Vers. 23—27.—*The heart and its issues.* I. LIFE CENTRED IN THE HEART. (Ver. 23.) *Physically*, we know this is so. It is a self-acting pump, a fountain of vital force. All the physical activities are derived from it. *Spiritually*, it is so. The connection of the heart with *emotion* is recognized in all languages. It is feeling in the widest sense that makes us what we are.

II. THE HEART MUST BE, THEREFORE, THE PECULIAR OBJECT OF OUR SOLICITUDE. (Ver. 23.) The *sentiments*, to put it in another form, are the important elements in character. These lie so close to *opinion*, that we commonly say either "I feel" or "I think" in expressing our opinions. To instil right *sentiments* about the important points of behaviour, the relation of the sexes, business, honour, truth, loyalty, is the great work of moral education, and here lies its immense value as distinguished from the gymnastic of the intellect.

III. THE EXTERNAL ORGANS MUST AT THE SAME TIME BE DISCIPLINED. (Vers. 24—27.) Education must not be one-sided. The heart supplies the organs and channels of activity; but these again react upon the heart. The impulses of feeling are in themselves formless; it is the definite organs which give to them peculiar shape and determination. Hence the organs themselves must be trained to receive true impressions and to give them back. 1. *The mouth—the lips.* They are to be corrected of every "crooked," false *expression*. What wonderful variety of expression is the mouth capable of—firmness, laxity, tenderness, scorn, love, irony, hate! In controlling the mouth we do something to control the heart. Its *contents* must be purified from falsehood, coarseness, foolish jesting, malicious gossip, all of which tell upon the central

consciousness, and disturb and obscure it. 2. *The eyes.* (Ver. 25.) They are to be trained to a *direct* and *straightforward* expression. The leer of lust, the oblique glance of cunning expressed on the faces of others, or the clear honest light beaming from the eyes of the pure and open-hearted, not only mirror the heart, but remind how the heart may be reached by the self-discipline of the eye. 3. *The feet.* (Ver. 26.) In like manner, they are to be trained to a straightforward walk. Even in moments of relaxation 'tis well to have an object for a walk. The mind needs self-direction and discipline even in its pleasures; otherwise it becomes dissolute, and waywardly falls into evil through sheer laxity in the spring of will. (1) Action and reaction, between the inward and the outward world, expression and impression, constitute a great law of our spiritual activity. (2) Hence self-discipline and moral education should be founded on the recognition of it. We must work from the centre to the periphery, and back again from every point of the periphery to the centre of life.—J.

Vers. 1—13.—*The solicitude of the wise father: a sermon to parents and children.* In these verses we have a peep into the royal house at Jerusalem while David was on the throne. And we have such a glimpse as we should expect to gain. We see the devout man extremely solicitous that his son should walk in the ways of Divine and heavenly wisdom. David, like the rest of human parents, and more than most of them, was under—

I. A STRONG TEMPTATION TO MAKE A FALSE ESTIMATE. So near to us is this present passing world, so powerfully do its interests appeal to us, so strong is the hold which it gains over our senses and our imagination, that we are apt to over-estimate altogether its claims and its worth. And this in proportion to the height of the dignity, the measure of the power, the extent of the fortune, to which we have attained. David, as a man subject to all human passions, would be particularly tempted to weigh the worldly advantages of his favourite son, and estimate them very carefully and very highly. He would be in danger of considering—not exclusively, but excessively—what would be the extent of his kingly rule, what the revenue he would be able to collect, what the influence he would wield over neighbouring powers, what the authority he would exercise over his own people, etc. And in the thick throng of these mundane considerations there would be no small risk of other and higher things being lost sight of. So with other if not with all parents. There is a constant danger of worldly anxieties about our children absorbing, or at any rate obscuring, the deeper and worthier solicitudes. But in the case of the devout monarch of Israel there was, as there should be with us all—

II. A WISE DISCERNMENT. David was profoundly convinced that "wisdom is the principal thing" (ver. 7), that everything is of inferior value to that. He saw clearly and felt strongly that he must induce his son Solomon to walk in the fear of the Lord, or even *his* brilliant prospects would come to nothing. For he knew: 1. That the fear of God was the living principle most likely to lead to temporal prosperity: he had proved that in the elevation of his own "house" and the rejection of that of Saul. 2. That no possible successes of an earthly kind would compensate for the loss of character: his own hour of disastrous folly had shown him that (2 Sam. xi. 27). 3. That no circumstantial misfortunes could fatally injure a man who was right at heart with God: his own experience had illustrated that truth (Ps. xli. 12). We shall be wise if we come to the same conclusions. Like David, we shall see that the outward and the visible, though they may be far more attractive and voiceful, are yet of far inferior account to the inward and the spiritual. We shall care immeasurably more for our children that they shall be wise in soul than prosperous in estate, "all glorious within" than magnificent without; we shall be far more solicitous to see them "getting wisdom" (ver. 5) than "making money," "retaining the words" of truth (ver. 4) than gaining or keeping possession of lands and houses.

III. THE WAY OF WISDOM TOWARD THE YOUNG. If we, as parents, would walk wisely, so that we may attain our heart's desire concerning the children of our love and of our charge, we shall act as David did—we shall *commend the truth* God has taught us (1) with all affectionateness of manner (ver. 3); (2) with all earnestness of spirit (vers. 4, 10, 11); (3) with all fulness of exposition. There is a strain of parental tenderness of tone and energy of manner, as well as great fulness of utterance here. The same

thought is presented, is repeated, is pressed on the reason and the conscience. David evidently yearned, strove, persisted with patient and resolute zeal, that he might convince and inspire his son with the sacred truths he held so dear. He represented heavenly wisdom, the truth of God, as (1) the thing of surpassing intrinsic excellency (ver. 7); (2) a thing to be pursued in preference to other fascinations (vers. 5—7); (3) a thing to be cherished and held to the heart (ver. 6); (4) a thing to be highly honoured before men (ver. 8); (5) a thing to be retained at all costs (ver. 13); (6) a friend that would repay all attentions—that would guard and shield from evil (vers. 6, 12), that would lead to honour and esteem (vers. 8, 9), that would prolong life (ver. 10), that would lead in that way which is *the* path of life itself (ver. 13).

1. To *parents*, the lesson of the text is (1) discern the one supremely precious thing to be commended to the heart of youth; and (2) commend it graciously, earnestly, fully. 2. To *sons and daughters*, it is (1) remember all the sacred solicitude that has been expended on you; and (2) fulfil the desire of your parents' hearts. "My son, know the God of your father" (see ver. 1); this is "good doctrine" (ver. 2); it is "your life" (ver. 13).—C.

Vers. 14—17, 19.—*The prudence of piety.* We may say concerning piety or virtue —the wisdom which is from God includes both—that the *essence of it* is in right feeling, in loving him who is the Holy One and that which is the right and admirable thing, and in hating that which is evil and base; that the *proof of it* is in right acting—in doing those things and those only which are good and honourable, which God's Word and our own conscience approve; and that the *prudence of it* is in these two things which are implied in our text.

I. CHERISHING A WHOLESOME HORROR OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN. There is an insensibility and an ignorance which passes for courage, and gets a credit which is not its due. Those who do not take the trouble to know what the issues of any line of conduct are, and who go fearlessly forward, are not brave; they are only blind. We ought to know all we can learn of the consequences of our behaviour, of the end in which the path we are treading terminates. The prudent man will see and shrink from the consequences of evil; and if he open his eyes or consult those who can tell him, he will find that they are simply disastrous. 1. For sin is mischievous in its spirit; it gloats over the ruin which it works; it finds a horrible delight in doing harm to human souls (vers. 16, 17). 2. And it succeeds in its shameful design. It *does* "mischief;" it makes men "to fall." It causes spiritual decline, decay, corruption—the worst of all mischief; it leads purity, sobriety, honesty, truthfulness, reverence, love, to fall down into the ruinous depths of lasciviousness, intemperance, dishonesty, falsehood, profanity, hard-heartedness. 3. It leads down to a darkness and a death of which it did not dream (ver. 19). It sinks into that awful soul-blindness in which the "eye is evil," in which the very "light is darkness" (Matt. vi. 23), in which the moral judgment, all perverted, leads astray. "The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble." Their powers of moral distinction are gone; they are "altogether gone astray." Piety, virtue, may well in godly prudence shrink with wholesome horror from this.

II. CAREFUL AVOIDANCE OF THE WAY OF THE WICKED, and so of the path of temptation. 1. True it is that we must be often found in perilous places at the call of daily *duty*. 2. True that at the invitation of *mercy* we shall sometimes be found there. 3. But it is also true that the wise will not needlessly expose themselves to the assaults of sin. They will refrain from so doing both because (1) we are not sure of the measure of our own strength; there may be some very weak places in our armour, ill-fortified parts in our character; most men are weaker than they know, *somewhere*. And also because (2) we do not know the full strength of temptation. Full often sin proves to have an unimagined force, an unsuspected skill. The full strength of the allurements and enticements of evil perhaps no man knows. The number of the slain that lie on the spiritual battle-field tells with a mournful eloquence that thousands of the children of men have over-estimated their own resisting power, or underestimated the insidiousness, or the fascination, or the force of the foe. Therefore, if duty does not demand it, nor mercy plead for it, *shun* the dangerous path, "enter not into the way of it . . . avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away" (vers. 14, 15).

Let it be considered that this is a Divine injunction; therefore let there be no hesitation about obeying. There is nothing unmanly or ignoble in prudence. It is not a virtue to be anywise ashamed of. There is ample scope for the utmost heroism of spirit and of life without exposing our young hearts to evils the very nature of which we may not know, the force of which we cannot measure, and from the consequences of which we might never be able to escape.—C.

Vers. 18, 19.—*Darkness and light.* We have two perfect contrasts in these two verses—the path of the just and the way of the wicked; the one is very closely connected with light and the other with darkness.

I. SIN AND DARKNESS. (Ver. 19.) We may say that: 1. Sin *is* darkness. It is (1) the ignorance of the mind; it is (2) the error of the heart—it is the soul's supreme mistake, misreading, misunderstanding every one and everything from the highest to the lowest. 2. Sin spreads darkness (1) over the soul of the sinner himself, blinding his eyes, distorting his vision, confusing his perceptions; (2) over the souls of others, leading them into the darkness of folly, superstition, wrong-doing. 3. Sin leads to the ruin which attends darkness; it ends in making the sinner blind to the true character of his own transgressions: "They know not at what they stumble;" blind, also, to the final issue of his guilt: they know not *into* what they stumble—into what a "blackness of darkness."

II. WISDOM AND LIGHT. (Ver. 18.) By "the just" in this verse we understand not particularly the man who is equitable in his dealings with his fellows, but the good and wise man—the man who, in the fear of God, seeks to act with rectitude in all his relations. This man is closely associated with the light. 1. Knowledge is light, and heavenly wisdom is the truest and best knowledge—that of God, and of the human soul, and of the path of eternal life. 2. That which reveals is light, and heavenly wisdom is the best and most beneficent revealing power. The wise, the "just" man is "making manifest" (see Eph. v. 13) the highest, the most far-reaching, deep-descending truths. He does this (1) by his direct endeavour to instruct; (2) unconsciously, by the influence of his life. "The life is the light of men" in our case as in his who was "the Life made manifest." 3. The light of the just man grows ever stronger and more illuminating: it "shineth more and more unto the perfect day." With added opportunities of inquiry and acquisition, with multiplied privileges, with more of Divine discipline, with increase of power resulting from the exercise of spiritual faculty, there is (1) growing light within, burning more steadily and lustrously; and (2) advancing influence for good which flows forth in wider, deeper, and larger streams.—C.

Vers. 20—27.—*The course of wisdom.* In these verses we may trace the course of wisdom from the beginning to its full development. We have—

I. ITS BEGINNING IN THE SOUL. (Ver. 20.) It commences in *attention.* When a man "inclines his ear unto the sayings of Wisdom," when he eagerly listens to what God says to him, when he is a disciple sitting at the feet of the great Teacher, he has taken an important step in the heavenward course. The "grace of God" is upon him (Acts xiii. 43).

II. ITS ESTABLISHMENT IN THE SOUL. (Ver. 21, latter clause.) When the counsels of the Wise One are once fairly and fully welcomed to the soul, so that they may be said to be "in the midst of thine heart," then it may be said that the decisive point is turned. When there is the "cherishing of a cordial attachment;" when we say, "How love I thy Law!" when our heart is given to the truth of God because given to him, the gracious Lord of truth;—then wisdom is established within our soul.

III. THE NEED FOR HOLY VIGILANCE CONCERNING ITS MAINTENANCE. (Ver. 23; see homily *infra.* Ver. 26, first clause.)

IV. ONE OF ITS MANIFESTATIONS. (Ver. 24.) It will show itself in clean lips; it will put far away the froward and perverse mouth. Its utterances will be pure, temperate, reverent. The child of folly is detected by his foolish, vain, culpable expressions. His "speech bewrayeth him." "By his words he is condemned." The son of wisdom is known by his blamelessness in this particular; by *his* words he is justified (Matt. xii. 36, 37; Eph. iv. 29; Jas. i. 26).

V. RESOLUTENESS IN THE RIGHT PATH. (Ver. 27.) There must be no "turning again to folly" (Ps. lxxxv. 8); no turning to the right or left into either main highways of vice and open sin, or any byways of error and ill-doing. Even the pleasant path that seems to skirt the King's highway so closely that at any time we may return thereto, is a danger to be avoided. The road that leads off from that highway of holiness by ever so small an angle is a road that finds its way at last to a "City of Destruction." The best preservative from the perilous wandering is here indicated; it is—

VI. STEADFAST GAZE UPON THE GOAL. (Ver. 25.) Look right on to the goal in front; be so intent on reaching that, and on attaining to the prize which awaits the winner, that there will be no temptation to depart from the straight course. We keep a straighter path by fixing our eye on the object toward which we walk than by watching the steps we take; how much more so than by looking about us on every hand! Our heavenly wisdom is to be looking "right on," "straight before us," unto Jesus, the Leader and Perfecter of the faith (Heb. xii. 2).

VII. ITS ISSUE. It issues in life and health (vers. 22, 23). Long life was promised to the wise and holy under the old dispensation; now we look confidently forward, as the issue of heavenly wisdom, to (1) a blessed life below, of spiritual wholeness, and (2) everlasting life beyond, where the inhabitants are never sick (Isa. xxxiii. 24).—C.

Ver. 23.—*Man's chief treasure.* "Keep thy heart above all keeping" (marginal reading). Evidently there is a precious treasure which, as the disciples of Wisdom, we are charged to keep. We ask—

I. WHAT ARE THE CHIEF TREASURES WE HAVE IN CHARGE? These are threefold. 1. That which belongs to us, but which is entirely without us—our money, our houses, our lands, our shares, our ships, our precious documents, our "valuables." 2. That which is more closely related to us, but is still outside ourselves—our bodily frame, the tabernacle of our spirit, and, with this, our physical health and strength; the clear eye, the healthy brain, the strong nerve. 3. Our own very selves—that spiritual nature in virtue of which we are said to be "created in the image of God" (Gen. i. 27). These are the treasures we may "keep."

II. WHICH IS THE ONE OF SUPREME VALUE, AND WHY? "Keep *thy heart* above all keeping." That which is nearest ourselves must be of more value to us than that which is further from us. To keep our temporal estate is to preserve that which is precious, but which is not ourselves. To maintain our health is most desirable, but our body is only our temporary home and organ; it is something we can lose and yet ourselves be. But our heart, that is our own very self. God made us, not *to have*, but *to be*, living souls: that in us, that of us which thinks, loves, hopes, worships, rejoices in the spiritual and the Divine, that is *ourself*, and to keep that must be the supreme duty; that is to be kept beyond all keeping. But the wise man says there is a special reason why we should keep our heart beyond all keeping; he says, "for out of it are the issues of life." In other words, a well-guarded heart is the spring and source of all that is best in human life. 1. The holy thoughts and pure feelings and kind purposes which flow therefrom are, in themselves, a large part and the very best part of human life. 2. A well-guarded heart will prove the source of a well-regulated life—of a life of honesty, virtue, peaceableness, sobriety; and these will ensure prosperity, esteem, joy. 3. A well-regulated heart will conduct to the life immortal in the heavenly land: this is the most blessed "issue" of all. With whatsoever anxiety, vigilance, diligence, we guard our temporal interests, or even our health and our mortal life, with far greater anxiety, far more eager vigilance, far more unremitting diligence, should we guard our heart—its purity, its tenderness, its devotion.

III. WHAT ARE OUR FORCES OF DEFENCE? Wherewith shall we keep these hearts of ours? What are the forces at our command? They are these. 1. The power of introspection. We can interrogate and examine our own souls, and see how we stand, what need there is for penitence and for renewal. 2. The power of self-regulation. We can acquire healthful habits, pass regulative resolutions which will (1) keep us away from temptation, and (2) take us where our souls will be nourished and strengthened in things Divine. 3. The power of the Divine Spirit. We can ask and gain the "might [which comes from] his Spirit in the inner man."—C.

## CHAPTER V.

Vers. 1—23.—S. *Eighth admonitory discourse. Warning against adultery, and commendation of marriage.* The teacher, in this discourse, recurs to a subject which he has glanced at before in ch. ii. 15—19, and which he again treats of in the latter part of the sixth and in the whole of the seventh chapters. This constant recurrence to the same subject, repulsive on account of its associations, shows, however, the importance which it had in the teacher's estimation as a ground of warning, and that he ranked it among the foremost of the temptations and sins which called the young off from the pursuit of Wisdom, and so led them astray from "the fear of the Lord." The vividness with which the ruin, bodily and moral, ensuing with absolute certainty on a life of vice, is described is a sufficient proof in itself that the subject before us is not brought forward from or for voluptuous motives, but for the purpose of conveying an impressive warning. Some commentators, *e.g.* Delitzsch, include the first six verses in the previous discourse; but the unity of the subject requires a different treatment. Zöckler's reason against this arrangement, on the ground that the previous discourse was addressed to "tender youth," and thus to youth in a state of pupilage, while the one before us refers to more advanced age —to the married man—may be true, but is not the true ground for incorporating them in the present discourse. The unity of the subject requires that they should be taken with the central and didactic part of the discourse, as being in a sense introductory to it. The discourse divides itself into three sections. (1) The earnest appeal to attention because of the counter-attraction in the blandishments of the harlot, which, however, in the end, are bitter as wormwood and sharp as a two-edged sword (vers. 1—6). (2) The main or didactic section (vers. 7—20), embracing (*a*) warnings against adulterous intercourse with "the strange woman" (vers. 7—14); (*b*) the antithetical admonition to use the means of chastity by remaining faithful to, and rejoicing with, the wife of one's youth (vers. 15—20). And (3) the epilogue, which, in addition to the disastrous temporal consequences which follow on the violation of the sanctity of marriage, mentioned in vers. 9—14, represents the sin as one which will be examined by the universal Judge, and which brings with it its own Nemesis or retribution. All sins of impurity, all sins against *temperance, soberness,* and *chastity,* are no doubt involved in the warning, and the subject is capable of an allegorical interpretation—a mode of treatment in some instances adopted by the LXX. rendering, as that the "strange woman" stands as the representative of *impenitence* (Miller), or, according to the earlier view of Bede, as the representative of heresy and false doctrine; but the sin which is inveighed against, and which is made the subject of these repeated warnings, is not fornication simply, but *adultery*—the violation, in its most repulsive form, of the sacred obligations of marriage. The whole discourse is an impressive commentary on the seventh commandment.

Ver. 1.—The admonitory address is very similar to that in ch. iv. 20, except that here the teacher says, "Attend to *my wisdom,* bow down thine ear to *my understanding,*" instead of "Attend to *my words,* and incline thine ear unto *my saying.*" It is not merely "wisdom" and "understanding" in the abstract, but wisdom which he has appropriated to himself, made his own, and which he knows by experience to be true wisdom. It may therefore have the sense of experience and observation, both of which increase with years. To "bow down the ear" is to listen attentively, and so to fix the mind intently on what is being said. Compare the similar expressions in Ps. xxxi. 2 and ch. ii. 2; iv. 20; xxxiii. 12. The same idea is expressed in Marc Antony's address to his countrymen, "Lend me your ears" (Shakespeare, 'Julius Cæsar,' act iii. sc. 2).

Ver. 2.—This verse expresses the purposes or results of the preceding admonition. The first is, that thou mayest regard discretion (Hebrew, *lishmôr m'zimmôth*); literally, *to guard reflection;* i.e. in other words, that thou mayest maintain thoughtfulness, observe counsel, set a proper guard or control over thy thoughts, and so restrain them within proper and legitimate limits, or form such resolutions which, being well

considered and prudential, may result in prudent conduct. The word *m'zimmôth*, however, does not travel beyond the sphere of what is conceived in the mind, and consequently does not mean conduct (as Holden conceives), except in a secondary sense, as that thoughts and plans are the necessary preliminaries to action and conduct. Muffet, *in loc.*, explains, "that thou mayest not conceive in mind any evil or vanity." The word *m'zimmôth* is the plural of *m'zimmâh*, which occurs in ch. i. 4. This word generally means any plan, project, device, either in a good or bad sense. In the latter sense it is applied to intrigue and deceitful conduct, as in ch. xxiv. 8. It is here used in a good sense. Indeed, Delitzsch remarks that the use of the word in a good sense is peculiar to the introductory part of the Proverbs (ch. i.—ix.). The Vulgate renders, "That thou mayest guard thy thoughts or reflection (*ut custodias cogitationes*)." So the LXX., Ἵνα φυλάξῃς ἔννοιαν ἀγαθήν, "That thou mayest guard good reflection," the adjective ἀγαθή being introduced to note the sense in which the ἔννοια, *i.e.* act of thinking, properly, is to be understood. The prefix לְ ("to") before *shâmâr*, "to guard," in *lishmôr*, expresses the purpose, as in ch. i. 5; ii. 2, *et alia*. The second end in view is, that **thy lips may keep knowledge**; literally, *and thy lips shall keep knowledge*. Those lips keep or preserve knowledge which literally retain the instruction of Wisdom (Zöckler), or which allow nothing to pass them which does not proceed from the knowledge of God (Delitzsch), and which, when they speak, give utterance to sound wisdom. The meaning may be illustrated by Ps. xvii. 3, "I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress." The same expression occurs in Mal. ii. 7, "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge," *i.e.* preserve and give utterance to it. Where "the lips keep knowledge," there they are protected against the lips of the strange woman, *i.e.* against her allurements, because they will be fortified with purity. *Thy lips; s'phâthêykâ* is the dual of the feminine noun *sâphah*, "a lip." The teacher designedly uses this word instead of "thy heart" (cf. ch. iii. 1), because of the contrast which he has in mind, and which he produces in the next verse. The LXX., Vulgate, and Arabic add, "Attend not to the deceitful woman," which Houbigant and Schleusner think is required by the context. The addition, however, is without authority (Holden).

Ver. 3.—The teacher enters upon the subject of his warning, and under two familiar figures—common alike to Oriental and Greek writers—describes the nature of the "strange woman's" allurements. **For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb.** The conjunction "for" (Hebrew *kî*) here, like the LXX. γάρ, states the reason why the preceding exhortation is worthy of attention. Some commentators render "although," "albeit," as corresponding with the antithetical "but" in ver. 4. *The lips; sîphthêy*, the construct case of *sâphâh* in ver. 2. The organ of speech is here used for the speech itself, like the parallel "mouth." *A strange woman* (*zârâh*); *i.e.* the harlot. The word occurs before in ch. ii. 16, and again in ch. v. 20; vii. 5; xxii. 14; xxiii. 33. She is *extranea*, a stranger with respect to the youth whom she would beguile, either as being of foreign extraction, or as being the wife of another man, in which capacity she is so represented in ch. vii. 19. In this sense she would be an adulteress. St. Jerome, in Ezek. vi., takes her as the representative of the allurements from sound doctrine, and of corrupt worship (Wordsworth). *Drop as an honeycomb* (*nôphêth tîthôph'nâh*); rather, *distil honey*. The Hebrew *nôphêth* is properly a "dropping," *distillatio*, and so the honey flowing from the honeycombs (*tsûphîm*). Kimchi explains it as the honey flowing from the cells before they are broken, and hence it is the *pure fine virgin honey*. Exactly the same phrase occurs in Cant. iv. 11, "Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as an honeycomb (*nôphêth tîthôph'nâh*)." The only other places where we meet with the word *nôphêth* are Ps. xxiv. 10 (11) (there combined with *tsûphîm*, which helps to determine its meaning) and ch. xxiv. 13; xxvii. 7. The meaning is the same as she "flattereth with her words" of ch. vii. 5, in which chapter the teacher gives an example of the alluring words which the strange woman uses (ch. vii. 14—20). As honey is sweet and attractive to the taste, so in a higher degree are her words pleasant to the senses. **Her mouth is smoother than oil**; *i.e.* her words are most plausible and persuasive. The Hebrew *khîk* is properly "the palate," though it also included the corresponding lower part of the mouth (Gesenius). It is used as the instrument or organ of speech in ch. viii. 7, "For my mouth (*khîk*) shall speak truth;" and in Job xxxi. 30, "I have not suffered my mouth (*khîk*) to sin." Under the same figure David describes the treachery of his friend in Ps. lv. 22, "His words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords."

Ver. 4.—The contrast is drawn with great vividness between the professions of the "strange woman" and the disastrous consequences which overtake those who listen to her enticements. She promises enjoyment, pleasure, freedom from danger, but **her end is bitter as wormwood.** "Her end," not merely with reference to herself, which

may be and is undoubtedly true, but the last of her as experienced by those who have intercourse with her—her character as it stands revealed at the last. So it is said of wine, "At the last," *i.e.* its final effects, if indulged in to excess, "it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder" (ch. xxiii. 22). *Bitter as wormwood.* The Hebrew, *lâănâh*, "wormwood," Gesenius derives from the unused root *lâăn*, "to curse." It is the equivalent to the *absinthium* of the Vulgate. So Aquila, who has ἀψίνθιον. The LXX. improperly renders χολή, "gall." In other places the word *lâănâh* is used as the emblem of bitterness, with the superadded idea of its being poisonous, also according to the Hebrew notion, shared in also by the Greeks, that the plant combined these two qualities. Thus in Deut. xxix. 18 it is associated with *rosh*, "a poisonful herb" (margin), and the Targum terms it, agreeably with this notion, "deadly wormwood." The same belief is reproduced in Rev. viii. 11, "And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and many men died of the waters because they were made bitter" (cf. Jer. ix. 15; Amos v. 7; vi. 12). The apostle, no doubt, has it in mind when he speaks of any "root of bitterness," in Heb. xii. 15. The herb is thus described by Umbreit: "It is a plant toward two feet high, belonging to the genus *Artemisia* (species *Artemisia absinthium*), which produces a very firm stalk with many branches, grayish leaves, and small, almost round, pendent blossoms. It has a bitter and saline taste, and seems to have been regarded in the East as also a poison, of which the frequent combination with *rôsh* gives an intimation." Terence has a strikingly similar passage to the one before us—

"In melle sunt linguæ sitæ vestræ atque orationes
Lacteque; corda felle sunt lita atque acerbo aceto."

"Your tongues are placed in honey and your speech is milk; your hearts are besmeared with gall and sharp vinegar" ('Trucul.,' i. 11. 75). **Sharp as a two-edged sword;** literally, *as a sword of edges* (*khĕrĕv pîyyóth*), which may mean a sword of extreme sharpness. Her end is as sharp as the sharpest sword. But it seems better to take the term as it is understood in the Authorized Version, which has the support both of the Vulgate, *gladius biceps*, and the LXX., μαχαίρα διστόμος, *i.e.* "a two-edged sword." Compare "a two-edged sword" (*khĕrĕv piphiyyôth*) of Ps. cxlix. 6. The meaning is, the last of her is poignancy of remorse, anguish of heart, and death. In these she involves her victims.

Ver. 5.—Vers. 5 and 6 continue the description of the harlot. **Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell.** She leads her victims to ruin. She hastens to death and the grave, and so do all those who listen to her. In all instances where the teacher speaks of the harlot at length he gives the same description of her (cf. ch. ii. 18; vii. 27; ix. 18). An intensifying of the language is observable in the second hemistich. The descending progress to death becomes the laying hold of the grave, the underworld, as if nothing could turn her steps aside. And it is not only death, as the cessation of life, but death as a punishment, that is implied, just as the grave has in it the idea of corruption. (On "hell," *sh'ol*, see ch. i. 12.)

Ver. 6.—**Lest thou shouldest ponder the path of life, her ways are movable, that thou canst not know them.** This verse should be rather rendered, *she walks not in the path of life, her ways fluctuate, she knows not.* It consists of a series of independent propositions or statements, all of which are descriptive of the singularly fatuous conduct of "the strange woman." In the previous verse the teacher has said that her conduct leads to ruin; he here further emphasizes the idea by putting forward the same truth from the opposite, or, as we may say, from the negative point of view, and so completes the picture. "The words," as Plumptre remarks, "describe with terrible vividness the state of heart and soul which prostitution brings on its victims." Her course is one of persistent, wilful, headstrong, blind folly and wickedness. *Lest; pĕn;* here "not," equivalent to אַל (*lô*). So the LXX., Vulgate, Targum, Syriac. The use of *pĕn* in this sense is, however, unique (Gesenius). Delitzsch and Zöckler, following Luther, Geïer, Holden, etc., assign to it an emphatic negative force, as, "She is *far removed from* entering," or, "she *never* treadeth." Others take *pĕn* as a dependent prohibitive particle, equivalent to the Latin *ne forte*, "lest," as in the Authorized Version, and employed to connect the sentence which it introduces either with the preceding verse (as Schultens) or with the second hemistich, on which it is made dependent (Holden, Wordsworth, Aben Ezra, *loc.*, Michaelis, etc.). *Thou shouldest ponder; t'phallês*, connected by makkeph with *pĕn*, as usual (Lee), is either second person masculine or third person feminine. The latter is required here, the subject of the sentence being "the strange woman," as appears clearly from the second hemistich, "*her* ways," etc. The verb *pâtâs* (cf. ch. xiv. 26) here means "to prepare," *i.e.* to walk in, or to travel over. Thus Gesenius renders, "She (the adulteress) prepareth not (for herself) the way of life;" *i.e.* she does not walk in the way of life;

cf. the LXX. εἰσέρχεται, Vulgate *ambulant* (sc. *gressus ejus*), and other ancient versions, all of which understand the verb in this sense. The meaning of the phrase, *pĕn t'phalles*, is, therefore, "she walks not" in the way of life—the way that has life for its object, and which in itself is full of life and safety. Far from doing this, the teacher goes on to say, *her ways are movable;* literally, *go to and fro, or fluctuate;* i.e. they wilfully stagger hither and thither, like the steps of a drunkard, or like the uncertain steps of the blind, for the verb *nûă* is so used in the former sense in Isa. xxiv. 20; xxix. 9; Ps. cvii. 27; and in the latter in Lam. iv. 14. Her steps are slippery (LXX., σφαλέραι), or wander (Vulgate, *vagi*); they are without any definite aim; she is always straying in the vagrancy of sin (Wordsworth); cf. ch. vii. 12. *That thou canst not know them* (*lô thêdâ*); literally, *she knows not.* The elliptical form of this sentence in the original leaves it open to various interpretations. It seems to refer to the way of life; she knows not the way of life, *i.e.* she does not regard or perceive the way of life. The verb *yâdâ* often has this meaning. The meaning may be obtained by supplying *mah*, equivalent to *quicquam*, "anything," as in ch. ix. 13, "She knows not anything," *i.e.* she knows nothing. The objection to this is that it travels unnecessarily out of the sentence to find the object which ought rather to be supplied from the context. The object may possibly be the staggering of her feet: she staggers hither and thither without her perceiving it (Delitzsch); or it may, lastly, be indefinite: she knows not whither her steps conduct her (Wordsworth and Zöckler).

Vers. 7—14.—The ruinous consequences of indulgence in illicit pleasures.

Ver. 7.—The subject of which the teacher is treating demands the utmost attention of youth. Enough, it might be supposed, had been said to deter from intercourse with the "strange woman." She has been portrayed in her real colours, plunging recklessly into ruin herself, and carrying her victims with her; deceitful, full of intrigues, neither walking in nor knowing the way of life. But the warning is amplified and made more impressive. There is another side of the picture, the complete bodily and temporal ruin of her victim. The *argumentum ad hominem* is applied. There is an appeal to personal interest in the details which follow, which ought not to fail in holding youth back. The form of the address which is repeated is very similar to that in ch. vii. 24. The plural form, "O ye children" (cf. ch. iv. 1 and vii. 24), immediately passes into the singular for the reason mentioned before, that, though the address is made to all, yet each individually is to apply it to himself.

Ver. 8.—**Remove thy way far from her.** In other words, this is the same as St. Paul counsels, "Flee fornication" (1 Cor. vi. 14). *From her* (*mêâleyâh; desuper ea*). The term conveys the impression that the youth has come within the compass of her temptations, or that in the highest degree he is liable to them. The Hebrew *mêăl*, compounded of *min* and *al*, and meaning "from upon," being used of persons or things which go away *from* the place *in* or *upon* which they had been. **And come not nigh the door of her house;** *i.e.* shun the very place where she dwells. "Be so far from coming into her chamber as not to come near the door of her house" (Patrick). She and her house are to be avoided as if they were infected with some mortal disease. The old proverb quoted by Muffet is applicable—

"He that would no evil do
Must do nothing that 'longeth [*i.e.* belongeth] thereto."

Ver. 9.—The reasons why the harlot is to be avoided follow in rapid succession. **Lest thou give thine honour unto others, and thy years unto the cruel.** The word rendered "honour" (Hebrew, *hôd*) is not so much reputation, as the English implies, as "the *grace* and *freshness* of youth." It is so used in Hos. xiv. 6; Dan. x. 8. The Vulgate renders "honour," and the LXX., ζώη, "life." *Hôd* is derived from the Arabic word signifying "to lift one's self up," and then "to be eminent, beautiful." *Thy years;* i.e. the best and most vigorous, and hence the most useful and valuable, years of life. *Unto the cruel* (Hebrew, *l'ăk'zâri*); literally, *to the cruel one;* but the adjective *ăkzâri* is only found in the singular, and may be here used in a collective sense as designating the *entourage* of the harlot, her associates who prey pitilessly on the youth whom they bring within the range of her fascinations. So Delitzsch. It seems to be so understood by the LXX., which reads ἀνελεήμοσιν, *immitentibus;* but not so by the Vulgate, which adheres to the singular, *crudeli.* If we adhere to the gender of the adjective *ăkzâri*, which is masculine, and to its number, it may designate the husband of the adulteress, who will deal mercilessly towards the paramour of his wife. So Zöckler. Again, it may refer, notwithstanding the gender, to the harlot herself (so Vatablus and Holden), who is cruel, who has no love for the youth, and would see him perish without pity. The explanation of Stuart and others, including Ewald, that the "cruel one" is the purchaser of the punished adulterer, is without foundation or warrant, since there is no historical instance on record

where the adulterer was reduced to slavery, and the punishment inflicted by the Mosaic code was not slavery, but death (Numb. xx. 10; Deut. xxii. 22), and, as it appears from Ezek. xvi. 40 and John viii. 5, death from stoning. The adjective *ākzârî*, like its equivalent *ākzâr*, is derived from the verb *kâzâr*, "to break," and occurs again in ch. xi. 17; xii. 10; xvii. 11. The moral of the warning is a wasted life.

Ver. 10.—Another temporal consequence of, and deterrent against, a life of profligacy. **Lest strangers be filled with thy wealth; and thy labours be in the house of a stranger.** The margin reads, "thy strength" for "thy wealth," but the text properly renders the original *kôăkh*, which means "substance," "wealth," "riches"—the youth's possessions in money and property (Delitzsch). The primary meaning of the word is "strength" or "might," as appears from the verb *kâkhălkh*, "to exert one's self," from which it is derived, but the parallel *ătsâbĕykâ*, "thy toils," rendered "thy labours," determines its use in the secondary sense here. Compare the similar passage in Hos. vii. 9, "Strangers have devoured his strength [*kôăkh*, i.e. 'his possessions'], and he knoweth it not" (see also Job vi. 22). *Kôăkh* is the concrete product resulting from the abstract strength or ability when brought into action. *Thy labours* (*ătsâbĕykâ*); i.e. thy toils, the product of laborious toil, that which you have gotten by the labour of your hands, and earned with the sweat of your brow. Fleischer compares the Italian *i miei sudori*, and the French *mes sueurs*. The singular *ĕtsĕv* signifies "heavy toilsome labour," and the plural *ătsâvîm*, "labours," things done with toil, and so the idea passes to the resultant of the labour. Compare the very similar expression in Ps. cxxvii. 2, *lĕkhĕm nâătsâvîm*, equivalent to "bread obtained by toilsome labour;" Authorized Version, "the bread of sorrows." The Authorized Version properly supplies the verb "be" against those (*e.g.* Holden *et alii*) who join on "thy labours" to the previous verb "be filled," as an accusative, and render, "and with thy labours in the house of a stranger." So also the LXX. and the Vulgate, "and thy labours come" (ἔλθωσι, LXX.) or "be" (*sint*, Vulgate) "to the house of strangers" (εἰς οἴκους ἀλλοτρίων) or, "in a strange house" (*in aliena domo*). In the latter case the Vulgate is wrong, as *nôk'rî* in the phrase *bêythi nôk'rî* is always personal (Delitzsch), and should be rendered, as in the Authorized Version, "in the house of a stranger." The meaning of the verse is that a life of impurity transfers the profligate's substance, his wealth and possessions, to others, who will be satiated at his expense, and, being strangers, are indifferent to his ruin.

Ver. 11.—The last argument is the mental anguish which ensues when health is ruined and wealth is squandered. **And thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed.** The Hebrew *v'nâhămtâ* is rather "and thou groan." It is not the plaintive wailing or the subdued grief of heart which is signified, but the loud wail of lamentation, the groaning indicative of intense mental suffering called forth by the remembrance of past folly, and which sees no remedy in the future. The verb *nâhâm* occurs again in ch. xxviii. 15, where it is used of the roaring of the lion, and the cognate noun *nâhâm* is met with in ch. xix. 12 and xx. 2 in the same sense. By Ezekiel it is used of the groaning of the people of Jerusalem when they shall see their sanctuary profaned, their sons and their daughters fall by the sword, and their city destroyed (Ezek. xxiv. 23). Isaiah (v. 29, 30) applies it to the *roaring* of the sea. The Vulgate reproduces the idea in *gemas*, equivalent to "and thou groan." The LXX. rendering, καὶ μεταμεληθήσῃ, "and thou shalt repent," arising from the adoption of a different pointing, *nikhâmtâ*, from the niph. *nikhâm*, "to repent," for *nâhâmtâ*, to some extent expresses the sense. *At the last;* literally, *at thine end;* i.e. when thou art ruined, or, as the teacher explains, *when thy flesh and thy body are consumed.* The expression, "thy flesh and thy body," here stands for the whole body, the body in its totality, not the body and the soul, which would be different. Of these two words "the flesh" (*bâsâr*) rather denotes the flesh in its strict sense as such (cf. Job xxxi. 31; xxxiii. 21), while "body" (*sh'êr*) is the flesh adhering to the bones. Gesenius regards them as synonymous terms, stating, however, that *sh'êr* is the more poetical as to use. The word *bâsâr* is used to denote the whole body in ch. xiv. 30. It is clear that, by the use of these two terms here, the teacher is following a peculiarity observable elsewhere in the Proverbs, of combining two terms to express, and so to give force to, one idea. The expression describes "the utter destruction of the libertine" (Umbreit). This destruction, as further involving the ruin of the soul, is described in ch. vi. 32, "Whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding; he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul (*nephesh*)" (cf. ch. vii. 22, 23).

Ver. 12.—Self-reproach accompanies the unavailable groaning. **And say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof!** *i.e.* how could it ever come to pass that I have acted in such a senseless and inexcusable manner, that I have hated instruction (*musar*, *disciplina*, παιδεία), the warning voice which dissuaded me from going with the harlot, and in my heart

despised, *i.e.* rejected inwardly, whatever my outward demeanour may have been, the reproof which followed after I had been with her! *Despised* (*nââts*), as in ch. i. 30; comp. also ch. xv. 5, "A fool despiseth his father's instructions."

Ver. 13.—**And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me.** The ruined profligate admits he was not without teachers and advisers, but that he gave no heed to their warnings and reproofs. *Have not obeyed the voice* (*lô-shâmā'ti b'kôl*). The same phrase occurs in Gen. xxvii. 13; Exod. xviii. 19; Deut. xxvi. 14; 2 Sam. xii. 18. The verb *shâmā* is primarily "to hear," and then "to obey," "to give heed to," like the Greek ἀκούω.

Ver. 14.—**I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly;** *i.e.* such was my shamelessness that there was scarcely any wickedness which I did not commit, unrestrained even by the presence of the congregation and assembly. The fact which the ruined youth laments is the extent and audacity of his sins. It is not that he accuses himself of hypocrisy in religion (Delitzsch), but he adds another element in his career of vice. He has disregarded the warnings and reproofs of his teachers and friends; but more, the presence of the congregation of God's people, a silent but not a less impressive protest, had no restraining effect upon him. The words, "the congregation and assembly" (Hebrew, *kâhâl v'êdâh*), seem to be used to heighten the conception, rather than to express two distinct and separate ideas, since we find them both used interchangeably to designate the congregation of the Israelites. The radical conception of *kâhâl* ("congregation") is the same as that of the LXX. ἐκκλησία and Vulgate *ecclesia*, viz. the congregation looked upon from the point of its being called together, *kâhâl* being derived from *kâhāl*, which in hiph. is equivalent to "to call together," while that of *êdâh* is the congregation looked at from the point of its having assembled *êdâh* being derived from *yâād*, in niph. equivalent to "to come together." The latter will therefore stand for any assembly of people specially convened or coming together for some definite object, like the LXX. συναγώγη and the Vulgate *synagoga*. The term *êdâh* is, however, used in a technical sense as signifying the *seventy elders*, or senators, who judged the people (see Numb. xxv. 7; xxxv. 12). Rabbi Salomon so explains *hâêdâh* as "the congregation," in Josh. xx. 6 and Numb. xxvii. 21. Other explanations, however, have been given of these words. Zöckler takes *kâhâl* as the convened council of elders acting as judges (Deut. xxxiii. 4, 5), and *êdâh* as the concourse (*cœtus*) of the people executing the condemning sentence (Numb. xv. 15; cf. Ps. vii. 7), and renders, "Well nigh had I fallen into utter destruction in the midst of the assembly and the congregation." Fleischer, Vatablus, and Bayne take much the same view, looking upon *râ* ("evil," Authorized Version) as "punishment," *i.e.* the evil which follows as a consequence of sin—a usage supported by 2 Sam. xvi. 18; Exod. v. 19; 1 Chron. vii. 23; Ps. x. 6—rather than as evil *per se*, i.e. that which is morally bad, as in Exod. xxxii. 22. Aben Ezra considers that the *perfect* is used for the *future*; "In a little time I shall be involved in all evil;" *i.e.* punishment, which is looked forward to prospectively. For "almost" (*kimat*, equivalent to "within a little," "almost," "nearly"), see Gen. xxvi. 10; Ps. lxxiii. 2; cxix. 87.

Vers. 15—19.—*Commendation of the chaste intercourse of marriage.* In this section the teacher passes from admonitory warnings against unchastity to the commendation of conjugal fidelity and pure love. The allegorical exposition of this passage, current at the period of the Revision of the Authorized Version in 1612, as referring to liberality, is not *ad rem*. Such an idea had no place certainly in the teacher's mind, nor is it appropriate to the context, the scope of which is, as we have seen, to warn youth against indulgence in illicit pleasures, by pointing out the terrible consequences which follow, and to indicate, on the other hand, in what direction the satisfaction of natural wants is to be obtained, that so, the heart and conscience being kept pure, sin and evil may be avoided.

Ver. 15.—**Drink waters out of thine own cistern,** etc.; *i.e.* in the wife of your own choice, or in the legitimate sphere of marriage, seek the satisfaction of your natural impulses. The pure, innocent, and chaste nature of such pleasures is appropriately compared with the pure and wholesome waters of the cistern and the well-spring. The "drinking" carries with it the satisfying of a natural want. Agreeably with oriental and scriptural usage, "the wife" is compared with a "cistern" and "well." Thus in the Song of Solomon the "bride" is called "a spring shut up, a fountain sealed" (Song of Sol. iv. 12). Sarah is spoken of under exactly the same figure that is used here, viz. the *bôr*, or "cistern," in Isa. li. 1. The figure was not confined to women, however, as we find Judah alluded to as "waters" in Isa. xlviii. 1,

and Jacob or Israel so appearing in the prophecy of Balaam (Numb. xxiv. 7). The people are spoken of by David as they that are "of the fountain of Israel" (Ps. lxviii. 26). A similar imagery is employed in the New Testament of the wife. The apostles St. Paul and St. Peter both speak of her as "the vessel (τὸ σκεῦος)" (see 1 Thess. iv. 4 and 1 Pet. iii. 7). The forms of the original, *b'or* and *b'er*, standing respectively for "cistern" and "well," indicate a common derivation from *bâär*, "to dig." But *bôr* is an artificially constructed reservoir or cistern, equivalent to the Vulgate *cisterna*, and LXX. ἄγγειος, while *b'êr* is the natural spring of water, equivalent to the Vulgate *putens*. So Aben Ezra, who says, on Lev. ii. 36, "*Bór* is that which catches the rain, while *b'ér* is that from within which the water wells up." This explanation, however, does not entirely cover the terms as used here. The "waters" (Hebrew, *māyim*) may be the pure water conveyed into the cistern, and not simply the water which is caught in its descent from heaven. The parallel term, "running waters" (Hebrew, *nôz'lim*), describes the flowing limpid stream fit, like the other, for drinking purposes. A similar use of the terms is made in the Song of Sol. iv. 15, "a well of living waters (*b'êr mayim khayyim*) and streams (*v'noz'lim*) from Lebanon." It may be remarked that the allusion to the wife, under the figures employed, enhances her value. It indicates the high estimation in which she is to be held, since the "cistern" or "well" was one of the most valuable possessions and adjuncts of an Eastern house. The teaching of the passage, in its bearing on the subject of marriage, coincides with that which is subsequently put forward by St. Paul, in 1 Cor. vii. 9.

Ver. 16.—**Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets.** The figurative language is still continued, and under the terms "fountains" and "rivers of waters," are to be understood children, the legitimate issue of lawful marriage. So Aben Ezra and the majority of modern commentators, Schultens, Döderlein, Holden, Muenscher, Noyes, Wardlaw, etc. The meaning appears to be, "Let thy marriage be blessed with many children, who may go forth abroad for the public good." Other interpretations have been adopted. Thus: (1) Delitzsch takes the words "fountains" and "rivers of waters" as used figuratively for the procreative power, and renders, "Shall thy streams flow abroad, and water-brooks in the streets?" and interprets, "Let generative power act freely and unrestrainedly within the marriage relation." (2) Schultens and Dathe, followed by Holden, regard the verse as expressing a conclusion on the preceding, "Then shall thy springs be dispersed abroad, even rivers of waters in the streets." The objection to this is that it necessitates the insertion of the copulative *vau* (ו) before the verb, *yâphûtzû*, "be dispersed." (3) Zöckler and Hitzig read the verse interrogatively, "Shall thy streams flow abroad as water-brooks in the streets?" on the analogy of ch. vi. 30 and Ps. lvi. 7. (4) The reading of the LXX., adopted by Origen, Clemens Alexandrinus, places a negative before the verb, Μὴ ὑπερεκχείσθω, *i.e.* "Let not thy waters flow beyond thy fountain;" *i.e.* "confine thyself to thy wife." *Fountains.* The Hebrew *ma'yânîm*, plural of *māyân*, derived from *āyin* ("a fountain") with the formative *men*, is rather a stream or rill—water flowing on the surface of the ground. It is used, however, of a fountain itself in Gen. vii. 11; viii. 2. *Rivers of waters* (Hebrew, *pāl'gêy-māyim*); rather, *water-courses*, or *water-brooks* (cf. Job xxxviii. 25). The *pêlĕg* represents the various streams into which the *māyân*, "fountain," divides itself at its source or in its course. We find the same expression, *pāl'gêy-māyim*, used of tears in Ps. cxix. 136; Lam. iii. 48. It occurs again in our book in ch. xxi. 1, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord as the rivers of waters (*pāl'gey māyim*)." On "abroad" (Hebrew, *khutz*), and "in the streets" (*r'khôvôth*), see ch. i. 20.

Ver. 17.—**Let them be only thine own, and not strangers' with thee.** By confining yourself to chaste intercourse with your lawful wife, be assured that your offspring is your own. Promiscuous and unlawful intercourse throws doubt upon the paternity of children. Thy children may be thine, they may belong to another. The natural pride which is felt in a legitimate offspring is the motive put forward to commend the husband to confine himself exclusively to his wife. Grotius on this verse remarks, "Ibi sere ubi prolem metas"—"Sow there where you may reap an offspring." *Them;* i.e. the children referred to figuratively in the preceding verse, from which the subject of this verse is supplied. The repetition of the pronoun which occurs in the original, "let them belong to thee, to thee," is emphatic, and exclusive of others. The latter clause of the verse, "and not strangers' with thee," covers the whole ground. The idea of their being strangers' is repulsive, and so gives further point to the exhortation.

Ver. 18.—**Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth.** The employment of the ordinary term "wife" in the second hemistich shows in what sense the figure which is used has to be understood. The terms "fountain" and "wife" denote the same person. The wife is here called "thy fountain" (Hebrew

*m'kor'ka*), just as she has been previously "thine own cistern" (*b'or*) and "thine own well" (*b'er*) in ver. 15. The Hebrew *mâkôr*, "fountain," is derived from the root *kur*, "to dig." The figure seems to determine that the blessing here spoken of consists in the wife being a fruitful mother of children; and hence the phrase means, "Let thy wife be blessed," *i.e.* rendered happy in being the mother of thy children. This is quite consistent with the Hebrew mode of thought. Every Israelitish wife regarded herself, and was regarded by others as "blessed," if she bore children, and unhappy if the reverse were the case. *Blessed;* Hebrew, *bârûk* (Vulgate, *benedicta*), is the kal participle passive of *bârâk*, "to bless." Instead of this, the LXX. reads ἴδια, "Let thy fountain be thine own"—a variation which in no sense conveys the meaning of the original. *And rejoice with;* rather, *rejoice in*, the wife being regarded as the sphere within which the husband is to find his pleasure and joy. Umbreit explains, "Let thy wife be extolled." The same construction of the imperative *s'mâkh*, from *sâmâkh*, "to be glad, or joyful," with *min*, occurs in Judg. ix. 19; Zeph. iii. 14, etc. The Authorized rendering is, however, favoured by the Vulgate, *lætare cum*, and the LXX., συνευφράνω μετά. Compare the exhortation in Eccles. ix. 9, "Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest." *The wife of thy youth* (Hebrew, *ishshâh n'ureykа*) may mean either (1) the wife to whom thou hast given the fair bloom of thy youth (Umbreit); (2) the wife chosen in thy youth (Delitzsch); or (3) thy youthful wife. The former seems the more probable meaning. Compare the expression, "companion of thy youth," in ch. ii. 17.

Ver. 19.—**Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe.** The words in italics do not occur in the original. The expression, "the loving hind and pleasant roe," is, therefore, to be attached to the preceding verse, as carrying on the sense and as descriptive of the grace and fascinating charms of the young wife. As combining these attributes, she is to be the object of thy love and devotion, the one in whom thine affections are to find the fulfilment of their desires. Love and grace are her possessions. *The loving hind* (Hebrew, *âyyêlêth âhâvîm*); literally, *the hind of loves*, which may be understood, as in the Authorized Version, as pointing to the fondness of this animal for its young, or as descriptive of its beauty and the extreme gracefulness of its form. In this sense the phrase may be rendered, "the lovely hind." The *âyyêlêth*, or *âyyâlâh*, feminine of *âyyâl*, "stag," or "hart," was in all probability the gazelle. *Pleasant roe* (Hebrew, *yâ'âlâth khên*); literally, *the ibex of grace*. The particular expression only occurs here in the Bible. The *yâ'âlâth* is the feminine of *yâ'âl*, "the ibex" or "mountain goat" according to Bochart, or the "chamois" according to Gesenius. It does not appear that it is so much "the pleasantness" or amiability of this animal which is here alluded to as its gracefulness of form. As terms of endearment, the words entered largely into the erotic poetry of the East. Thus in the Song of Sol. iv. 5 the bride likens her beloved to "a roe or young hart" (cf. also Song of Sol. iv. 17 and viii. 14), while numerous examples might be quoted from the Arabian and Persian poets. They were also employed sometimes as names for women. Compare the superscription of Ps. xxii., *Ayyeleth hash-shakar*, "Upon the hind of the dawn." **Let her breasts satisfy thee at all times.** The love of the wife is to refresh and fully satisfy the husband. The word *dadeyah*, "her breasts," only occurs here and in Ezek. xxiii. 3, 8, 21, and is equivalent to *dodeyah*, "her love." The marginal reading, "water thee," serves to bring out the literal meaning of the *y'ravvuka*, derived from *ravah*, in kal, "to drink largely," "to be satisfied with drink," but misses the emphatic force of the piel, "to be fully satisfied or satiated." This is expressed very forcibly in the Vulgate rendering, "Let her breasts inebriate thee (*inebrient te*)," which represents the strong influence which the attractions of the wife are to maintain. The LXX., on the other hand, avoiding the rather sensual colouring of the language, substitutes, "May she thine own lead thee, and be with thee always." **And be thou ravished always with her love;** *i.e.* let it intoxicate thee. The teacher, by a bold figure, describes the entire fascination which the husband is to allow the wife to exercise over him. The verb *shâgâh* is "to reel under the influence of wine," and is so used in the succeeding vers. 20 and 23, and ch. xx. 1 and Isa. xxviii. 7. The primary meaning, "to err from the way," scarcely applies here, and does not express the idea of the teacher, which is to describe "an intensity of love connected with the feeling of superabundant happiness" (Delitzsch). The Vulgate, *In amore ejus delectare jugiter*, "In her love delight thyself continually," and the LXX., "For in her love thou shalt be daily engaged," are mere paraphrases.

Vers. 20, 21.—*The adulterer to be restrained by the fact of God's omniscience and the Divine punishment.* Vers. 20 and 21 should apparently be taken together. The teaching assumes a higher tone, and rises from the lower law which regulates fidelity to the wife, based upon personal attractions, to the higher law, which brings the husband's

conduct into relation with the duty he owes to Jehovah. Not merely is his conduct to be regulated by love and affection alone, but it is to be fashioned by the reflection or consciousness that the Supreme Being presides over all, and takes cognizance of human action. Without losing sight that the marriage contract has its own peculiar obligations, the fact is insisted upon that all a man's ways are open to the eyes of the Lord.

Ver. 20.—**And why**; *i.e.* what inducement is there, what reason can be given, for conjugal infidelity, except the lewd and immoral promptings of the lower nature, except sensuality in its lowest form? **Ravished.** The verb *shâgâh* recurs, but in a lower sense, as indicating "the foolish delirium of the libertine hastening after the harlot" (Zöckler). **With a strange woman** (Hebrew, *b'zarah*); *i.e.* with a harlot. On *zârâh*, see ch. ii. 16 and vii. 5. The *b'* (בְּ) localizes the sources of the intoxication. **Embrace** (Hebrew, *t'khâbbêk*). On this verb, see ch. iv. 8. **The bosom of a stranger** (Hebrew, *khêk nôk'riyyâh*). A parallel expression having the same force as its counterpart. The more usual form of *khêk* is *khêyk*, and means "the bosom" of a person. In ch. xvi. 33 it is used of the *lap*, and in ch. xvii. 23 and xxi. 14 for the *bosom* or *folds* of a garment.

Ver. 21.—**For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord.** The obvious meaning here is that as "the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (ch. xv. 3), there is no possibility of any act of immorality escaping God's notice. The consciousness of this fact is to be the restraining motive, inasmuch as he who sees will also punish every transgression. The great truth acknowledged here is the omniscience of God, a truth which is borne witness to in almost identical language in Job: "For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings" (Job xxxiv. 21; cf. xxiv. 23 and xxxi. 4). So Hanani the seer says to Asa King of Judah, "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth" (2 Chron. xvi. 9); and Jehovah says, in Jeremiah, "For mine eyes are upon all their ways, they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes" (Jer. xvi. 17; cf. xxxii. 29); and again, in Hosea, "They are before my face" (Hos. vii. 2), and the same truth is re-echoed in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in all probability gathered from our passage, "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. iv. 13). *The ways of man*; *i.e.* the conduct of any individual man or woman; *îsh*, "man," being used generically. *Are before the eyes of the Lord*; i.e. are an object on which Jehovah fixes his gaze and scrutiny. **And he pondereth all his goings.** The word "he pondereth" is in the original *m'phallêl*, the piel participle of *phillêl*, piel of the unused kal, *pâlâl*, and appears to be properly rendered in the Authorized Version. This verb, however, has various meanings: (1) to make level, or prepare, as in ch. iv. 26 and v. 6; (2) to weigh, or consider accurately, in which sense it is used here. So Gesenius, Lee, Buxtorf, and Davidson. Jehovah not only sees, but weighs all that a man does, wheresoever he be, and will apportion rewards and punishments according to a man's actions (Patrick). The German commentators, Delitzsch and Zöckler, however, look upon the word as indicating the overruling providence of God, just as the former part of the verse refers to his omniscience, and render, "he marketh out," in the sense that the Lord makes it possible for a man to walk in the way of uprightness and purity. There is nothing inherently objectionable in this view, since experience shows that the world is regulated by the Divine government, but it loses sight to some extent of the truth upon which the teacher appears to be insisting, which is that evil actions are visited with Divine retribution.

Vers. 22, 23.—*The fearful end of the adulterer.* From the universal statement of God's omniscience and the Divine judgment, the teacher passes to the fate of the profligate. His end is inevitable ruin and misery. The deep moral lesson conveyed is that sin carries with it its own Nemesis. Adultery and impurity, like all sin of which they are forms, are retributive. The career of the adulterer is a career begun, continued, and ended in folly (comp. ch. i. 31, 32; ii. 5; xviii. 7; xxix. 6; and Ps. ix. 15).

Ver. 22.—**His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself**; *i.e.* his manifold sins shall overtake and arrest him. The imagery is borrowed from the snare of the fowler. The emphatic form of the original, "His sins shall overtake him, the impious man," point conclusively to the adulterer. It is "his" sins that shall overtake *him*, not those of another, and they shall fall upon his own head; and further, his character is depicted in the condemning clause, "the impious man;" for such he is. *Shall take.* The verb *lâkâd* is literally "to take or catch animals in a snare or net," properly "to strike with a net." The wicked man becomes entangled and caught in his own sins; he is struck down and captured by

them, just as the prey is struck by the snare of the fowler. The verb is, of course, used metaphorically, as in Job v. 13. *The wicked* (Hebrew, *eth-hârâsâ*); in the original introduced as explanatory of the object, "him." **And he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.** The Authorized Version follows the LXX. and Vulgate in rendering "his sins," instead of the original "his sin" (*khâttâtho*). It is not so much every sin of man which shall hold him, though this is true, as the particular sin treated of in the address, viz. adultery, which shall do this. The expression, "the cords of his sin" (Hebrew, *khâvley khâttâtho*), means the cords which his sin weaves around him. Nothing else will be requisite to bind and hold him fast for punishment (cf. "cords of vanity," in Isa. v. 18).

Ver. 23.—**He shall die without instruction.** The phrase, "without instruction," is in the original *b'eyn musar*, literally, "in there not being instruction." The obvious meaning is, because he gave no heed to instruction. So Aben Ezra and Gersom. The Authorized Version is at least ambiguous, and seems to imply that the adulterer has been without instruction, without any to reprove or counsel him. But such is not the case. He has been admonished of the evil consequences of his sin, but to these warnings he has turned a deaf ear, and the teacher says therefore he shall die. The Vulgate supports this explanation, *quia non habuit disciplínam* "because he did not entertain or use instruction." In the LXX. the idea is enlarged, "He shall die together with those who have no instruction (μετὰ ἀπαιδεύτων)." The *b'* (ב) in *b'eyn* is causal, and equivalent to *propter*, as in Gen. xviii. 28; Jer. xvii. 3. A similar statement is found in Job iv. 21, "They die even without wisdom," *i.e.* because they have disregarded the lessons of wisdom; and Job xxxvi. 12, "They shall die without knowledge." **And in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray;** better, as Delitzsch, "He shall stagger to ruin." The verb *shâgâh* is used as in vers. 19 and 20, but with a deeper and more dread significance. A climax is reached in the manner in which the end of the adulterer is portrayed. His end is without a gleam of hope or satisfaction. With an understanding darkened and rendered callous by unrestrained indulgence in lust, and by folly which has reached its utmost limits and cannot, as it were, be surpassed, in that it has persistently and wilfully set aside and scorned wisdom and true happiness, the adulterer, like the drunkard, who is oblivious of the danger before him, shall stagger to ruin.

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 15.—*Home joys.* I. THE HOME IS A DIVINE INSTITUTION OF THE FIRST IMPORTANCE FOR THE WELFARE OF MANKIND. Here and throughout the Bible the sanctity of the home is insisted on as something to be guarded inviolably. It is evident that this beautiful institution is in harmony with our nature. To live according to nature is not to indulge ill-regulated passions, to follow chance impulses, to subordinate reason and conscience to instinct and appetite. It is to live so as to secure the harmonious working of our whole nature and of the general body of mankind. Thus regarded, family life is natural; it falls in best with the requirements of the race, it ministers best to its advancement. Polygamy is always degrading. As men rise in the moral scale they cast it off. The home is the foundation of the state. Where home life is most corrupt social and political institutions are in greatest danger. The homes of England are the surest guardians of her internal order and peace. May no corrupt casuistry ever dare to lay its foul finger on these holy shrines! The worst fruits of atheism and of the confessional are seen in specious pretexts for committing that horrible sacrilege.

II. IN ORDER TO PROTECT THE HOME GOD HAS MADE IT TO BE A FOUNTAIN OF PURE AND WHOLESOME JOYS. They who break through the restraints of home life in the feverish thirst for illicit delights little know what joys they are losing. The poison-fruits of a pandemonium let a blight fall on the sweet, fresh beauty of what might have been a very garden of Eden. For the restraints which look to libertines so irksome are just the very conditions of the most lasting, most satisfying, most wholesome of human joys. The strong love of husband and wife, the parents' pleasure in their children, the innumerable little interests of the home circle, and all that is typified by the "fireside," are delights unknown to men who profess to make the pursuit of pleasure their aim in life.

"The first sure symptom of a mind in health
Is rest of heart and pleasure felt at home."

III. TO BE PRESERVED IN THEIR INTEGRITY, THE HOME JOYS MUST BE CAREFULLY GUARDED AND REVERENTLY CHERISHED. The serpent is in the garden; beware of its wiles. Temptations seek to break up the confidence and peace of the family circle. Not only must gross infidelity be shunned as a deadly sin, but all approaches to a breach of domestic sanctity must be dreaded. Levity, as well as immorality, may go far to spoil the waters of the purest fountain of delight. Mere indifference may wreck the home joys. These joys must be cherished. Courtship should not end with the wedding-day. Husbands and wives should beware of neglecting mutual respect and consideration under the influence of familiarity. Why should a man be more rude to his wife than to any other woman? Surely marriage is not designed to destroy courtesy. There should be an element of reverence in wedded love. Mutual sympathy —each taking interest in the occupations and cares of the other; mutual confidence— the avoidance of secrets between husband and wife on the mistaken plea of sparing pain; and mutual forbearance, are requisites for the preservation of the sweetness of the fountains of home joy.

Ver. 21.—*Under the eyes of God.* I. WE ARE ALWAYS UNDER THE WATCHFUL EYES OF GOD. God is no epicurean Divinity, retreating far above mundane affairs in celestial seclusion. He is not indifferent to what goes on in this little world. He is watchful and observant. This fact may not affect us much while we think of it in the general. But we should observe that God's watchfulness is directed to all particular, individual objects. He looks at each of us, at the smallest of our concerns. It is the property of an infinite mind thus to reach down to the infinitely small, as well as to rise to the infinitely great. Consider, then, that God searches us through and through. There is no dark cranny of the soul into which his keen penetrating light does not fall, no locked secret which does not open up freely to his magisterial warrant. We may hide the thought of God from our own minds, but we cannot hide ourselves from the sight of God. Now, what God notices chiefly in us is our conduct—our "ways," "goings." Mere profession counts for nothing with the All-seeing. Opinions, feelings, resolutions, are of secondary moment. God takes inquisition chiefly of what we do, whither our life is tending, what are the actions of the inner as well as of the outer man. But let us remember that God does all this in no mere prying curiosity, in no cruel desire to "find us out" and convict us of wrong. He does it of right, for he is our Judge; he does it with holy ends, for he is holy; he does it in love, for he is our Father.

II. THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE DIVINE OVERSIGHT SHOULD POWERFULLY AFFECT ALL OUR CONDUCT. 1. It should make us *true*. What is the use of paltry devices for the deception of men when the only question of consequence concerning the treatment of our conduct is—How will God regard it? What folly to wear a mask if he sees behind it! The gaze of God should shame and burn all lies out of the soul. 2. It should make us *dread to do wrong*. An Eastern legend tells how one stole a jewel called "the eye of God," but though he fled far with his treasure and hid in dark caverns, he was tortured by the piercing light that it threw out till, unable to endure the horror of it, he gave himself up to justice. We all have the eye of God on our ways. Let us beware that we never go where we should not wish him to see us. 3. It should lead to *confession of sin*. If God knows all, is it not best to make a clean breast of it, and humble ourselves before him? We cannot hide or cloke our sins from God. It is foolish to attempt to do so. But let us be thankful that we cannot. While we try to hide them they only scorch our own bosom. If we confess them, "he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." 4. It should induce *confidence in God*. It is sometimes a relief to know that the worst is out. God knows all. Yet he endures us, yet he loves us still. He who thus watches looks upon us as a mother regards her child, grieving for what is wrong, but tenderly seeking to save and protect us from all harm. Why should we fear the gaze of God? His sleepless eye is our great security (see 2 Chron. xvi. 9). 5. It should incline us to *faithful service*. We should learn to be ashamed of the eye-service of men-pleasers, and seek to win the approval of our rightful Lord. He is no hard tyrant. When we try to please him, though ever so imperfectly, he *is* pleased, and will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." May

it be our aim to live, as Milton resolved to do when considering his life on his twenty-third birthday—

"As ever in my great Taskmaster's eye."

Ver. 22.—*Cords of sin.* I. THE SINNER IS IN BONDAGE. Such a condition is not expected when a man freely gives the reins to his passions, and weakly yields himself to temptation. On the contrary, he supposes that he is enjoying a larger liberty than they possess who are constrained to walk in the narrow path of righteousness. Moreover, even when this shocking condition is reached, he is slow to admit its existence. He will not confess his bondage; perhaps he scarcely feels it. Thus the Jews were indignant in rejecting any such notion when our Lord offered deliverance from the slavery of sin (John viii. 33). But this only proves the bondage to be the greater. The worst degradation of slavery is that it so benumbs the feelings and crushes the manliness of its victims, that some of them do not notice the yoke that would gall the shoulders of all men who truly appreciated their condition. The reality of the bondage is soon proved, however, whenever a slave tries to escape. Then the chains of sin are felt to be too strong for the sinner to break. He cries, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii. 24).

II. THE CORDS THAT BIND THE SINNER ARE SPUN OUT OF HIS OWN SINS. Satan does not need to build any massive prison walls, or to call upon Vulcan to forge fetters for his captives. He has but to leave them to themselves, and their own misdeeds will shut them in, as the rank new growth of a tropical forest encloses the rotting trunks of the older trees, from the seed of which it sprang. 1. This results from the *force of habit.* All conduct tends to become permanent. The way wears into ruts. Men become entangled in their own past. 2. This is confirmed by *wilful disregard of saving influences.* If the sinner repented and called for deliverance, he might be saved from the fearful bondage of his sins. But proudly choosing to continue on his own course, he has consented to the tightening of the cords that bind him.

III. CHRIST ALONE CAN LIBERATE FROM THE BONDAGE OF SIN. Left to itself, the slavery will be fatal. The sinner will never be free to live to any good purpose. He will not be able to escape in the day of doom; his own sins will tie him to his fate. In the end they will strangle him. Inasmuch as the cords are spun out of his own conduct, they are part of himself, and he cannot untie their knots or cut their strands. They are stronger than the cords with which Delilah bound Samson, while the helpless, guilty sinner is weaker than the shorn Nazarite. But it is to men in this forlorn condition that the gospel of Christ is proclaimed, with its glorious promise of liberty to the captives (Isa. lxi. 1). Christ brings liberating truth (John viii. 32), redeeming grace, and the saving power of a mighty love,—those attractive "cords of a man" (Hos. xi. 4) which are even stronger than the binding cords of sin.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—14.—*Meretricious pleasures and their results.* I. GENERAL ADMONITION. (Vers. 1—3.) Similar prefaces to warnings against unchastity are found in ch. vi. 20, etc.; vii. 1, etc. The same forms of *iteration* for the sake of *urgency* are observed. A fresh expression is, "That thy lips may keep insight." That is, let the lessons of wisdom be oft conned over; to keep them on the lips is to "get them by heart." "Consideration" (ver. 2), circumspection, forethought, are peculiarly needed in facing a temptation which wears a fascinating form, and which must be viewed in *results,* if its pernicious quality is to be understood.

II. THE FASCINATION OF THE HARLOT. (Ver. 3; comp. ch. ii. 16.) Her lips are honeyed with compliments and flattery (comp. Cant. iv. 11). Her voice is smoother than oil. A temptation has no power unless it is directed to some weakness in the subject of it, as the spark goes out in the absence of tinder. The harlot's power to seduce lies mainly in that weakest of weaknesses, vanity—at least, in many cases. It is a power in general over the senses and the imagination. And it is the part of the teacher to disabuse these of their illusions. In the word "meretricious" (from the Latin word for

"harlot"), applied to spurious art, we have a witness in language to the hollowness of her attractions.

III. THE RESULTS OF VICIOUS PLEASURES. (Vers. 4—6.) They are described in images full of expression. 1. As *bitter* like *wormwood*, which has a bitter, salt taste, and is regarded in the East in the light of poison. Or "like Dead-Sea fruits, which tempt the taste, and turn to ashes on the lips." 2. As of *acute pain*, under the image of a sword, smooth on the surface, with a keen double edge to wound. 3. As *fatal*. The harlot beckons her guests as it were down the deathful way, to *sheôl*, to Hades, the kingdom of the dead. 4. They have *no* good result. Ver. 6, correctly rendered, says, "She measures not the path of life; her tracks are roving, she knows not whither." The picture of a life which *can give no account of itself*, cannot justify itself to reason, and comes to a brutish end.

IV. THE REMOTER CONSEQUENCES OF VICE. (Vers. 7—13.) A gloomy vista opens, in prospect of which the warning is urgently renewed (vers. 7, 8). 1. The *exposure of the detected adulterer*. (Ver. 9.) He exchanges honour and repute for public shame, loses his life at the hands of the outraged husband, or becomes his slave (comp. ch. vi. 34). 2. *The loss of property*. (Ver. 10.) The punishment of adultery under the Law was stoning (Lev. xx. 10; Deut. xxii. 22, *sqq.*). Possibly this might be commuted into the forfeiture of goods and enslavement to the injured husband. 3. *Remorse*. (Vers. 11—14.) Last and worst of all inflictions, from the Divine hand, immediately. In the last stage of consumption the victim of lust groans forth his unavailing sorrow. Remorse, the fearful counterpart of self-respect, is the mind turning upon itself, internal discord replacing the harmony God made. The sufferer accuses himself of *hatred to light, contempt of rebuke*, of *disobedience* to voices that were authoritative, of *deafness to warning*. No external condemnation is ever passed on a man which his own conscience has not previously ratified. Remorse is the last witness to Wisdom and her claims. To complete the picture, the miserable man is represented as reflecting that he all but fell into the doom of the public condemnation and the public execution (ver. 14).—J.

Vers. 15—21.—*Fidelity and bliss in marriage*. The counterpart of the foregoing warning against vice, placing connubial joys in the brightest light of poetic fancy.

I. IMAGES OF WIFEHOOD. The wife is described: 1. As a *spring*, and as a cistern. Property in a spring or well was highly, even sacredly, esteemed. Hence a peculiar force in the comparison. The wife is the husband's peculiar delight and property; the source of pleasures of every kind and degree; the fruitful origin of the family (comp. Isa. li. 1; Cant. iv. 12). 2. As "*wife of one's youth*." (Cf. Deut. xxiv. 5; Eccles. ix. 9.) One to whom the flower of youth and manhood has been devoted. The parallel description is "companion of youth" (ch. ii. 17). Her image, in this case, is associated with the sunniest scenes of experience. 3. As a "*lovely hind, or charming gazelle*." A favourite Oriental comparison, and embodied in the names *Tabitha* and *Dorcas*, which denote "gazelle." There are numberless uses of the figure in Arabian and Persian poets. The beautiful liquid eye, delicate head, graceful carriage of the creature, all point the *simile*. Nothing can surpass, as a husband's description of a true wife, Wordsworth's exquisite stanza beginning—

> "She was a phantom of delight,
> When first she gleam'd upon my sight;
> A creature not too bright or good
> For human nature's daily food;
> For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
> Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles."

II. IMAGES OF THE HUSBAND'S BLISS. 1. It is like taking draughts from a fresh and ever-running stream. There is "continual comfort in a face, the lineaments of gospel books." 2. It is a *peculiar*, a *private possession*. Ver. 16 should be rendered interrogatively; it conveys the contrast of the *profaned* treasures of the unchaste woman's love, and thus fits with ver. 17. The language of lovers finds a true zest in the word, "My own!" Life becomes brutish where this feeling does not exist. 3. Yet it attracts *sympathy, admiration*, and *good will*. Ver. 18 is the blessing wished

by the speaker or by any looker-on. Wedding-feasts bring out these feelings; and the happiness and prosperity of married pairs are as little exposed to the tooth of envy as any earthly good. 4. It is *satisfying*; for what repose can be more sweet and secure than that on the bosom of the faithful spouse? It is *enrapturing*, without being enfeebling, unlike those false pleasures, "violent delights with violent endings, that in their triumph die" (ver. 19).

III. CONCLUDING EXHORTATION (ver. 20), founded on the contrast just given. 1. The true rapture (the Hebrew word *shâgâh*, "reel" as in intoxication, repeated) should deter from the false and vicious. 2. To prefer the bosom of the adulteress to that of the true wife is a mark of the most vitiated taste, the most perverted understanding.—J.

Ver. 21.—*God the all-seeing Judge.* "Before Jehovah's eyes are man's paths, and all his tracks he surveys."

I. CYNICAL PROVERBS CONCERNING SECRECY ARE CONDEMNED. Such as "What the eye sees not, the heart does not grieve over;" "A slice from a cut cake is never missed;" "Never mind so long as you are not found out."

II. NOTHING IS REALLY SECRET OR UNKNOWN. We are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. The whisper, the inarticulate thought, will come back one day in thunder.—J.

Vers. 22, 23.—*Vice suicidal.* I. WICKEDNESS (LIKE GOODNESS) HAS UNDESIGNED RESULTS. The good comes back to nestle in the bosom of the giver and the doer. We never do right without invoking a blessing on our own heads. Evil, on the other hand, designed and executed, is like a snare set for one's self, a net in the meshes of which the crafty is entangled, self-overreached.

II. WICKEDNESS AND IGNORANCE ARE IN CLOSE CONNECTION. "He shall die for *want of* instruction"—the correct rendering of ver. 23. Socrates taught that vice was ignorance, virtue identical with knowledge. This, however, ignores the perversity of the will. The Bible ever traces wickedness to *wilful* and inexcusable ignorance.

III. WICKEDNESS IS A KIND OF MADNESS. "Through the greatness of his folly he shall reel about." The word *shâgâh* once more. The man becomes drunk and frenzied with passion, and, a certain point passed, staggers to his end unwitting, careless, or desperate.—J.

Vers. 1—20.—*Victims of vice.* One particular vice is here denounced; it is necessary to warn the young against its snares and sorrows. What is here said, however, of this sin is applicable, in most if not all respects, to any kind of unholy indulgence; it is an earnest and faithful warning against the sin and shame of a vicious life.

I. ITS SINFULNESS. The woman who is a sinner is a "strange" woman (ver. 3). The temptress is all too common amongst us, but she is *strange* in the sight of God. She is an alien, foreign altogether to his purpose, a sad and wide departure from his thought. And all vice is strange to him; it is a departure from his thought and from his will; it is sin in his sight; it is offensive to him; he "cannot look on" such iniquity without abhorrence and condemnation. He who is tempted may well say, with the pure-minded and godly Joseph, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

II. ITS SHAME. It is a shame to a man to allow himself to be deceived by a vain, shallow-minded woman (vers. 3, 4); it is a shame to a man to permit a mere selfish temptress to beguile him, to prevent him from entertaining the true and wise thought in his mind, to hinder him by her artifices from reflecting on what is the path of life and what the way of death (ver. 6); it is a shame to a man to surrender his manly virtue to one so utterly undeserving of his honour (vers. 7—9). He who yields to the solicitations of the temptress, to the impulses of a vicious nature, is forfeiting his honour, is resigning his true manhood, is a son of shame.

III. ITS FOLLY. (Vers. 15—20.) How senseless is sin! how stupid is vice! It embraces a guilty and short-lived pleasure only to reject a pure and lasting joy. Why should men resort to shameful lust when they can be blest with lawful and honourable love? Why sink in debauchery when they can walk along those goodly heights of moderation and of pleasures on which God's blessing may be invoked? Whatever the

sense may be (whether of seeing, hearing, etc.), it is the pure pleasure which is not only high and manly, but is also unaccompanied by bitter and accusing thoughts, and is lasting as life itself. Why turn to devour the garbage when "angels' food" is on the table? Vice is the very depth of folly.

IV. Its penalty. This is threefold. 1. Impoverishment (ver. 10). Vice soon scatters a man's fortune. A few years, or even weeks, will suffice for dissipation to run through a good estate. Men "waste their substance in riotous living." 2. Remorse (vers. 11—14). How bitter to the soul the pangs of self-accusation! There is no poisoned dart that wounds the body as the arrow of unavailing remorse pierces the soul. 3. Death (ver. 5, "Her feet go down to death; her steps lay hold on hell"). Death physical and death spiritual are the issue of immorality. The grave is dug, the gates of the City of Sorrow are open, for the lascivious, the drunken, the immoral.—C.

Ver. 11 (first clause).—*Mourning at the last.* What multitudes of men and women have there been who, on beds of pain, or in homes of poverty, or under strong spiritual apprehension, have "mourned at the last"! After tasting and "enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season," they have found that iniquity must meet its doom, and they have "mourned at the last." Sin makes fair promises, but breaks its word. It owns that there is a debt due for guilty pleasure, but it hints that it will not send in the bill for many years;—perhaps never: but that account has to be settled, and they who persist in sinful indulgence will find, when it is too late, that they have to "mourn at the last." This is true of—

I. Slothfulness. Very pleasant to be idling when others are busy, to be following the bent of our own fancy, dallying with the passing hours, amusing ourselves the whole day long, the whole year through; but there is retribution for wasted hours, for misspent youth, for negligent and idle manhood, to be endured further on; there is self-reproach, condemnation of the good and wise, an ill-regulated mind, straitened means if not poverty,—mourning at the last.

II. Intemperance. Very tempting may be the jovial feast, very fascinating the sparkling cup, very inviting the hilarity of the festive circle; but there is the end of it all to be taken into account, not only to-morrow's pain or lassitude, but the forfeiture of esteem, the weakening of the soul's capacity for pure enjoyment, the depravation of the taste, the encircling round the spirit of those cruel fetters which "at the last" hold it in cruel bondage.

III. Lasciviousness. (See previous homily.)

IV. Worldliness. There is a strong temptation presented to men to throw themselves into, so as to be absorbed by, the affairs of time and sense—business, politics, literature, art, one or other of the various amusements which entertain and gratify. This inordinate, excessive, unqualified devotion to any earthly pursuit, while it is to be distinguished from abandonment to forbidden pleasure, is yet wrong and ruinous. It is *wrong*, for it leaves out of reckoning the supreme obligation—that which we owe to him in whom we live and move and have our being, and who has redeemed us with his own blood. It is *ruinous*, for it leaves us (1) without the heritage we were meant to have, and may have, in God, in Jesus Christ and his blessed service and salvation; (2) unprepared for the other and larger life which is so near to us, and to which we approach by every step we take. However pleasant be the pursuits we engage in or the prizes we win, we shall wake one day from our dream with shame and fear; we shall "mourn at the last."—C.

Ver. 21.—*Man in God's view.* This verse is added as a powerful reason why the worst sins should be avoided. A man under temptation may well address himself thus—

> "Nor let my weaker passions dare
> Consent to sin; for God is there."

I. The varied energies and actions of man. Many are "the ways of man;" "all his goings" cannot easily be told. There is (1) his innermost thought starting in his mind; (2) then his feeling or desire in some direction; (3) then his resolution, the decision of his will; (4) then his planning and arranging; (5) then his consultation and co-operation with others; (6) then his execution. Or we may consider the variety

of his actions by regarding them as (1) beginning and ending with himself; (2) affecting his immediate circle, his own family; (3) reaching and influencing his neighbours; (4) acting upon those who will come after him. The forms of human activity are indefinitely numerous—so complex is his nature, so various are his relations to his kind and the world in which he lives.

II. GOD'S NOTICE OF ALL OUR DOINGS. "The ways of a man are before the eyes of the Lord." Every thought is thought, every feeling felt, every resolve made, every plan formed, every word spoken, every deed done, under his all-observing eye. "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, but *all* things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. iv. 13; see 2 Chron. xvi. 9; Job xxxi. 4; Ps. cxxxix. 2—12; and ch. xv. 3). The eyes of the Lord not only cover the earth and the heavens, but they look everywhere within; through the thick curtains of the night his own hand has spread, and through the thickest folds our hand can draw, and through the walls of our human frame into the inner chambers and darkest recesses of our souls.

III. GOD'S MEASURE OF OUR DOINGS. "He *pondereth* all his goings." God weighs all that he sees in the scales of his Divine wisdom and righteousness. He marks every thought, word, deed; and he estimates their worth, their excellency or their guilt. Never any way taken, any course entered upon, but *all* the motives which led to its choice and execution are before the mind of God, and are accepted or are blamed by him. And this being so, there must be—

IV. GOD'S REMEMBRANCE OF OUR PAST AS WELL AS HIS OBSERVATION OF OUR PRESENT LIFE. For the Omniscient One cannot forget; and it may be that, in some way unknown to us, but quite in accordance with some ascertained facts, all our past actions are spread out before his sight in some part of his universe. Certainly the effects of all we have done abide, either in our own character and life or in those of other men. Our ways, past and present, *are before him;* he is estimating the moral character, for good or ill, of *all* our goings.

Therefore: 1. In view of all our guilt, let us seek his mercy in Christ Jesus. For it is a truth consistent with the foregoing, that, if there be repentance and faith, all our sins shall "be cast into the depths of the sea" (Amos vii. 19). God will "hide his face from our sins, and blot out our iniquities" (Ps. li. 9). 2. In view of God's observation and judgment, let us strive to please him. If we yield our hearts to himself and our lives to his service, if we accept eternal life at his hands through Jesus Christ, and then seek to be and to do what is right in his sight, we shall do that which he will look upon with Divine approval, with fatherly delight (Gal. iv. 1; Heb. xi. 5; xiii. 16; 1 Pet. ii. 20, etc.).—C.

Vers. 22, 23.—*The end of an evil course.* There are two fearful evils in which impenitent sin is sure to end, two classes of penalty which the wrong-doer must make up his mind to pay. He has to submit to—

I. AN INWARD TYRANNY OF THE MOST CRUEL CHARACTER. (Ver. 22.) We may never have seen the wild animal captured by the hunter, making violent efforts to escape its toils, failing, desperately renewing the attempt with fierce and frantic struggles, until at length it yielded itself to its fate in sullen despair. But we have witnessed something far more romantic than that. We have watched some human soul caught in the meshes of vice (intemperance, it may be), or entangled in the bonds of sin (coveteousness, it may be), struggling to be free, failing in its endeavour, renewing the attempt with determined eagerness, and failing again, until at length it yields to the foe, vanquished, ruined, lost! "His own iniquities have taken the wicked himself, he is holden in the cords of his sins." 1. Sin hides its tyranny from view; its cords are so carried that they are not seen; nay, they are so wound around the soul that at first they are not felt, and the victim has no notion that he is being enslaved. 2. Gradually and stealthily it fastens its fetters on the soul; *e.g.* intemperance, impurity, untruthfulness, selfishness, worldliness. 3. It finally obtains a hold from which the soul cannot shake itself free; the man is "holden;" sin has him in its firm grip; he is a captive, a spiritual slave. Beside this terrible tyranny, the persistent wrong-doer has to endure—

II. AFTER-CONSEQUENCES YET MORE CALAMITOUS. (Ver. 23.) These are: 1. Death

in the midst of folly. "He shall die without instruction," unenlightened by eternal truth, in the darkness of error and sin; he will die, "hoping nothing, believing nothing, and fearing nothing"—nothing which a man should die in the hope of, nothing which a man should live to believe and die in the faith of, nothing which a man should fear, living or dying. He shall die without peace to smooth his dying pillow, without hope to light up his closing eyes. 2. Exclusion from future blessedness through his folly. "In the greatness of his folly he shall go astray." While the simplest wisdom would have led him to seek and find entrance into the City of God, in the greatness of his folly he wanders off to the gates of the City of Sorrow.

1. If the path of folly has been entered upon and is now being trodden, return at once without delay. Further on, perchance a very little further on, it may be too late—the cords of sin may be too strong for the soul to snap. Arise at once, in the strength of the strong Deliverer, and regain the freedom which is being lost. 2. Enter in earliest days the path of spiritual freedom. Bear the blessed yoke of the Son of God, that every other yoke may be broken. Enrol in his ranks whose "service is perfect freedom."—C.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER VI.

Vers. 1—35.—The sixth chapter embraces four distinct discourses, each of which is a warning. The subjects treated of are (1) suretyship (vers. 1—5); (2) sloth (vers. 6—11); (3) malice (vers. 12—19); and (4) adultery (ver. 20 to the end). The continuity of the subject treated of in the preceding chapter appears to be somewhat abruptly interrupted to make way for the insertion of three discourses on subjects which apparently have little connection with what precedes and what follows. Their unlooked-for and unexpected appearance has led Hitzig to regard them as interpolations, but it has been conclusively pointed out by Delitzsch that there is sufficient internal evidence, in the grammatical construction, figures, word-formations, delineations, and threatenings, to establish the position that they proceeded from the same hand that composed the rest of the book and to guarantee their genuineness. But another and not less interesting question arises as to whether any connection subsists between these discourses and the subject which they apparently interrupt. Such a connection is altogether denied by Delitzsch, Zöckler, and other German commentators, who look upon them as independent discourses, and maintain that, if there is any connection, it can be only external and accidental. On the other hand, Bishops Patrick and Wordsworth discover an ethical connection which, though not clear at first sight, is not on that account less real or true. The subject treated of in the preceding chapter is the happiness of the married life, and this is imperilled by incautious undertaking of suretyship, and suretyship, it is maintained, induces sloth, while sloth leads to maliciousness. After treating of suretyship, sloth, and malice in succession, the teacher recurs to the former subject of his discourse, viz. impurity of life, against which he gives impressive warnings. That such is the true view there appears little doubt. One vice is intimately connected with another, and the verdict of experience is that a life of idleness is one of the most prolific sources of a life of impurity. Hence we find Ovid saying—

"Quæritur, Ægisthus, quâ re sit factus adulter?
In promptu causa est—desidiosus erat."

"Do you ask why Ægisthus has become an adulterer?
The reason is close at hand—he was full of idleness."

Within the sphere of these discourses themselves the internal connection is distinctly observable, vers. 16—19 being a refrain of vers. 12—15, and the phrase, "to stir up strife," closing each enumeration (see vers. 14 and 19).

Vers. 1—5.—9. *Ninth admonitory discourse. Warning against suretyship.*

Ver. 1.—The contents of this section are

not to be taken so much as an absolute unqualified prohibition of suretyship as counsel directed against the inconsiderate and rash undertaking of such an obligation. There were some occasions on which becoming surety for another was demanded by the laws of charity and prudence, and when it was not inconsistent with the humane precepts of the Mosaic Law as enunciated in Lev. xix. 19. In other passages of our book the writer of the Proverbs lays down maxims which would clearly countenance the practice (ch. xiv. 21; xvii. 17; xviii. 24; xxvii. 10), and in the apocryphal writings the practice is encouraged, if not enjoined (Ecclus. xxix. 14; viii. 13). Notwithstanding this limitation, however, it is observable that suretyship is almost invariably spoken of in terms of condemnation, and the evil consequences which it entailed on the surety may be the reason why it is so frequently alluded to. The teacher refers to the subject in the following passages: here; ch. xi. 15; xvii. 18; xxii. 26; xx. 16; xxvii. 13. **My son.** On this address, see ch. ii. 1; iii. 1, 17. **If thou be surety** (Hebrew, *im-ârâvtâ*); literally, *if thou hast become surety;* LXX., *ἐὰν ἐγγύσῃ*; Vulgate, *si spoponderis.* What the teacher counsels in the present instance is that, if by inadvertence a person has become surety, he should by the most strenuous endeavours prevail on his friend to free him from the bond. The Hebrew verb *ârâv* is properly "to mix," and then signifies "to become surety" in the sense of interchanging with another and so taking his place. The frequent mention of suretyship in the Proverbs is alluded to above. The first recorded instances are those where Judah offers to become surety for Benjamin, first to Israel (Gen. xliii. 9), and secondly to Joseph (Gen. xliv. 33). It is singular that it is only once alluded to in the Book of Job, where Job says, "Lay down now, put me in surety with thee; who is he that will strike hands with me?" (Job xvii. 3); and once only, and that doubtfully, in the whole of the Mosaic writings, in the phrase *tesummat yad*, i.e. giving or striking the hand in the case of perjury (Lev. vi. 2). The psalmist refers to it in the words, "Be surety for thy servant for good" (Ps. cxix. 122). It is spoken of twice in Isaiah (xxxviii. 14; xxxvi. 8), once in Ezekiel (xxvii. 27) and in Nehemiah (v. 3), and the cognate noun, *arrabon*, "the pledge," security for payment, is met with in Gen. xxxviii. 17 and 1 Sam. xvii. 18. These scattered notices in the Old Testament show that the practice was always in existence, while the more frequent notices in the Proverbs refer to a condition of society where extended commercial transactions had apparently made it a thing of daily occurrence, and a source of constant danger. In the New Testament one instance of suretyship is found, when St. Paul offers to become surety to Philemon for Onesimus (Philem. 19). But in the language of the New Testament, the purely commercial meaning of the word is transmuted into a spiritual one. The gift of the Spirit is regarded as the *arrabon*, *ἀρραβών*, "the pledge," the earnest of the Christian believer's acceptance with God (2 Cor. i. 22; v. 5; Eph. i. 14). **For thy friend**; Hebrew, *l'rêêka.* The Hebrew *rêêh*, more usually *rêâ*, is "the companion or friend," and in this case obviously the debtor for whom one has become surety. The word reappears in ver. 3. The ל (*l'*) prefixed to *rêêh* is the *dativus commodi.* So Delitzsch and others. **If**; not in the original, but rightly inserted. **Thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger** (Hebrew, *tâkâ'tâ lâzzâr kâpêykâ*); properly, *thou hast stricken thy hand for a stranger.* The analogous use of *l'* (ל) in *lâzzâr* determines this rendering. As in the corresponding *l'rêêyka*, the ל (*l'*) indicates the person *for* whose benefit the suretyship is undertaken, *i.e.* the debtor, and not the person *with* whom the symbolical act is performed, *i.e.* the creditor. Compare the following passages, though the construction with ל is wanting: "He that is surety for a stranger" (ch. xi. 15); "Take his garment that is surety for a stranger" (ch. xx. 16 and xxvii. 13). "The stranger," *zâr*, is not an alien, or one belonging to another nationality, but simply one extraneous to one's self, and so equivalent to *ăkhêr*, "another." The meaning, therefore, seems to be, "If thou hast entered into a bond for one with whom thou art but slightly acquainted." Others (Wordsworth, Plumptre), however, take *zâr* as representing the foreign money-lender. The phrase, "to strike the hand," *tâkâ kâph*, or simply "to strike," *tâkâ*, describes the symbolical act which accompanied the contract. *Tâkâ* is properly "to drive," like the Latin *defigere*, and hence "to strike," and indicates the sharp sound with which the hands were brought into contact. The act no doubt was accomplished before witnesses, and the hand which was stricken was that of the creditor, who thereby received assurance that the responsibility of the debtor was undertaken by the surety. The "striking of the hand" as indicating the completion of a contract is illustrated by the author of the 'Kamoos' (quoted by Lee, on Job xvii. 3), who says, "He struck or clapped to him a sale . . . he struck his hand in a sale, or on his hand . . . he struck his own hand upon the hand of him, and this is among the necessary (transactions) of sale." So among

Western nations the giving of the hand has been always regarded as a pledge of *bona fides*. Thus Menelaus demands of Helena (Euripides, 'Hel.,' 838), Ἐπὶ τοῖσδε νῦν δεξιὰς ἐμῆς θίγε, "Touch my right hand now on these conditions," *i.e.* in attestation that you accept them. In purely verbal agreements it is the custom in the present day for the parties to clasp the hand. A further example may be found in the plighting of troth in the Marriage Service.

Ver. 2.—**Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth**, etc.; *i.e.* the inevitable consequence of an inconsiderate undertaking of suretyship is that you become entangled and involved by your own promises, and hampered by self-imposed obligations. The Authorized Version rightly regards this as the conclusion. So the Vulgate. Others, however, carry on the hypothesis, and insert אִם, "if:" "If thou art snared," etc.; but without warrant (Zöckler, Wordsworth, Plumptre). The LXX. throws the thought into the form of a proverb, as "a strong net to a man are his own words." A distinction is to be drawn between the verbs rendered "entangled" and "taken;" the former, *yâkôsh*, signifying to be taken unwarily, off one's guard; the latter, *lâkâd*, referring, as before observed (cf. ch. v. 22), to the being stricken with the net. They are found in the same collocation in Isa. viii. 15, "Many among them shall be *snared* and *taken*." The repetition of the phrase, "with the words of thy mouth," is not unintentional or purely rhetorical. It is made, as Delitzsch observes, to bring with greater force to the mind that the entanglements in which the surety is involved are the result of his own indiscretion.

Ver. 3.—In this verse advice is tendered as to what is to be done under the circumstances of this entanglement. The surety is to take immediate steps to be set free. The urgency of the advice is to be explained by the serious consequences which would follow in the event of the debtor not satisfying the creditor in due time. The surety became liable to the penalties inflicted by the Hebrew law of debt. His property could be distrained. His bed and his garment could be taken from him (ch. xxii. 27 and xx. 16), and he was liable as well as his family to be reduced to the condition of servitude. So we find the son of Sirach saying, "Suretyship hath undone many of good estate, and shaken them as a wave of the sea: mighty men hath it driven from their houses, so that they wandered among strange nations" (Ecclus. xxix. 18; cf. 2 Kings iv. 1; Neh. v. 3—5; and Matt. xviii. 25). Compare the dictum of Thales, the Greek philosopher, Ἐγγύα πάρα δ' ἄτα, "Give surety, and ruin is near;" and that of Chilo (Pliny, 'Nat. Hist.,' vi. 32), "Sponsioni non deest jactura"—"Loss is not wanting to a surety." The same idea is conveyed in the modern German proverb, "Bürgen soll man' würgen"—"Worry a surety." **Do this now**; or, *therefore*. The particle *êphô* is intensive, and emphasizes the command, and in this sense is of frequent occurrence (Job xvii. 15; Gen. xxvii. 32; xliii. 11; 2 Kings x. 10, etc.). It appears to be equivalent to the Latin *quod dico*. So the Vulgate, "Do therefore what I say;" similarly the LXX. renders, "Do, my son, what I bid thee (ἃ ἐγὼ σοι ἐντέλλομαι)." It carries with it the sense of instant and prompt action. **And deliver thyself, when thou art come into the hand of thy friend**; *i.e.* set thyself free when thou findest thou art actually at the mercy of thy friend for whom thou hast become surety. The *ki* (כִּי) is not hypothetical, but actual; it is not "if" you are, but "when" or because you actually are in his power. The Vulgate and LXX. render כִּי respectively by *quia* and γάρ. **Go, humble thyself**; *i.e.* present thyself as a suppliant, prostrate thyself, offer thyself to be trodden upon (Michaelis), or humble thyself like to the threshold which is trampled and trode upon (Rashi), or humble thyself under the soles of his feet (Aben Ezra). The expression implies the spirit of entire submission, in which the surety is to approach his friend in order to be released from his responsibility. The Hebrew verb *hith'râppês* has, however, been rendered differently. Radically *râphâs* signifies "to tread or trample with the feet," and this has been taken to express haste, or the bestirring of one's self. So the Vulgate reads *festina*, "hasten;" and the LXX. ἴσθι μὴ ἐκλυόμενος, *i.e.* "be not remiss." But the hithp. clearly determines in favour of the reflexive rendering; comp. Ps. lxviii. 30, "Till every one submit himself with pieces of silver"—the only other passage where *râphâs* occurs. **And make sure thy friend** (Hebrew, *r'hâv rêêykâ*); rather, *importune thy friend*, be urgent with him, press upon him to fulfil his engagement. The verb *râhâv* is properly "to be fierce," "to rage," and hence with the accusative, as here, "to assail with impetuosity." In Isa. iii. 5 it is used with בְּ (*b'*), and signifies to act fiercely against any one. The meaning of the passage is that if abject submission or persuasion does not avail, then sterner measures are to be resorted to to gain the desired end.

Ver. 4.—This verse carries on the thought one step further. The appeal to the friend is not to be confined to one spasmodic effort and then relinquished. He is to be followed up pertinaciously and continually, with unwearied diligence, until prevailed upon to

fulfil his engagements. Of this unwearied energy in the pursuit of an object in which one is deeply interested, compare David's resolution, "I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob" (Ps. cxxxii. 4, 5).

Ver. 5.—The struggles of the roe and the bird to escape from the snare are employed figuratively to describe the efforts which the surety is to make to tear and free himself from his friend. **From the hand** of the hunter (Hebrew, *miyyâd*); literally, *from the hand*, as shown by the italics. The variation in all the ancient versions, with the exception of the Vulgate and Venetian, which read "from the snare," suggests that the original text was *mippath* instead of *miyyâd*. The Hebrew *yad*, "hand," may, however, be used by metonymy for a toil or gin; but this is improbable, as no example of this kind can be found. With regard to the addition, "of the hunter," though this does not occur in the original, the parallelism would seem to clearly require it, and Böttcher maintains, but upon insufficient evidence, and against the reading of all manuscripts, which omit it, that the word *tsâyyâd*, equivalent to "of the hunter," formed part of the original text, but has fallen out. The plain reading, "from the hand," may, however, be used absolutely, as in 1 Kings xx. 42, "Because thou hast let go out of thy hand (*miyyâd*)," in which case the hand will not be that of the hunter, but that of the person for whom the one is surety. **Roe.** There is a paronomasia in *ts'vi*, equivalent to "roe," and *tsiphôr*, equivalent to "bird," of the original, which is lost in the Authorized Version. The *ts'vi* is the "roe" or "gazelle," so named from the beauty of its form (see also Song of Sol. ii. 7—9, 17; iii. 5; viii. 14; 1 Kings v. 3; Isa. xiii. 14). *Tsippôr* is a generic word, and represents any small bird. It is derived from the twittering or chirping noise which the bird makes, the root being *tsâphâr*, "to chirp, or twitter." As to its identification with the sparrow, *Passer montanus*, or the blue thrush, *Petrocossyphus cyanens* (see 'Bible Animals,' Rev. J. G. Wood, p. 405, edit. 1876).

Vers. 6—11.—10. *Tenth admonitory discourse. Warning against sloth.* The ethical connection of this discourse with the preceding has already been pointed out. Sloth militates against prosperity; it is the prolific parent of want, and, even more surely than suretyship, leads to misfortune and ruin. The certainty with which ruin steals upon the sluggard may be the reason why the teacher closes the discourse in the way he does. In the case of suretyship such an issue is uncertain; there is the possibility of escape, the surety may prevail upon his friend to release him from his obligation, and so he may escape ruin; but with sloth no such contingency is possible, its invariable end is disaster. So far as the grammatical structure of the two discourses is concerned, they appear to be quite independent of each other, the only points of coincidence observable being the repetition of one or two words, which is purely accidental (cf. "go" in vers. 3 and 6, and "sleep" and "slumber" in vers. 4 and 10).

Ver. 6.—**Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise.** The ant (Hebrew, *n'mâlâh*) is here brought forward as supplying an example of wisdom to the sluggard. The habits of this insect, its industry and providence, have in all ages made it the symbol of these two qualities, and not only the sacred, but also profane writers have praised its foresight, and held it up for imitation. The ant is only mentioned twice in the Old Testament, and on both occasions in our book (see present passage and ch. xxx. 25). The derivation of *n'mâlâh* is either from the root *nâm*, with reference first to the silence with which it moves, and secondly to its active yet unperceived motion (Delitzsch), or from *nâmâl*, i.q. *mâlâl*, "to cut off," from its cutting off or consuming seeds (*ab incidendis seminibus*) (Buxtorf, Gesenius). The Aramaic name, *shum'sh'mânâh*, however, points to its activity and rapid running hither and thither (Fleischer). *Sluggard;* Hebrew, *âtsêl*, a verbal adjective found only in the Proverbs. The primary idea of the root *âtsâl* is that of languor and laxity. The cognate abstract nouns *âts'lâh* and *âts'luth*, equivalent to "slothfulness," occur in ch. xix. 15; xxxi. 27. *Consider her ways;* attentively regard them, and from them derive a lesson of wisdom. Her ways are the manner in which the ant displays her industry and foresight.

Ver. 7.—**Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler.** This statement is substantially correct, for though the most recent observations made by modern naturalists have discovered various classes of ants occupying the same ant-hill, yet there appears to be a total want of that gradation and subordination in ant-life which is noticeable among bees. The three terms used here, *kâtsâ, shôter, môshêl*, all refer to government, and correspond respectively with the modern Arabic terms, *kadi, wali*, and *emir* (Zöckler). The first refers to the judicial office, and should rather be rendered "judge," the root

*kâtsâh* being "to decide" (see Isa. i. 10; iii. 6, 7; Micah iii. 9). The word, however, is used of a military commander in Josh. x. 24; Judg. ii. 6—11, and in this sense it is understood by the Vulgate, which has *dux*. *Shôtêr*, rendered "overseer," is literally "a scribe," and appears as the general designation for any official. In Exod. v. 6, 19 the *shôtêr* is the person employed by the Egyptian taskmasters to urge on the Israelites in their forced labour; in Numb. xi. 16 the *shôtêr* is one of the seventy elders; and in 1 Chron. xxiii. 4 he is a municipal magistrate. The meaning assigned to the word in the Authorized Version seems to be the correct one. The ant has no overseer; there is none to regulate or see that the work is done. Each ant apparently works independently of the rest, though guided by a common instinct to add to the common store. In *môshêl* we have the highest title of dignity and power, the word signifying a lord, prince, or ruler, from *mâshâl*, "to rule."

Ver. 8.—**Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.** It is this characteristic, combined with what has just been said, which gives point to the lesson the sluggard is to learn. The teacher, as it were, argues: If the ant, so insignificant a creature in the order of the animal kingdom, is so provident, how much more should you be—you, a man endued with superior intelligence, and with so many more resources at hand, and with greater advantages! If the ant, with none to urge, direct, or control her work, is so industrious, surely she provides an example at which you, the sluggard, should blush, since there is every external incentive to rouse you to action—your duty to the community, the urgent advice of your friends, and your dignity as a man. If she provides for the future, much more should you do so, and throw off your sloth. Objection has been taken to what is here stated of the provident habits of the ant in storing food, on the ground that it is carnivorous and passes the winter in a state of torpidity. That the ant does lay up stores for future use has, however, been the opinion of all ages. Thus Hesiod ('Days,' 14) speaks of the ant as harvesting the grain, calling it τὸ ῥπις, "the provident." Virgil says ('Georg.,' i. 186; cf. 'Æneid,' iv. 4027)—

"Veluti ingentem formicæ farris acervum
Quum populant hiemis memores, tectoque reponunt."

"So the ants, when they plunder a tall heap of corn, mindful of the winter, store it in their cave." The language of Horace ('Sat.,' i. 1. 32) might be a comment on our passage—

"Parvula (nam exemplo est) magni formica laboris sicut
Ore trahit quodcunque potest, atque addit acervo,
Quem struit, haud ignara ac non incauta futuri,
Quæ, simul universum contristat Aquarius annum
Non usquam prorepit, et illis utitur ante
Quæsitis sapiens."

"For thus the little ant (to human lore
No mean example) forms her frugal store,
Gathered, with mighty toils, on every side,
Nor ignorant, nor careless to provide
For future want; yet when the stars appear
That darkly sadden the declining year,
No more she comes abroad, but wisely lives
On the fair store industrious summer gives."

(Francis' Translation.)

The same provident character is noted in Æsop's fable, 'The Ant and the Grasshopper;' see also Aristotle ('Hist. Nat.,' ix. 6). All objections on this subject appear to be based on insufficient data, and have been conclusively answered by recent observation. Apart from the remark of Buffon, that "the ants of tropical climates *lay up provisions*, and as they probably live the whole year, they submit themselves to regulations entirely unknown among the ants of Europe." The late Professor Darwin states of the agricultural ant of Texas, which in many features resembles the ant of Palestine, that it not only *stores its food*, but prepares the soil for the crops, keeps the ground free from weeds, and finally reaps the harvest (*Journal of Linnæan Society*, vol. i. No. 21, p. 29). Canon Tristram also observes, "The language of the wise man is not only in accordance with the universal belief of his own time, but with the accurately ascertained facts of natural history. Contrary to its habits in colder climates, the ant is not there dormant through the winter; and among the tamarisks of the Dead Sea it may be seen, in January, actively engaged in collecting the aphides and saccharine exudations, in long files passing and repassing up and down the trunk. Two of the most common species of the Holy Land (*Alta barbara*, the black ant, and *Alta structor*, the brown ant) are strictly seed-feeders, and in summer lay up large stores of grain for winter use. These species are spread along the whole of the Mediterranean coasts, but are unknown in more northern climates. Hence writers who were ignorant of ants beyond those of their own countries have been presumptuous

enough to deny the accuracy of Solomon's statement" ('Nat. Hist. of the Bible,' p. 320). The Mishna, section 'Zeraim,' also contains a curious piece of legislation which bears testimony to the storing properties of the ant.

Ver. 9.—Vers. 9—11 contain a call to the sluggard to rouse himself from his lethargy, and the warning of the evil consequences if he remains heedless of the reproof. **How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard?** It is the same as if it were said, "What infatuation is this which makes you lie and sleep as if you had nothing else to do?" The double question stigmatizes the sluggard's utter indolence, and suggests the picture of his prolonging his stay in bed long after every one else is abroad and about his business. *How long* (Hebrew, *ād-māthā;* Vulgate, *usquequo*); literally, *till when?* When; Hebrew, *māthā;* Vulgate, *quando.* The same words are used in the same order in introducing a question in Neh. ii. 6, "For how long will the journey be? and when wilt thou return?" **Wilt thou . . . sleep.** The Hebrew *tish'kâr* is literally "wilt thou lie," but the verb easily passes to the secondary meaning of "to sleep." The delineation of the sluggard is again drawn in ch. xxiv. 30—34 in almost identical language, but with some additions.

Ver. 10.—Yet a little sleep, etc. Is this the answer of the sluggard which the teacher takes up and repeats ironically, and in a tone of contempt? or is it the teacher's own language describing how the sluggard slides on insensibly to ruin? The Vulgate favours the latter view, "Thou shalt sleep a little, thou shalt slumber a little, thou shalt fold thy hands to sleep, and then," etc. Habits, as Aristotle in his 'Ethics' has shown, are the resultant of repeated acts, and habits entail consequences. So here the inspired teacher would have it learnt, from the example of the sluggard, that the self-indulgence which he craves leads on to a confirmed indolence, which in the end leaves him powerless. "Yet a little" is the phrase on the lips of every one who makes but a feeble resistance, and yields supinely to his darling vice.

Ver. 11.—**So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.** The inevitable consequences of sloth—*poverty* and *want*, two terms conveying the idea of utter destitution—are described under a twofold aspect: first, as certain; second, as irresistible. Poverty will advance upon the sluggard with the unerring precision and swiftness with which a traveller tends towards the end of his journey, or, as Michaelis puts it, "quasi viator qui impigre pergit ac proprius venit donec propositum itineris scopum contingat" (Michaelis, 'Notæ Uberiores'). Muffet, *in loc.*, keeping to the figure, however, explains differently, "Poverty shall overtake thee, as a swift traveller does one who walks slowly." The Authorized Version, "as one that travelleth," correctly represents the original *kim'hāllēk.* There is no ground whatever, from the use of the verb, for rendering the piel participle *m'hallēk* as "a robber." The verb *hâlāk* invariably means "to go, or walk," and the piel or intensive form of the verb means "to walk vigorously, or quickly." The participle can only mean this in the two other passages where it occurs—Ps. civ. 3 and Eccles. iv. 14. The substantive *hêlēk* in 2 Sam. xii. 4 also signifies "a traveller." So the Vulgate here, *quasi viator.* The other view, it is stated, is required by the parallel expression in the second hemistich, "as an armed man," and receives some support from the LXX. reading, ὥσπερ κακὸς ὁδοιπόρος, "as an evil traveller," which may mean either a traveller bringing evil news, or one who wanders about with an evil intention and purpose, in the sense of the Latin *grassator*, "a highwayman." In this case the meaning would be that poverty shall come upon the sluggard as he is indulging in his sloth, and leave him destitute as if stripped by a robber. But the destitution of the sluggard will not only be certain and swift, it will be also irresistible. His want shall come upon him as *an armed man* (*k'ish māgēn*); literally, as *a man of a shield;* Vulgate, *quasi vir armatus;* i.e. like one fully equipped, and who attacks his foe with such onset and force that against him resistance is useless. As the unarmed, unprepared man succumbs to such an opponent, so shall the sluggard fall before want. The expressions, "*thy* poverty" and "*thy* want," represent the destitution of the sluggard as flowing directly from his own habit of self-indulgence. It is his in a special manner, and he, not others, is alone responsible for it. Compare, beside the parallel passage ch. xxiv. 33, the similar teaching in ch. x. 4; xiii. 4; xx. 4. The Vulgate, LXX., and Arabic Versions at the close of this verse add, "But if thou art diligent, the harvest shall come as a fountain, and want shall flee far from thee;" the LXX. making a further addition, "as a bad runner (ὥσπερ κακὸς δρομεύς)." It is observable, in comparing this section with the preceding, that the teacher pursues the subject of the sluggard to its close, while he leaves the end of the surety undetermined. The explanation may be in the difference in character of the two. The surety may escape the consequences of his act, but there is no such relief for the sluggard. His slothfulness becomes a habit, which increases the more

it is indulged in, and leads to consequences which are as irremediable as they are inevitable.

Vers. 12—19.—11. *Eleventh admonitory discourse. Warning against mischievousness as a thing hateful to God.* The connection of this with the preceding discourse is not at first sight very clear, but it may be found in the fact, attested only too unhappily by experience, that sloth leads those who indulge in it to such vices as are next enumerated. The sluggard may develop into a treacherous and deceitful man, and even if such should not happen, the characteristics of the two are nearly allied, and their end is much the same. St. Paul, in his First Epistle to Timothy, observes this same combination of character, and remarks that idlers are "tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not" (see 1 Tim. vi. 13). The intention of the discourse is obviously to dissuade all, and especially the young, from the vices, and to preserve them from the ruin, of those men of whom "the naughty person and wicked man" is the type.

Ver. 12.—**A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth.** The teacher begins by stating in general terms the nature and character of the man whom he now holds up as a warning to others, and then proceeds to point out the various features in his conduct and behaviour by which he may be known. In concise terms he is described as "a naughty person, a wicked man." This is pre-eminently his character, and the first feature in it is that his life is one of wilful and injurious misrepresentation of the truth. *A naughty person, a wicked man.* In apposition and mutually explanatory. The grammatical arrangement of the sentences which follow, each of which is introduced by a participle, and is thus co-ordinate to the others, as well as the parallel terms, "person" (*âdâm*) and "man" (*ish*), determine this apposition. So Bertheau and Delitzsch. Others (as Zöckler, Noyes, Kamph), however, connect the second expression with the series of characteristics which follow, and render, "A worthless person is a deceiver, who," etc., but wrongly. *A naughty person* (Hebrew, *âdâm b'liyyâăl*); literally, *a man of Belial;* Vulgate, *homo apostata;* LXX., ἀνὴρ ἄφρων. The word "Belial" is derived from *b'li*, "without," and *yâăl*, "profit" (*i.e.* "without profit"), or from *b'li* and *ôl*, "yoke" (*i.e.* "without yoke"), and strictly signifies either a worthless or a lawless person. The latter derivation is, however, rejected by Gesenius and others. Its abstract signification is worthlessness, uselessness; its concrete or adjectival, worthless. The word "naughty" (Anglo-Saxon, *náht, ne aht*, "not anything," equivalent to "nothing"), in the sense of good-for-nothing, ne'er-do-well, adopted in the Authorized Version, exactly reproduces its strict etymological meaning. The word, however, always carries with it the idea of moral turpitude. In the present instance its meaning is determined by the appositional phrase, "a man of iniquity," or "a wicked man," and such iniquity as takes the form of mischief-making, deceit, and sowing discord among brethren. The "man of Belial" is not therefore simply, as its etymological derivation would imply, a worthless individual, one who is of no use either to himself or to the community at large, but a positively wicked, iniquitous, and despicable character. The meaning of the word varies in other passages. Thus in Deut. xiii. 13, where it first occurs, it is used to designate those who have fallen away into idolatry, and induce others to follow their example. In this sense it corresponds with the Vulgate, *apostata*, as signifying a defection from the worship of the true God. Again, in 1 Sam. i. 16 it is applied to the profanation of sacred places. When Hannah is accused by Eli of drunkenness in God's house at Shiloh, she replies, "Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial." In the historical books (*e.g.* Judges, 1 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Chronicles), where it is of frequent occurrence, it has the general meaning of "wickedness," under whatever form it appears. So in the Psalms (xviii. 4; xli. 8; ci. 3) and Nahum (i. 11, 15). In the Book of Job (xxxiv. 18, once only) it is used adjectively and as a term of reproach, "Is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked [*b'liyyâăl;* i.e. 'worthless']?" Individuals possessing the qualities of worthlessness, profanity, or wickedness are designated in Holy Scripture either as "sons," "children," "daughters," or "men of Belial." The word only occurs in two other passages in the Proverbs—ch. xvi. 27 and xix. 28. In the New Testament (2 Cor. vi. 15) the word "Belial" (Greek, Βελίαρ or Βελιάλ) appears as an appellative of Satan, ὁ πονηρὸς, "the evil one," as the representative of all that is bad, and as antichrist. *A wicked man* (Hebrew, *ish âvên*); literally, *a man of vanity* or *iniquity;* Vulgate, *vir inutilis;* LXX., ἀνὴρ παράνομος. The radical idea of *âvên* (from *ûn*, "nothing") is that of emptiness or vanity, and has much, therefore, in common with *b'liyyâăl*. Its secondary

meaning, and that which it usually bears in Scripture, is iniquity. "A man of iniquity" is one who is altogether deficient in moral consciousness, and who goes about to work wickedness and do hurt and injury to others (cf. ver. 18 and Job xxii. 15). *Walketh with a froward mouth.* His first characteristic, as already observed. His whole life and conduct are marked by craftiness, deceit, perversion, and misrepresentation, and an utter want of truth. "Walking" is here, as elsewhere in Scripture, used of some particular course of conduct. So we find the LXX. paraphrase, *πορεύεται ὁδοὺς οὐκ ἀγαθάς*, "he enters or walks not in good ways." *With a froward mouth* (Hebrew, *ik'shûth pĕh*); literally, *with perversity of mouth;* Vulgate, *ore perverso.* Symmachus has *στρεβλεύμασι στόματος*, "with perversity of mouth." The mouth, or speech, is the vehicle by which this person gives outward expression to the evil thoughts which are inwardly filling his heart. The phrase occurs before in ch. iv. 24. The meaning of the passage is well illustrated in Ps. x. 7, "His mouth is full of misery, deceit, and fraud: under his tongue is mischief and vanity."

Ver. 13.—**He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers.** He employs his other members for the same nefarious purpose. In the language of St. Paul, he yields his members to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity (Rom. vi. 19). "To wink with the eye (*kârâts ăyĭn*)," as in ch. x. 10 and Ps. xxxv. 19, or "with the eyes (*kârâts b'ēynāyim*)," is properly to compress or nip them together, and so to wink, and give the signal to others not to interfere (Gesenius and Delitzsch); cf. the LXX., *ἐννεύει ὀφθαλμῷ*; and the Vulgate, *annuit oculis.* Aquila and Theodoret, however, read, *κνίζει*, "he *vexes* or *annoys*." The observation of the teacher in ch. x. 10 is, "He that winketh with his eyes causeth sorrow." The same verb *kârûts* is also used of the compression or closing of the lips in ch. xvi. 30. *He speaketh with his feet;* i.e. he conveys signs by them to his companion; cf. the LXX., *σημαίνει δὲ ποδί*, and the Vulgate, *terit pede*, which conveys much the same meaning. *He teacheth with his fingers;* or, as more fully expressed in the LXX., *διδάσκει δὲ ἐννεύμασι δακτύλων*, "he teacheth by the signs of his fingers." Symmachus has *δακτυλοδεικτῶν*, which, however, in its strictly classical use (see Demosthenes, 790. 20) is pointing at with the finger. "Teaching" is only the secondary meaning of the Hebrew participle *môrĕh*, which is here used. The verb *yârâh*, to which it belongs, means properly to extend or stretch out the hand for the purpose of pointing out the way (compare the Hebrew *shâlakh yod*, and the Latin *monstrare*), and hence came to mean "to teach." The crafty and deceitful character which is here presented to us is strikingly reproduced in Ecclesiasticus: "He that winketh with the eyes worketh evil: and he that knoweth him will depart from him. When thou art present, he will speak sweetly, and will admire thy words: but at the last he will writhe his mouth, and slander thy sayings. I have hated many things, but nothing like him; for the Lord will hate him" (Ecclus. xxvii. 22—24). The heathen poet Nævius says of the impudent woman—

"Alium tenet, alii adnutat, alibi manus
Est occupata: est alii percellit pedem."

Compare also Ovid's words ('Amor.,' i. iv. 16)—

"Clam mihi tange pedem:
Me specta, mutusque meos, vultumque loquacem.
. . . . . .
Verba superciliis sine voce loquentia dicam;
Verba leges digitis."

So Tibullus, i. 12—

"Illa viro coram nutus conferre loquaces
Blandaque compositis abdere verba notis."

The lesson which we may learn from this verse is not to abuse the members of our bodies, by employing them for the purposes of deceit and hypocrisy, and so to promote evil, but to put them to their natural and legitimate use.

Ver. 14.—From these external features the teacher passes to the heart, the seat of all this mischief and deceit. In this respect we observe a striking correspondence with the method adopted by our Saviour in his teaching, who referred everything to the heart, as the true seat of all that was good or bad in man. **Frowardness is in his heart** (Hebrew, *tāh'pūkôth b'libbo*); *i.e.* his heart is full of perverse imaginations, it is there he nourishes his jealousy, his hatred, his malice, his ill will. It is there, too, **he deviseth mischief continually.** "Devising mischief" carries us one step further back in the history of evil. It is this feature, this deliberate premeditation to plot mischief and to devise means to carry it into execution, which makes the character of the man simply diabolical. He makes his heart as it were the workshop wherein he fabricates and prepares his villainy. The Hebrew *khârâsh* (to which the participle *khôrêsh* belongs) is equivalent to the Vulgate *machinari*, and the LXX. *τεκταίνομαι*, "to fabricate, devise, plot." (See ch. iii. 29 and ver. 18; and cf. Ps. xxxvi. 4, "He deviseth mischief upon his bed.") The LXX. combines the two statements in one proposition: "A perverse heart deviseth evil at all

times." Similarly the Vulgate, which, however, joins "continually" (Hebrew, *b'kol-eth;* Vulgate, *omni tempore*) to the second hemistich, thus: "And at all times he sows discord (*et omni tempore jurgia seminat*)." **He soweth discord** (Hebrew, *mid'yânim* (Keri) *y'shâlléăkh*); literally, *he sends forth* (i.e. excites) *strife;* or, as the margin, *he casteth forth strife.* The Keri reading *mid'yánim*, for the Khetib *m'dânim*, is probably, as Hitzig suggests, derived from Gen. xxxvii. 36. The phrase occurs again as *shillâkh m'dânim* in ver. 19, and as *shillâkh mâdôn* in ch. xvi. 28 (cf. ch. x. 12). This is the culminating point in the character of the wicked man. He takes delight in breaking up friendship and in destroying concord among brethren (see ver. 19), and thus destroys one of the most essential elements for promoting individual happiness and the welfare of the community at large. This idea of the community is introduced into the LXX., which reads, "Such an one brings disturbance to the city (*ὁ τοσοῦτος ταραχὰς συνίστησι πόλει*)." The motive cause may be either malice or self-interest.

Ver. 15.—**Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; suddenly shall he be broken without remedy.** Great sins, as Muffet, *in loc.*, observes, have great punishments; neither only great, but sudden. *Therefore;* Hebrew, *ăl-kên.* A Nemesis or retribution awaits this man of malice and deceit. His calamity or destruction is represented as the direct result of, as flowing forth from, what he has done. *His calamity;* Hebrew, *êydô.* On *êyd*, see ch. i. 26. *Shall come suddenly;* i.e. sooner than he anticipates; when he thinks his diabolical plans are succeeding, then suddenly his victims will discover his fraud and malice, and will rise and inflict the punishment which is his due. *Suddenly; pĕthā*, a variation of *pithôm* just used. *Shall he be broken;* Hebrew, *yĭsh-shâvĕr;* Vulgate, *conteretur.* The verb *shâvăr*, "to break," "to break to pieces," is used of ships which are wrecked (Isa. xiv. 29; Ezek. xxvii. 34; Jonah i. 4); of an army which is defeated and dispersed (Dan. xi. 22; 2 Chron. xiv. 12); of the destruction of a kingdom, city, or people (Isa. viii. 15; Jer. xlviii. 4); and of the complete prostration of the spirit of man by affliction (Ps. xxxiv. 19); and as such, in the passage before us, conveys the idea of the complete ruin of this man. It is a destruction that shall break him up. *Without remedy* (Hebrew, *v'éyn măr'pê;* literally, *and there is no remedy.* There shall be, as Fleischer, as it were, no means of recovery for his shattered members. His destruction shall be irremediable, or as the LXX., *a συντριβὴ ἀνίαστος*, *a contritio insanibilis;* or as the Vulgate, *nec habebit ultra medicinam.* The idea seems to be taken from the shattered fragments of a potter's vessel, which it is impossible to reunite. So in the case of the man whose life has been one of fraud, deceit, and malice, there is for him no hope of any recovery. The language may seem exaggerated, but the picture is painted with this high colouring to exhibit a strong deterrent to such a line of conduct, and further, it may be remarked that, in the present day, only the most confiding would again put trust in a man who has wilfully and maliciously deceived them (cf. Isa. xxx. 14). The second hemistich of this verse occurs again *verbatim* in ch. xxix. 1.

Ver. 16.—The whole structure and arrangement of the thoughts which occur in vers. 16—19 clearly show that this is not an independent section, but one closely allied to that which has just preceded. The object is to show that those evil qualities of deceit and malice which are disastrous to man are equally odious in the sight of Jehovah, and consequently within the scope of the Divine displeasure. **These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him.** The use of the numerical proverb, though common to the gnomic literature of Persia and Arabia, as Umbreit shows, is by our author confined to this single instance. Other examples occur in our book in the words of Agur the son of Jakeh (see ch. xxx. 7—9, 24—28), and the midda, the name given by later Jewish writers to this form of proverb, is observable in the apocryphal Book of Ecclesiasticus (see xxiii. 16; xx. 7 and xxvi. 5—28). When, as in the present instance, two numbers are given, the larger number corresponds with the things enumerated. So in Job v. 19. In Amos i. and ii., however, there is an exception to this rule, where the numbers appear to be used indefinitely. As to the origin of the numerical proverb, the most probable explanation is that given by Hitzig and adopted by Zöckler, namely, that it is due to the exigencies of parallelism. The author first adopts one number optionally, and then a second is employed as a parallel to it. Here, however, the number determined on in the writer's mind is the larger number seven, and the smaller number six is used as a rhetorical parallel. An examination of the following verses will show that the seven exactly measures the things which are described as odious to the Lord. The Authorized Version, so far as the numbers are concerned, exactly represents the original, which, by the use of the cardinal number "seven" (*shĕvā*), and not the ordinal "seventh," which would be *sh'vîi*, shows that the things enumerated are equally an abomination in God's sight. The view,

therefore, that the seventh vice is odious to God in an especial degree above the others, is untenable, though it has found defenders in Lowenstein, Bertheau, and Von Gerlach, and is supported by the Vulgate, *Sex sunt quæ odit Dominus, et septimum detestatur anima ejus.* All the seven things are execrable, all are equally objects of the Divine abhorrence. Besides, we cannot imagine that the vice of sowing discord among brethren, of ver. 19, is more odious to God than the crime of shedding innocent blood of ver. 17. *Unto him* (Hebrew, *naph'sho*); literally, *of his soul.*

Ver. 17.—The enumeration begins with *pride.* **A proud look** (Hebrew, *êynāyim râmôth*); literally, *haughty or lofty eyes,* as in the margin; Vulgate, *oculos sublimes;* LXX., ὀφθάλμὸς ὑβριστοῦ. It is not merely the look which is meant, but the temper of mind which the look expresses (Wardlaw). The lofty look is the indication of the swelling pride which fills the heart, the *mentis elatæ tumor,* the supreme disdain, *grande supercilium,* for everything and everybody. Pride is put first, because it is at the bottom of all disobedience and rebellion against God's laws. It is the very opposite of humility, which the apostle, in Eph. iv. 2, mentions as the basis, as it were, of all the virtues. All pride is intended, and the face of the Lord is against this pride. He "resisteth the proud;" he "knoweth them afar off;" he "hath respect unto the lowly;" he "will bring down high looks" (Ps. xviii. 27); he judgeth those that are high (Job xxi. 22). It is against this spirit that Job prays Jehovah "to behold every one that is proud, and abase him," and "to look upon every one that is proud, and bring him low" (Job xl. 11, 12). The next thing in the enumeration is **a lying tongue.** Lying is hateful to God, because he is the God of truth. In a concise form the expression, "a lying tongue," represents what has been already said in vers. 12 and 13 of "the wicked man" who "walks with a froward mouth," and whose conduct is made up of deceit. Lying is the wilful perversion of truth, not only by speech, but by any means whatever whereby a false impression is conveyed to the mind. The liar "sticks not at any lies, flatteries, or calumnies" (Patrick). Lying is elsewhere denounced as the subject which excites the Divine displeasure (see Ps. v. 6; cxx. 3, 4; Hos. iv. 1—3; Rev. xxi. 8, 27); and in the early Christian Church, in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, it was punished with death. On the subject of lying, see St. Augustine, 'Enchiridion,' c. xviii., wherein he says, "Mihi autem videtur peccatum quidem esse omne mendacium." Every lie is a sin. The third thing is **hands that shed innocent blood,** *i.e.* a murderous and cruel disposition, which, rather than have its plans frustrated, will imbue the hands with innocent blood, *i.e.* the blood of those who have done it no injury. The Divine command is, "Thou shalt do no murder," and those who break it will find, even if they escape man, that the Lord is "the avenger of blood," and that he "maketh inquisition" for it (cf. ch. i. and ii., and Isa. lix. 7, which bear a close resemblance to this passage). That the shedding of innocent blood cries for vengeance, and pulls down God's heavy judgments on the murderer, appears in the case of Cain and Abel (Muffet).

Ver. 18.—The fourth thing is **an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations.** "Wicked imaginations" are literally "thoughts of iniquity;" Hebrew, *mākh'sh'vôth âvĕn;* Vulgate, *cogitationes pessimas;* LXX., λογισμοὺς κακοὺς. The same expression in Isa. lix. 7 is rendered "thoughts of iniquity." (On *deviseth,* Hebrew *khôrĕsh,* see ver. 14 and ch. iii. 29.) The thought is a repetition of ver. 14*a*. There are evil thoughts in all men's hearts; but the devising, fabricating of them, and thus making the heart into a devil's workshop, is the mark of utter depravity and wickedness, and is abhorrent to God. The devices of the heart, though planned in secret, are clear to him "to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid." The peculiar position which the heart occupies in the enumeration is to be accounted for on the ground that it is the fountain, not only of those vices which have been already mentioned, but of those which follow. The fifth thing is **feet that be swift in running to mischief.** Again we are reminded of Isa. lix. 7, "Their feet run to evil." "Mischief" (Hebrew, *râ*) is a re-echo of ver. 14 and ch. i. 16. "To run to mischief" is to carry out with alacrity and without delay what has already been devised in the heart. It implies more than falling or sliding into sin, which is common to all. It denotes, Cornelius à Lapide remarks, "inexplebilem sceleris aviditatem, et destinatum studium."

Ver. 19.—The sixth thing is *perjury.* **A false witness that speaketh lies;** literally, *he that breathes out, or utters, lies as a false witness.* So the Vulgate, *proferentem mendacia testem fallacem.* The Hebrew *pûākh* is "to breathe," "to blow," and in the hiph. form, which is used here (*yâphîākh,* hiph. future), it is "to blow out" or "utter," either in a bad sense, as in the present instance, and in ch. vi. 19; xiv. 5; xix. 5, 9 (cf. Ps. x. 5; xii. 5); or in a good sense, "to utter the truth," as in ch. xii. 17. *Lies;* Hebrew, *k'zâvîm,* plural of *kāzâv,* "false-

hood," "lying" (cf. ch. xxi. 28). *A false witness* (Hebrew, *êd-k'zâvîm*), as in margin, "a witness of lies." The expression, "as a false witness," as it appears in the original, is explanatory, and indicates the particular aspect under which the speaking of lies is regarded. Lying in its more general sense has been already spoken of in ver. 17. The vice which is here noted as odious to God is expressly forbidden in the moral code, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour" (Exod. xx. 16). But this, though the chief, is only one view of the case. Perjury may be employed, not only in ruining the innocent, but also in screening the guilty. "Much hurt," says Muffet, *in loc.*, "doth the deceitful and lying witness, for he corrupteth the judge, oppresseth the innocent, suppresseth the truth, and in the courts of justice sinneth against his own soul and the Lord himself most grievously." "He that speaketh lies as a false witness," again, may be the vile instrument in the hands of unscrupulous and inexorable enemies, as those employed against our Lord and Stephen. Perjury, too, destroys the security of communities. The shipwreck of society which it occasions may be seen in the frightful misery which ensued when the system of *delatores* was not only countenanced, but encouraged under the Roman empire. Truly speaking, he that lies as a false witness must be hateful to God. **And he that soweth discord among brethren**; the seventh and last thing in the enumeration, but not, as Delitzsch holds, the *ne plus ultra* of all that is hated of God. It closes, as in ver. 14, the series, but with the addition "among brethren;" thus emphatically stigmatizing the conduct of that man as diabolical who destroys the harmony and unity of those who ought to live together in brotherly affection, and who disturbs the peace of communities.

Vers. 20—35.—12. *Twelfth admonitory discourse.* In this the teacher returns again to the subject which he has already treated in the eighth discourse. The extreme tendency of men, and especially young men, to sins of impurity is no doubt, as Delitzsch remarks, the reason why this subject is again resumed. The subject is gradually worked up to the preceding admonitions in vers. 20—23, pointing out that the way of life, the way of safety, is to be secured by obedience to the precepts of parents, whose commandment and law illumine the perilous road of life, and whose reproofs are salutary to the soul. The arguments against the sin of adultery are cogent in their dissuasiveness, and none stronger of a purely temporal nature could be devised. It may be objected that the sin is not put forward in the higher light, as an offence before God, and that the appeal is made simply on the lines of self-interest; but who will deny that the scope of the teaching is distinctly moral, or that mankind is not influenced and dissuaded from sin by such a category of evils as includes personal beggary, dishonour, and death?

Ver. 20.—The first part of this verse is couched in almost the same terms as that of ch. i. 8, except that *mitz'rath*, "precept," *preceptum*, is here used instead of *musar*, *eruditio*, or "disciplinary instruction," while the latter part of the two verses are identical.

Ver. 21.—This verse recalls also ch. iii. 3, and reminds us of the use of the phylacteries, or *tefellîm*, common among the Jews of our Lord's time, and the practice of binding which upon various parts of the person may have had its origin in this and such like passages. The "tying about" the neck may suggest the use of amulets, an Oriental custom, to ward off evil, but it is more likely that it refers to the wearing of ornaments. **Them**; *i.e.* the *commandment* and *law* of father and mother respectively, expressed in the Hebrew by the suffix *-êm*, in the verb *kosh'rem*, equivalent to *liga ea*, and again in *ŏndem*, equivalent to *vinci ea*. (For the *personal* use of this figure, see Cant. viii. 6.) **Tie them**; Hebrew, *ŏndêm*. The verb *ânâd*, "to tie," only occurs twice as a verb—here and in Job xxxi. 36. Lee prefers "to bind;" Delitzsch, however, states that it is equivalent to the Latin *circumplicare*, "to wind about." The meaning of this and similar passages (cf. ch. vii. 3; Exod. xiii. 9; Deut. vi. 8; xi. 13) is that the commandment, precept, law, or whatever is intended, should be always present to the mind. The heart suggests that they are to be linked to the affections, and the neck that they will be an ornament decking the moral character.

Ver. 22.—The going, sleeping, and awaking occur in the same order in the Pentateuch, from which the ideas of this and the preceding verse are evidently derived (see Deut. vi. 7 and xi. 19). Though only specifying three conditions, they refer to the whole conduct of life, and hence the verse promises direction, guardianship, and converse of wisdom, which will undoubtedly attend life where the precepts of parents are lovingly treasured and obediently observed. The Authorized Version conveys the impression that it is "the keeping" of the parents' precepts, etc., which is to bear such results; but it is better to under-

stand "it" as signifying the whole teaching or doctrine of wisdom, as Delitzsch. Wisdom becomes personified in the representation, and identified with her teaching. **It shall lead thee.** The Hebrew verb *nâkhâh*, "to lead," in the sense of "to direct," like the Latin *dirigere* (Delitzsch), and as it is used in Exodus and Numbers, *passim*. In the Psalms (v. 9; xxvii. 11; xxxi. 4, etc.) it is employed of God as governing men. Hence, in the affairs of life, Wisdom will so guide and control us that we shall act uprightly. There is the further notion imported into the word of preservation from evil (cf. ch. iii. 23, "Thou shalt walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble"). **When thou sleepest**; or, *when thou liest down*, as in ch. iii. 24, where the same verb occurs. **It shall keep thee**; *i.e.* watch over, keep safe, or preserve; as in the Vulgate, *custodire*, and the LXX. φυλαττεῖν. We have had the same verb, *shâmâr*, before in ch. ii. 11. Wisdom will be as it were a guardian angel in our hours of repose. **When thou awakest**; Hebrew, *hâkitsôthâ*, the hiph. perfect of *kûtz*. This word only occurs here. The hiph. form, *hêkitz*, is intransitive, "to be aroused" (cf. the LXX., ἐγειρομένῳ). **It shall talk with thee**; rather, *she*. Bertheau renders, "She will make thee thoughtful;" and Dathe, "Let them be thy meditation;" but the accusative suffix designates the person who is the object of the action of the verb, as in Ps. v. 5; xlii. 4; Zech. vii. 5 (Zöckler) and as Delitzsch remarks, the personification requires something more than a mere meditation with one's self on the precepts of Wisdom. Wisdom herself shall hold converse with thee (cf. the LXX., συλλαλῇ σοι), she shall suggest thoughts how thou art to behave thyself. The meaning of the verb, "to meditate," "to think deeply," however, need not be lost sight of.

Ver. 23.—**For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light.** The teacher takes up the words "commandment" (Hebrew, *mitzvah*) and "law" (Hebrew, *tôrâh*) from ver. 20, which he describes respectively as "a lamp" and "light." The "commandment" is any special or particular commandment which harmonizes with God's will, and commands what is to be done and forbids what is to be left undone. The "law" is the whole law of God in its entirety; not here the Law of Moses technically, but the whole system of generalized instruction. They stand, therefore, in the same relation to each other as "a lamp" and "light," the one being particular, and the other general. "Light" (Hebrew, *ôr*) is light in general, as the light of the day and the sun, while "a lamp" (Hebrew, *nêr*, from *nûr*, "to shine") is a particular light like that of a candle, which is enkindled at some other source. The "commandment" and the "law" alike enlighten the conscience and enable one to walk in his way of life. On this passage Le Clerc remarks, "Ut in tenebris lucerna, aut fax ostendit nobis, quâ eundum sit: in ignorantiæ humanæ caligine, quæ nos per hanc totam vitam cingit, revelatio divina nos docet, quid sit faciendum, quid vitandum." So the psalmist says in Ps. xix. 8, "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes;" and again in Ps. cxix. 105, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path;" *i.e.* they direct and show the true way of faith and life (Gejerus). The "commandment" and the "law" may stand for the whole revelation of God without reference to any particular precept (as Scott), but they have here a specific bearing on a particular form of human conduct, as appears from the following verses. **And reproofs of instruction are the way of life.** *Reproofs of instruction;* Hebrew, *tok'khôth mûsâr*, disciplinary reproofs, *i.e.* reproofs whose object is the discipline of the soul and the moral elevation of the character. The LXX. reads, καὶ ἔλεγχος καὶ παιδεία; thus connecting it with education in its highest sense. Such reproofs are a way of life (Hebrew, *dêrêk khayyim*), *i.e.* they lead to life; they conduce to the prolongation of life. This view of the subject, so prominent in the mind of the teacher in other passages (cf. ch. iii. 2 and 19), must not be lost sight of, though the words are susceptible of another interpretation, as indicating that the severest reproofs, inasmuch as they correct errors and require obedience, conduce to the greatest happiness (Patrick). Or again, it may mean that disciplinary reproofs are necessary to life. The soul to arrive at perfection must undergo them as part of the conditions of its existence, and, consequently, they are to be submitted to with the consciousness that, however irksome they may be, they are imposed for its eventual benefit (cf. Heb. xii. 5). But this interpretation is unlikely from what follows.

Ver. 24.—**To keep thee from the evil woman.** The specific object to which the discourse was tending. The "commandment" and the "law" illuminate the path of true life generally, but in a special degree they, if attended to, will guard the young against sins of impurity, fornication, and adultery. *The evil woman* (Hebrew, *êsheth râ*); strictly, *a woman of evil*, or vileness, or of a wicked disposition, addicted to evil in an extraordinary degree; *râ* being here a substantive standing in a genitive relation to *êsheth*, as in ch. ii. 12, "The way of evil (*dêrêk râ*)." Cf. also *tâh'pûkôth râ*, *perverstate mali* (ch. ii. 14), and *makh'sh'voth râ*, *cogitationes mali* (ch. xv. 26), and *ân'shêy*

*râ, viri mali* (ch. xxviii. 5). The Vulgate, however, gives an adjectival force to *râ*, rendering, *à muliere mala*. The LXX. ἀπὸ γυναικὸς ὑπάνδρου, *i.e.* "from the married woman," arises from reading *rêâ*, "a companion," for *râ*, "evil." **From the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman**; *i.e.* from her enticements; Hebrew, *mêkhĕl'kâth lâshôn nôk'riyyâh;* literally, "from the smoothness of a strange tongue," as in the margin. Zöckler, however, proposes an emendation of the Masoretic text, and substitutes the construct case, *l'shon*, for the absolute, *lâshôn*, rendering as in the Authorized Version, on the ground that the emphasis lies, not on the "tongue," which would be the case if we render "of a strange tongue," but on "the strange woman," who is the subject of the discourse, as in ch. ii. 16 and v. 20. But *nok'riyyah* is feminine of the adjective *nôk'ri*, and in agreement with *lâshôn*, which, though common, is more frequently feminine (Gesenius), and hence the two words may stand in agreement. The marginal reading is to be preferred (Wordsworth). Again, *mêkhĕl'kâth*, the construct case of *khĕl'kâh*, literally, "smoothness," and metaphorically flattery, with the prefix *mê*, forms one member of the phrase, while the compound expression, *lâshôn nôk'riyyah*, forms the second. Ewald and Bertheau render, "from the smooth-tongued, the strange woman," thus connecting *mêkhĕl'kâth lâshôn*, and regarding *nôk'riyyah* as a separate and distinct idea. They agree with Symmachus and Theodotion, ἀπὸ λειογλώσσου ξένης, *i.e.* "from the smooth-tongued or flattering stranger." So the Vulgate, *à blandâ linguâ extraneæ*, i.e. from the smooth tongue of the strange woman. The LXX. again favours the marginal reading, ἀπὸ διαβολῆς γλώσσης ἀλλοτρίας, "from the slander of a strange tongue." So the Chaldee Paraphrase. The Syriac reads, "from the accusation of a woman of a strange tongue," *i.e.* who uses a foreign language. If, however, the Authorized Version be retained, the Hebrew *nôk'riyyah* will, as in other passages, mean "an adulteress" (Gesenius); ch. v. 20; vii. 5; xxiii. 27. Under any circumstances, we have here attributed to the tongue what, in fact, belongs to the woman. It is against the enticements and blandishments of a woman of depraved moral character that the "commandment" and "law" form a safeguard to youth.

Ver. 25.—**Lust not after her beauty in thine heart.** The admonition of this verse embraces the two sides of the subject—the external allurement and the internal predisposition to vice. *Lust not after* (Hebrew, *al-tâkh'mōd*); strictly, *desire not*, since the verb *khâmâd* is properly "to desire, or covet." The same verb is used in Exod. xx. 17, "Thou shalt not *covet* thy neighbour's wife," and xxxiv. 24, "Neither shall any man *desire* thy land" (cf. Micah ii. 2 and ch. xii. 12). In Ps. lxviii. 19; Isa. i. 29; liii. 2, it has the sense of *taking delight* in anything. It may be questioned whether it ever has the strong meaning given in the Vulgate (*non concupiscat*) and adopted in the Authorized Version, "to lust after" (Holden). Aquila, Theodotion, and Symmachus render μὴ ἐπιθυμήσῃς. The use of *khâmâd* here reveals the warning of the Decalogue. *In thine heart;* Hebrew, *bil'vâvĕkâ*, corresponding to the ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ of Matt. v. 28. The admonition is a warning to repress the very first inclinations to unchaste desires. They may be unobserved and undetected by others, but they are known to ourselves, and the first duty of repressing them calls for an act of determination and will on our part. Our Lord teaches (Matt. v. 28, cited above), "That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." The LXX. reading is Μή σε νικήσῃ κάλλους ἐπιθυμία, "Let not the desire of beauty conquer thee." **Neither let her take thee with her eyelids**; *i.e.* do not let her captivate thee with her amorous glances. *Take.* The Hebrew verb, *lâkâlkh*, is "to captivate" with blandishments, "to allure, beguile" (cf. ch. xi. 30); LXX., μήδε ἀγρευθῇς. *With her eyelids* (Hebrew, *b'âph'âppĕyâh*); or perhaps more literally, *with her eyelashes* (Zöckler). The eyelids; Hebrew, *âph'âppāyim*, dual of *aph'aph*, so called from their rapid, volatile motion, are here compared with *nets*, as by Philostratus ('Epistles:' Γυναικί), who speaks of "the nets of the eyes (τὰ τῶν ὀμμάτων δίκτυα)." The eyelids are the instruments by which the amorous woman beguiles or catches her victims. She allures him by her glances. So St. Jerome says, "The eye of an harlot is the snare of her lover." The wanton glance is expressed in the Vulgate by *nutibus illius;* cf. "The whoredom of a woman may be known in her haughty looks and eyelids" (Ecclus. xxvi. 9). Milton ('Paradise Lost,' xi. 620) speaks of the daughters of men "rolling the eye," amongst other things, in order to captivate the sons of God. Piscator and Mercerus understand the eyelids as standing metonymically for the beauty of the eye; and Bayne, for the general adornment of the head in order to attract attention. Allusion may possibly be made to the custom of Eastern women painting the eyelids to give brilliancy and expression; cf. 2 Kings ix. 30 (Wordsworth). A striking parallel to the verse before us occurs in Propertius, lib. i. 'Eleg.' i., "Cynthia prima suis miserum me cepit ocellis."

Ver. 26.—**For by means of a whorish**

**woman a man is brought to a piece of bread.** From this verse onwards to the end of the chapter the discourse consists of a series of arguments, each calculated to deter youth from the sins of fornication and adultery, by exhibiting the evil consequences of such indulgence. The first is the poverty and extreme beggary to which a man is brought. *For by means of;* Hebrew, *kî v'âd.* Lee gives the preposition *vâad* the force of "after," *i.e.* after associating with. The radical idea of the preposition is that of nearness, *by, near,* and easily passes to that of "because" (Gesenius) or "by means of," as in the Authorized Version. It is here used for *per,* "through," as in Josh. ii. 15; 2 Sam. xx. 23, and so indicates the transit through the way of fornication to extreme beggary (Gejerus). *A whorish woman;* Hebrew, *ishshâh zônâh;* Vulgate, *scortum;* LXX., πόρνη; "a harlot," here corresponding to "the adulteress" (*êshĕth ish*), since the root *zânâh,* "to commit fornication," is attributed both to married and unmarried women (Gen. xxxviii. 24; Lev. xix. 29; Hos. iii. 3). The word *zônâh* is sometimes written alone, as in Gen. xxxviii. 15 and Deut. xxiii. 19. The fuller expression, as here, occurs in Lev. xxi. 7; Josh. ii. 1; Judg. xi. 1. *To a piece of bread;* Hebrew, *âd-kikkâr lâkhĕm.* It will be noticed that there is an ellipsis in the Hebrew, which, however, may be easily supplied, as in the Authorized Version. Delitzsch supplies "one cometh down to;" so Zöckler. "A piece of bread" is properly "a circle of bread, a small round piece of bread, such as is still baked in Italy (*pagnotta*) and in the East (Arabic *kurs*), here an expression for the smallest piece" (Fleischer). The term occurs in Exod. xxix. 23; 1 Sam. ii. 36, in the latter of which passages it expresses the extreme destitution to which the members of the house of Eli were to be reduced. As illustrating the term, see also ch. xxxviii. 21 and Ezek. xiii. 19. The LXX. and Vulgate singularly render, "For the price of a harlot is scarcely that of a bit of bread," which may mean, as Castalio, that she is of so little value; but the context is opposed to this rendering, where the point brought out is not the vile character of the harlot as the ruin she inflicts or is the cause of. Besides, the Hebrew *ad* does not mean ever "scarcely," or "hardly," which the Vulgate *vix* gives to it. **And the adulteress will hunt for the precious life.** The adulteress is *ishĕth ish,* literally, "the woman of a man," or "a man's wife," as in the margin—as, therefore, strictly an adulteress here (cf. Lev. xx. 10). *Will hunt;* Hebrew, *thâtsûd;* LXX., ἀγρεύει; Vulgate, *capit.* The Hebrew verb *tsûd,* "to lie in wait for," "to hunt," also signifies "to take, or capture," like the Vulgate *capere.* The verb in its metaphorical use also occurs in Lam. iii. 52; Micah vii. 2; Ps. cxl. 12, and refers to those beguilements resorted to by the adulteress to seduce youth. In Ezek. xiii. 18 it carries with it the idea of death, and if understood in this sense here it may have reference to the death-penalty inflicted on adulterer and adulteress by the Mosaic Law (Lev. xx. 10), and introduces what is said more fully in vers. 32, 34, 35. *The precious life;* Hebrew, *nĕphĕsh y'kârâh.* The epithet *y'kârâh* is appropriately added to *nĕphĕsh,* as indicating the high value of the life. All is implied in the *nĕphĕsh,* "the life," moral dignity of character, the soul of man. It is the ever-existing part of the man, and therefore is precious—nothing can exceed it in value. Our Lord says (Matt. xvi. 26), "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" and the psalmist (Ps. xlix. 8), "For the redemption of their life is precious." But it is for this life, or soul, that the adulteress hunts, and which she destroys. Lives of fornication and adultery, therefore, carry with them the severest penalties, the loss of temporal possessions, for the enjoyment of a transient passion, and far beyond this the loss of life both temporal and eternal. We cannot imagine a more deterrent warning.

Ver. 27.—In this and the two following verses (28 and 29) the discourse proceeds from statement to illustration, and by examples of cause and effect the teacher shows "the moral necessity of the evil consequences of the sin of adultery" (Delitzsch). The meaning of the verses is plain enough, viz. that as it is in vain to suppose that a person's garment will not be burnt or his feet not be scorched if fire is brought near them, so it is equally inconceivable that a person indulging in adultery can escape its consequences or the retribution that follows. The two questions in vers. 27 and 28 imply a strong negative, and so prepare for the conclusion in ver. 30. *Take fire.* The Hebrew verb *khâthâh* signifies "*to take* burning or live coals *from the hearth*" (Piscator); and hence is used here in a pregnant sense "to take from the hearth and place in" (cf. ch. xxv. 22, "For thou wilt take coals ['and heap them:' Hebrew, *gĕkhâlîm khôtheh*] on his head"). The fuller expression is met with in Isa. xxx. 14, "So that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a sherd to take fire from the hearth (*lâkh'tôth êsh mîyyâkûd*)." The Vulgate renders by *abscondere,* "to hide:" *Numquid potest homo abscondere ignem;* and the LXX. by ἀποδεῖν, equivalent to the Latin *alligare,* "to tie or bind fast." Wordsworth explains "to take and heap up, as in a firepan or censer." **In his bosom;** Hebrew, *b'khêykô;* LXX., ἐν κόλπῳ; Vulgate, *in sinu suo.* The

word *khêyk* is properly "an undulation" (Delitzsch), not the *lap*, but as in the Authorized Version here, "the bosom," and "the bosom of a garment," as in ch. xvi. 33; xvii. 23; xxi. 14. The answer to the question of this and the next verse is of course a decided negative, but we may note that the teacher compares adultery to a burning fire in its consequences.

Ver. 28.—**Can one go upon hot coals**, etc.? The repeated question is introduced by *im*, "if," here equivalent to the Latin *an*, used in double questions, as in Gen. xxiv. 21; Exod. xvii. 7; Judg. ix. 2, etc. *Go;* i.e. *walk upon hot coals* (Hebrew, *al-hăggĕkâlim*); literally, *upon the hot coals.* The Hebrew *gâkhĕlĕth* is coals thoroughly ignited, as in Lev. xvi. 12 and ch. xxv. 22; different from *pĕkhâm* of ch. xxvi. 21, which is "a black coal," or, as Gesenius explains, charcoal unkindled. **Be burned**; Hebrew, *tikkâvĕynâh;* i.e. be burned or scorched so as to leave a mark by burning, as in Isa. xliii. 2; this being the force of the verb *kâvâh.* The flames of lust will certainly be visited with punishment, and with the stings of conscience. Job, speaking on this very subject, says a deviation from the paths of virtue "is a fire that consumeth to destruction." And to him who gives way to adultery it may be said, in the words of Horace, though with a different application from that in which they were used by that poet, "incedis per ignes suppositos cineri doloso." "You are walking over fire that lies hidden under deceitful ashes" (Gejerus).

Ver. 29.—**So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent.** It is as great a folly to suppose that an adulterer will escape punishment as to imagine that no injury will follow where fire has been applied. Delitzsch illustrates this verse by a passage from Pythagoras's maxim ('Eclog.,' c. 39), Τὸ εἰς πῦρ καὶ εἰς γυναῖκα ἐμπεσεῖν ἴσον ὑπάρχει. *Goeth in;* Hebrew, *hâbbâ el;* i.e. has intercourse with, as in Gen. vi. 4; xix. 31; xxxviii. 9; Ps. li. 2. The same in force as "toucheth." *Shall not be innocent;* Hebrew, *lô-yînnâkĕh;* i.e. *pœna vacuus*, "exempt from punishment," or shall be unpunished (Delitzsch, Zöckler, Gesenius); cf. ch. xi. 21, "The wicked shall not be unpunished (*lo yînnâkĕh*)," as here. The verb *nâkâh* signifies primarily "to be pure;" so the Vulgate renders *non erit mundus*, "he will not be pure;" but the LXX. observes the secondary meaning of the verb, οὐκ ἀθωωθήσεται, *non erit innoxius*, "he shall not be let go unpunished," from the Alexandrine verb ἀθῳόω. Certain and the very heaviest punishment shall come upon him (see also ch. xvii. 5; Jer. xxv. 29; xlix. 12). With this explanation agree Gejerus and Vatablus.

Ver. 30.—The teacher continues his argument with another illustration, still keeping in view his object, which is to show that the punishment of the adulterer is a surely impending one and severe in its character. The argument in vers. 30—33 is one *à fortiori.* If men do not overlook but severely punish a crime which has been committed under extenuating circumstances, much less will they do so where the crime is of a much graver character and has nothing to excuse it. Theft and adultery are brought into comparison. Theft under all circumstances is a lesser crime than adultery, but here it is minimized to the lowest degree. The case of a man is taken who steals to satisfy his hunger; the extent of the theft cannot be large, but yet he is punished, and called upon to make the amplest restitution. Much more, does the teacher infer, will be the punishment, and equally certain, where adultery is in question, and the crime is of the most heinous character affecting the most precious interests, and indulged in from the lowest of motives. **Men do not despise a thief**, etc.; *i.e.* they do not condemn him under the circumstances, *non grandis est culpa* (Vulgate), "the fault is not a great one;" but they do despise an adulterer—him they hold in contempt as one "who lacketh understanding" and destroyeth his own soul (ver. 32). The verb *bûz* has, however, been otherwise rendered as "to overlook." Zöckler and Holden explain, "men do not overlook," though the former gives the literal sense as "men do not despise." Gesenius renders "despise," but explains, "*i.e.* they do not let him go unpunished." Vatablus, the Versions, Ariæ, Montani, and Munsteri, Hitzig, Delitzsch, and Gesenius, Stuart, Muenscher, and Wordsworth, all agree in regarding the proper meaning of the verb to be "to despise" or "to treat scornfully." The verb *bûz*, moreover, occurs in this sense in ch. i. 7; xi. 12; xiii. 13; xiv. 21; xxiii. 9; and Cant. viii. 1, 7. Michaelis's explanation is as follows: "although a theft is deservedly regarded as infamous in the commonwealth, nevertheless, if it be compared with adultery, it is less wicked." The rendering of the LXX., οὐ θαυμαστὸν ἐάν ἁλῷ τις κλέπτων, *i.e.* "it is not a wonder if any thief be taken," it is difficult to reconcile with the text in the original, though it may be explained as expressing the certainty of arrest which follows theft, and thus gives colour to the secondary meaning attached to the verb, *i.e.* that of overlooking. The Syriac and Arabic Versions follow the LXX., while the Chaldee Paraphrase renders, "It is not a matter of surprise if a thief steals," etc. **His soul**; Hebrew, *nâph'shô. Nĕphĕsh* is

used here for desire, craving, or appetite, as in Eccles. vi. 2, 7; Ezek. vii. 19. "To satisfy his soul" is "to sustain his life." *Anima*, Vulgate; ψυχή, LXX.

Ver. 31.—**But if he be taken, he shall restore sevenfold.** Men do not despise the thief, but yet they apprehend him and insist on fullest restitution. *Be found;* i.e. seized (Delitzsch), or legally convicted (Gejerus). *He shall restore;* i.e. he must restore (Zöckler). Delitzsch, however, understands the future, *y'shālēm*, as potential, "he may restore." *Sevenfold;* Hebrew, *shiv'āthâ-yim;* LXX., ἑπταπλάσια; Vulgate, *septulum.* On this word Geïer remarks, "Hæc vox nullibi in sacris ponitur pio numero definito;" *i.e.* "It is nowhere put in Scripture for a definite number." It is therefore to be understood indefinitely of complete restitution, or, as it is expressed in the second and parallel clauses, "all the substance of his house." The word is used in this sense in Gen. iv. 24; Lev. xxvi. 28; Job v. 19 (Lapide). Theft under the Mosaic Law was punishable by a fivefold, fourfold, and twofold restitution (Exod. xxii. 1—4, 9), and, in the event of this not forthcoming, the delinquent was to be sold into slavery (Lev. xxv. 39). In 2 Sam. xii. 6 a fourfold restitution is mentioned, and in the New Testament Zacchæus promises to restore fourfold if he could be convicted of fraud (Luke xix. 8). In the attempts to reconcile the "sevenfold" of our passage with the requirements of the Mosaic Law, Aben Ezra says that the combined penalties for two cases of theft are contemplated, and others that in the time of the writer the penalties had been increased. But proof of this is wanting. Grotius's explanation is more curious than correct, viz. that if the theft be repeated seven times, and he be "taken" seven times, the thief should only be punished by being forced to make restitution with some addition. Both the Greek and Roman law demanded a twofold restitution. Selden maintains that theft would have been subjected to the usual punishment (Selden, 'De Jure Not. et Gent.,' vi. c. 6). We may therefore come to the conclusion that "sevenfold" is used in the sense indicated above. As to any objection which may be raised on the score of inconsistency in talking of a man making restitution, and giving all his substance when he steals to satisfy his hunger, it may be remarked that he need not necessarily be without substance of some sort or other, and he could acquire subsequently sufficient to satisfy the demand. On the question whether a person is justified by extreme want in stealing, see Grotius, 'De Jure Belli et Pacis,' ii. c. 2. § 6; Puffendorf, 'De Jure Not. et Gent.,' ii. c. 6. § 5; Blackstone, 'Commentary,' iv. 2. § 4.

Ver. 32.—**But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding.** The adversative "but" is wanting in the original, but is clearly demanded by the contrast which is instituted. The man who steals from hunger has a motive for so doing, but the adulterer has no such excuse for *his* crime, which is an unwarrantable invasion of his neighbour's rights. Because there are honest ways for satisfying his desires, he therefore "lacketh understanding." *Committeth adultery with a woman;* Hebrew, *nôêph ĕshshâh;* LXX., ὁ μοιχὸς; Vulgate, *qui adulter est;* i.e. an adulterer. The Hebrew *nâăph*, "to commit adultery," is here followed by an accusative, as in Lev. xx. 10 and Jer. xxix. 23. *Lacketh understanding;* Hebrew, *khāsār-lêv; deficit corde.* The verb *khâsér* is "to be devoid of anything," "to lack." The expression, which occurs again in ch. vii. 7 and ix. 4, refers to the brutish and stupid condition to which lust has reduced him. Lust has displaced right reason. He is *expers judicii* (Syriac), devoid of judgment, without intelligence, senseless and stupid. In modern phraseology, he has taken leave of his senses. Both the LXX. and Vulgate have combined the two branches of this verse, the former rendering, "But the adulterer, on account of want of intelligence, compasses the loss of his life," and the latter, "But the adulterer, on account of want of intelligence, loses his life." **He that doeth it destroyeth his own soul;** or literally, *whoso will destroy his life he will do this*, i.e. adultery. So Ariæ Montani, Munsterus, Chaldee Targum. The man who commits adultery is a self-murderer. The phrase, *māshkith naph'sho, corrumpens animam suam*, may be resolved into the concrete "a self-destroyer," as Delitzsch. The following verses seem to indicate that it is the temporal life which is referred to in *nĕphĕsh*, but the meaning of the term may be extended to embrace not only physical loss of life, but also moral and spiritual loss. By the Levitical Law adultery was punished by death: "The man that committeth adultery with another man's wife . . . the adulterer and adulteress shall surely be put to death" (Lev. xx. 10; cf. Deut. xxii. 22; John viii. 4, 5; see also 1 Thess. iv. 6).

Ver. 33.—**A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away.** Two other things more immediate await the adulterer—personal chastisement and loss of reputation. It seems clear that "a wound" (Hebrew, *nĕgăr*, "a stroke" or "blow"), used here in the singular, collectively refers to the corporal punishment, which the outraged husband will inflict upon the adulterer (Delitzsch, Zöckler, Lapide). (For the word, see Deut. xvii. 8;

xxi. 5.) It may also have reference to the punishment inflicted by the Law. In the LXX. the idea is expressed by *ὀδύνας, i.e.* "pains," and so gives colour to Lapide's explanation of "afflictions of every kind." The Vulgate gives a moral turn to the meaning, and co-ordinates the word with "dishonour:" *Turpitudinem et ignominiam congregat sibi*, "*Dishonour* is the ignominious treatment he will receive on all hands." The second part of the verse states that a brand of disgrace will be attached to his name which will be perpetual, not confined to this life only, but extending beyond it, so that men will never recall it but with this stigma (Patrick, Mercerus). On *shall be . . . wiped away* (Hebrew, *timmâḥêh*, the niph. future of *mâkhâh*. "to wipe off, or away," and in hiph. "to be blotted out," equivalent to the Latin *delere*), see Deut. xxv. 6; Ezek. vi. 6; Judg. xxi. 17. The LXX. renders *ἐξαλειφθήσεται*, and adds, *εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα*, "for ever." The statements of the verse are illustrated by Horace, 'Satires,' lib. i. 2. 37, who describes the dangers and mishaps which befall the adulterer and fornicator.

"Hic se præcipitem tecto dedit; ille flagellis
Ad mortem cæsus: fugiens hic decidit acrem
Prædonum in turbam: dedit hic pro corpore nummos."

Ver. 34.—**For jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance.** The first hemistich is adduced as a reason for what has preceded, while the concluding hemistich and the following and last verses are a deduction strengthening what has been stated before, and also showing that the punishment will be inevitable. The general *consensus* of commentators and texts is to connect the two hemistiches of this verse. Thus the LXX., *Μεστὸς γὰρ ζήλου θυμὸς ἀνδρὸς αὐτῆς, οὐ φείσεται ἐν ἡμέρᾳ κρίσεως*, "For the wrath of her husband filled with jealousy shall not spare in the day of judgment;" the Vulgate, *Quia zelus et furor viri non parcet in die vindictæ*, "For the jealousy and rage of a man shall not spare in the day of vengeance;" the Syriac, *Nam quia furor mariti plenus est zelotypiâ non parcet in die retributionis*, "For because rage of a husband is full of jealousy he shall not spare in the day of retribution." So the Arabic, and the Tigurina Versio, and among the commentators Durandus, Dathe, Doderlein, Holden. But the Hebrew simply makes the statement, *kî-ḳinâh ḥămâth-gâver, quia zelus excandescentia viri*, i.e., as in the Authorized Version, "for jealousy is the rage of a man;" *kî*, equivalent to the Greek *γάρ*, "for," and *ḳinâh* is the subject of the sentence. The Hebrew *ḳinâh* is "jealousy" as in ch. xxvii. 4, "Who is able to stand before envy?" or, as margin, "jealousy." The ordinary copulative verb "is" is best understood as connecting the subject and the predicate; "the rage of a man," Hebrew *ḥămâth-gâvĕr*, as above, *i.e.* "the glow of a man's anger" (Delitzsch), or "a man's fierce anger" (Zöckler). Jealousy awakens and inflames the wrath and anger of a man or husband to its highest pitch. It evokes the strongest feelings for revenge. *Man;* Hebrew, *gâvĕr*, equivalent to *ish*, "a man," in opposition to "a wife"—"a *husband*," as here. The word is chiefly found in poetry. Its derivation, from *gâvăr*, "to be strong," serves to bring out the idea also of the intensity or force of the jealousy—it burns or rages with all the might of the man. The latter part of the verse in the Hebrew is simply, "and he will not spare (*v'lô-yâkh'môl*) in the day of vengeance." The Authorized Version "therefore" serves to bring out the deduction, though it does not occur in the original. *He will not spare;* i.e. the injured husband will not show any clemency or mercy to the adulterer, the man who has wronged him so deeply. *In the day of vengeance;* Hebrew, *b'yôm nâḳâm*. The expression may refer to the time when the adulterer is brought before the judges, but more probably to every occasion on which the husband can exercise his vengeance. So Gejerus. For the expression, cf. Isa. xxxiv. 8, "The day of the Lord's vengeance;" Job xx. 28, "The day of his wrath;" and ch. xi. 4, "The day of wrath." Jealousy is implacable (see Song of Solomon viii. 6, "Jealousy is cruel as the grave").

Ver. 35.—**He will not regard any ransom; neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts.** No recompense or atonement, nor any gifts however great, will buy him off. These are supposed to be offered by the adulterer to the enraged husband, who, however, will never rest till he effects the utter ruin of his injurer. The literal rendering of the first hemistich is, "He will not accept the face of any ransom." The phrase *nâsâ phanim* is equivalent to the Greek *πρόσωπον λαμβάνειν*, and signifies "to give a favourable reception to the outward expression of any one." The figure is taken from lifting up the face of a suppliant, the radical meaning of the verb *nâsâ* being "to take up," "to lift up." The *ransom;* Hebrew, *kôphĕr* (the word usually applied to designate the price of redemption, mulct, or fine demanded for expiation of a crime; see Exod. xxi. 30; xxx. 12; Numb. xxxv. 31, 32); here the bribe offered by the adulterer to be let off will be altogether rejected, however alluring, the word *p'ney*, "face," carrying with it the

idea of something recommendatory. For the expression, *nâsâ phanîm*, cf. Gen. xix. 21; xxii. 21; Job xiii. 10; xlii. 8; and Mal. i. 8. The LXX. rendering is, Οὐκ ἀνταλλάξεται οὐδενὸς λύτρου τὴν ἔχθραν, "He will not commute for any redemption his enmity." *Neither will he rest content;* literally, *and he will not be willing;* Hebrew, *w'lô-yô'vêh;* LXX., οὐδὲ μὴ διαληθῇ, "nor may it, *i.e.* his enmity, be dissolved or weakened." (On the verb *âvâh*, "to consent to," or "to be willing," see ch. i. 10.) Many gifts, each increasing in value, may be offered, but he will not be willing to forego his right of revenge. *Though thou givest many gifts.* It is noticeable that the address, which has been adapted to the third person, here becomes personal, and so takes up the form originally employed in vers. 20—25. A hypothetical case has been imagined in vers. 26—35, but still with the thought underlying it that it applies to the person addressed. "Though *thou* givest many gifts," or more literally, "though thou multipliest the gift," brings the matter home to the young man. *Gifts;* Hebrew, *shôkâd*, "the gift," is the word usually employed to designate the bribe offered to corrupt a judge (see Exod. xxiii. 8; Deut. x. 17; xvi. 19; xxvii. 25; 1 Sam. viii. 3). Here it refers to the money offered to free from punishment. The Vulgate gives the idea that these gifts or bribes are offered by a third party on behalf of the adulterer: *Nec acquiescet cujusquam precibus, nec suscipiet pro redemptione dona plurima.* On these two last verses Lange remarks, "Just as little as the adulterer, taken in his adultery, is left unpunished by the injured husband, so little, yea, even less, will the spiritual adulterer remain unpunished of the Lord (1 Cor. iii. 17)."

## HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—5.—*The surety.* Our Christian charity may naturally be shocked at the selfishness apparently inculcated by the frequent warnings against giving security for others that are scattered up and down the Book of Proverbs. They have done more than anything else to lead people to regard the standard of morality of the Proverbs as low and worldly. Let us consider the subject from various points of view.

I. THE STANDARD OF MORALITY OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS IS LOWER THAN THAT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. Let this fact be clearly recognized. Revelation is progressive. Doctrine is only revealed by degrees. The same applies to ethics. Such a method is most suited to the moral education of the race. A less-advanced people can only live up to a less-elevated principle. If the standard be raised too high, it ceases to be effective, and becomes like a counsel of perfection, which ordinary people disregard. On the other hand, Christians have no excuse for taking refuge in the lower principles of an obsolete dispensation.

II. AN EXCLUSIVE ATTENTION TO ONE DUTY WILL ALWAYS MILITATE AGAINST OTHER DUTIES. Duties cross and qualify one another. Each taken by itself and pressed to its extreme will lead to conflict with others. Now, here prudence only is commended. To enforce it the more powerfully, other duties are for the time left out of sight. When they are taken up they will qualify it considerably.

III. IT IS FOOLISH TO UNDERTAKE AN OBLIGATION WHICH WE ARE UNWILLING TO CARRY OUT. It is so easy to make chivalrous promises. But immense harm is done by overhaste in professions of generosity. Let a man count the cost enough to see whether he is morally able to bear the strain before making a very liberal offer.

IV. MUCH EVIL WAS DONE BY THE MONEY-LENDING SYSTEM OF THE JEWS. The laws of debt were most stringent, and "the goods of the sureties might be distrained, or they even sold as slaves, just as in the case of insolvent debtors." Such an outrageously cruel state of things was justly deprecated.

V. OTHER MORE PRESSING CLAIMS FORBID US TO CONTRACT SOME OF THE MOST EXACTING OBLIGATIONS. The good-natured Jew who beggared his children and lost his liberty by becoming surety to a spendthrift, robbed those who had most right to enjoy his property, and hindered himself from doing more good in the future. The duty of a man to his family is often pleaded as an excuse for some act of mean selfishness. Nevertheless, the duty is real, and must not be neglected. A man has no right to risk his children's welfare in order to oblige a friend. People who are too hasty in putting their names to bills should remember this.

VI. THE SURETY IS ONLY ADVISED TO ESCAPE BY JUST MEANS. He is not told to

break his promise, to hide, to leave the country. He is urged to seek a release by requesting his friend to grant it him. Such a course is humiliating. But it is not dishonest.

Ver. 6.—*The ant.* Scripture sends us to nature. Even the smallest works of nature are full of Divine lessons to him who has eyes to read them. Sometimes we are bidden to consider the heavens, but now we are invited to consider the ant. The telescope has its lessons; so also has the microscope. But when a man refuses to hear the voice of God, will he hear the voice of an insect-prophet? Possibly. It takes an eagle's eye to gaze at the sun; but any eye can look on the earth. If a man's vision is too weak to look at the burning bush, the fiery pillar, the mystic Shechinah, let him turn his eyes to the glowworm at his feet, and perhaps even that humble torch-bearer may save him from stumbling.

I. GO TO THE ANT, AND LEARN NOT TO DESPISE LITTLE THINGS. Of late the doings of the ant have been very carefully looked into, and very wonderful facts have come to light. Among ants there are *engineers*, constructing elaborate tunnels and carrying on complicated building operations; *stock-keepers*, guarding and feeding the aphis, like a cow, for the juice they extract from it; *agriculturists*, carefully clearing ground of all weeds, in order to let only certain grasses grow within the prepared area, and storing up corn underground, which by a marvellous instinct they first kill so as to prevent it from germinating; *slave-holders*, who attack tribes of black ants, carry off the young and keep these to wait on them and feed them, becoming meanwhile so helpless as to be absolutely unable to feed themselves, and dying of starvation when deprived of the help of their slaves; and some so far imitating our habits as to keep pet insects—insects which they feed and attend to but which apparently render them no service. As we look at the diminutive ant, we may well wonder

"That one little head could carry all he knew."

We must not mistake bigness for greatness. Tartary is bigger than Greece. Athens was a little city in comparison with Babylon. Despise not one of the little ones. And we too with our short lives and dwarf powers, may we not do something worth living for?

II. GO TO THE ANT, AND LEARN NATURE'S LESSON OF WORK. It is with no small labour that the agricultural ant of Syria clears its field, keeps it well weeded, gathers in the corn, and stores this in subterranean granaries. Nature is a great factory. All life involves work. Even the silent forest apparently sleeping in the hush of noon is busy, and if only we had ears to hear, we might detect the elaboration of the sap and the growth of the leaf, showing that every tree is hard at work on its appointed task. 1. Work *according to ability*. The ant cannot build a cathedral. But he can make an ant-hill. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." 2. Work *in face of danger*. One careless footstep may demolish a whole city of ant-life, and crush hundreds of its inhabitants. Yet the little creatures toil on without heeding a danger which they cannot avert. 3. Work *perseveringly*. Any one who has watched an ant struggling with a heavy load may well be rebuked by the patient insect. If the ant-hill is destroyed, the ants soon set to work and commence mining and building, and reducing the chaos to order again. 4. Work *harmoniously*. It is the union of great numbers that enables the ants, though a very small folk, to effect very considerable results. The Church can do what passes the power of individuals, but only when the individuals are severally doing their share of labour.

III. GO TO THE ANT, AND LEARN THE DUTY OF PROVIDING FOR THE FUTURE. The ant works from instinct, and we must admire the wisdom of the great Maker, who has taught it unconscious habits of providence. But we are endowed with powers of looking before and after, and therefore are left to our own will to be deliberately provident. It is strange that many people have no prudence in temporal things. In prosperous times they are recklessly self-indulgent. In harder times they are in destitution. These people abuse Christian charity; and unwise Christian charity is guilty of indirectly encouraging their improvidence. Thus they lose independence, self-reliance, and the wholesome discipline of present restraints for the sake of future

needs. But if earthly prudence is practised, shall we stop there? Are we consistent in our providence? We have provided for the natural winter: have we provided for other, more terrible, winters? We may have a philosophy of life which suits the happy sunshine, but how are we provided against the storms and frosts of the winter of sorrow? There is a wintry blast that ultimately kills the hardiest flower. Have we made provision for the winter of death? Happy they who in bright summer, and happier they who in youth's spring-time, have found a Saviour who will be their Bread of life and their Shelter in the chills of grief, in the dread winter of death!

Ver. 14.—*Sowing discord.* I. THE SOWER. He may be of various characters. 1. *A malignant person.* Such a one delights in the mischief he makes. He flings the firebrand with fiendish glee because he loves to witness the conflagration. He is a true child of Satan, one to break the peace of Eden, one to set Cain to murder his brother. 2. *A person greedy of power.* It is easier to make trouble than to mend it. Nothing is more simple than to scatter seeds of quarrels. A single pebble flung into the middle of a mountain tarn will shatter the fair mirror of crag and sky, and spread disturbing wavelets to every shore. There is a sense of power, of producing a great effect, in mischief-making. 3. *A selfish person.* If we always claim our dues and exact our pound of flesh, we must be perpetually embroiled in quarrels. Disregard to the rights of others, which is only too common with the selfish, will lead one individual to plunge a whole society into confusion. 4. *A heedless person.* It is so easy to sow discord that we may do the mischievous thing before we are aware of our folly. It needs care and watchfulness to avoid this disastrous conduct.

II. THE SEED. 1. *A misrepresentation.* Thomas Carlyle pointed out how often national quarrels and wars spring from "misunderstandings." If we knew each other better we should be more friendly. Our acquaintances tend to become our friends. But a misrepresentation is the parent of a misunderstanding, and as such the seed of discord. 2. *A hot word.* If we approached a troublesome question calmly and patiently we might see a way of avoiding all quarrelling over it. But when the anger is roused everything appears in its worst light; there is no inclination to smooth over a difficulty; on the contrary, opposition is magnified. 3. *An unkind word.* This may be spoken deliberately. The more cool the speaker, the more cutting his speech.

III. THE SOIL. The discord is sown "among brethren." 1. *A possible soil.* One would say that here no quarrels can grow. But, alas! they who should love most can hate with bitterest hatred, or, if no deep dislike be engendered, they may still quarrel most fiercely. The first quarrel was between brethren—Cain and Abel. Esau and Jacob, the two Hebrews whom Moses rebuked in Egypt, the nations of Israel and Judah, were all brethren in discord. 2. *A fruitful soil.* Surely it would be thought discord among brethren cannot last and spread. But experience proves the contrary. Family feuds are deep, bitter, enduring. Church quarrels are most rancorous. Civil war is sanguinary.

IV. THE HARVEST. This discord is no slight thing like the breeze that disturbs the lake for one moment and speedily leaves it to resume its normal placidity. 1. *It is painful.* Pride may conceal the wound, but the sore is not slight. No misery is greater than that of family quarrels. 2. *It is injurious.* It raises evil passions, hinders harmonious action, wastes resources in internecine strife. All men are of one blood, therefore all war is discord among brethren; and who shall measure its frightful harvest of woe? 3. *It is unchristian.* The gospel proclaims and enforces brotherhood. It helps us to realize the dream of the psalmist, "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Ps. cxxxiii. 1). Christ blessed the peacemaker (Matt. v. 9).

Vers. 16—19.—*Seven hateful things.* It is certainly best for us to think most of "whatsoever things are lovely, of good report," etc. But the *couleur de rose* view of human nature that comes of a fastidious objection to look at the darker shades of character is not only false, but also dangerous, since it tempts us to ignore our own failings and to neglect the duty of rebuking sin and of labouring to better the world. The physician must study pathology. The patient must allow his disease to be examined. We must therefore sometimes set ourselves to the unwelcome task

of considering hateful things. Let us look at the general features of the seven abominations.

I. THEY ARE DEFINED IN DETAIL. We are not only told that sin is odious. Particular sins are specified. A general confession of sin may be made without any admission of guilt in regard to one's own special faults. The proud man will confess himself a miserable sinner while he refuses to see the evil of his pride. Therefore we must consider our sins in the concrete. Only thus can we feel true compunction and make practical repentance. Six hateful things are mentioned; then a seventh is added as a sort of after-thought, and to suit the requirements of the poetic form of the enigma. It is thus made apparent that the seven is not a definite number intended to exclude all others. Seven is a round number, and the list might easily be lengthened. In fact, we have just seven specimen abominations. Therefore let no man flatter himself because his peculiar failing may happen to be omitted. All transgression of the Law is sin, and is hateful in the sight of God. When particular evils are denounced, remember that they are but specimens of a large and varied and wholly abominable host of sins.

II. THEY ARE DESCRIBED IN REFERENCE TO PARTICULAR ORGANS. A look, a tongue, hands, a heart, feet. All sin is the abuse of some power or faculty. The organ is innocent in itself, but it is prostituted to a base purpose. Every part of our nature is susceptible of this degradation. The more powers we have, the greater is our capacity of evil-doing as well as of well-doing.

III. THEY ARE APPARENTLY VERY UNEQUAL IN GUILT. The promiscuous collection of hateful things is surprising. It looks as though they were flung together with little consideration. Possibly this is designed, that we may not so much compare respective degrees of sin but hate and eschew all evil, the least sin being hateful to God. Pride, lying, murder, are in close juxtaposition. It is not asserted that the three are equally guilty. But no measure is given for discriminating between them. The casuistry of such measurement is demoralizing. Moreover, the difference is often not so great as we think. The crime that sends a shock of horror through the country and leads us to regard the doer of it as an inhuman monster, may come from no blacker sink of iniquity than that which sends forth a sin wearing a much less tragic hue.

IV. THEY ARE AS A WHOLE CHARACTERIZED BY FEATURES THAT ARE SPECIALLY REPRODATED IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS. The first and the last of the hateful things are the exact opposites of the first and the last of the graces named in the seven Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount. Pride, lying, cruelty, are the opposites of the Christian duties of humility, truthfulness, and charity. The sin of the heart and imagination is condemned as well as that of the hands.

V. THEY ARE ALL CONDEMNED ON ACCOUNT OF THEIR HATEFULNESS IN THE SIGHT OF GOD. Morality is not created by the fiat of the Divine will. It is eternal, necessary, immutable. God is holy because he lives according to it. But God's relation to morals adds a new sanction. Wickedness then becomes sin. The hatefulness of sin in God's sight should be to us its greatest condemnation, not only because God will punish it, but because it separates us from the love of God.

Vers. 20—22.—*Parental training.* I. SOUND PARENTAL TRAINING IS THE SUREST FOUNDATION FOR A GOOD AFTER-LIFE. Both parents are here named. Neither has a right to delegate to the other his or her share of the great responsibility. In early days this rests chiefly with the mother, and throughout life her moral influence is likely to be the more persuasive. Here is woman's great work. Man fills the world with the noise of his busy doings. But woman has a no less great and useful task in moulding the characters of the toilers of the future. Yet the father has his duty in parental training; and there are often special circumstances in which his knowledge of the world or his firmness of control is essential. Let parents feel that nothing can take the place of home training. The Sunday school cannot do the work of the mother's counsel. No pressure of public duty should let a man excuse himself for neglecting the religious training of his children. He deludes himself if he thinks he can do it by proxy, be the substitute ever so efficient a teacher. Nothing can take the place of the anxious watchfulness of parental love.

II. SOUND PARENTAL TRAINING IS OF LITTLE USE UNLESS IT IS RIGHTLY RECEIVED

BY THE CHILDREN. The child has his duty in regard to it as well as the parent. His will is free. The best seed may be wasted on bad soil. It is his duty to treasure up wholesome home lessons as the most valuable portion divided to him. How mad is the desire of some to escape from the control of the home to the fascinating liberty of the world, of the perils and deceits of which they are so ignorant? Why should the young man be so anxious to take a journey into a far country out of the sight of those who have his interest most at heart? Perhaps there have been unwise restraints in the home. But escape from them is no excuse for rushing to the utmost bounds of licence.

III. SOUND PARENTAL TRAINING, WELL RECEIVED AND FOLLOWED, IS A GREAT BOON FOR THE WHOLE OF LIFE. 1. It is a source of quiet restfulness. It keeps one while sleeping. After the feverish tumult of the day, to retire to rest with hallowed memories lovingly recalled, what a help it is to peace of heart! 2. It is a guide in duty and in danger. "When thou goest, it shall lead thee . . . When thou awakest, it shall talk with thee." These old memories rise up to cheer in dismal tasks or to warn from deceitful temptations. And if they have become doubly sacred because the voice that spake the words of counsel is hushed in death, shall they not also be more reverently cherished? Who knows but what those patient, gentle eyes that followed the child in his nursery griefs and joys may be looking down from the heights of heaven to watch him still as he bends to the hard toil of life?

Ver. 23.—*The object of religious teaching.* I. IT IS TO SERVE AS A LIGHT. How much so-called religious teaching "darkens counsel with words without knowledge"! We do not give right Christian instruction when we urge upon the belief of people unintelligible dogmas in phrases which are to them meaningless. Like the book Hamlet was reading, very much that is crammed into children is "words, words, words." You cannot teach that which is not understood. The first thing is to open the eyes of the scholar, to throw light on regions of the unknown. Revelation is illumination. Christianity is not a rule of dark superstition, but a religion of light.

II. THIS LIGHT GIVES A NEW INTERPRETATION TO ALL THINGS. The light does not create the objects it shines upon, it only makes manifest what was previously hidden, but not the less solidly existent. So religious revelation does not create. The doctrines of Christianity, if they are true at all, represent eternal facts. The New Testament brings these facts to light. Thus Christ has taught us to call God "Father," but he was our Father before the great Teacher came into the world. Earthly facts have new meanings as new lights fall upon them. The light of eternity transforms the whole appearance of life. Under its rays "all things become new." The pleasures, the sorrows, the duties, the gold, the food, the houses, the land, are there still, but they take on quite other hues, and range themselves in strangely altered ranks of interest. When the sun rises, the horrible monsters that loomed on us through the night resolve themselves into homely barns and familiar trees, while the distant mountain range that had been invisible before displays its silent solitudes in all their awful splendour.

III. THE MISSION OF THIS LIGHT IS TO GUIDE OUR CONDUCT. "Reproofs of instruction are the way of life." This teaching is not given merely to satisfy our curiosity, nor simply to develop our mental powers. When theology is pursued with the thirst for knowledge only, it eludes our grasp. When it is degraded to the functions of mental gymnastics, it is wrecked and ruined. The end of revelation is practical and momentous. Scripture is to serve as a "lamp to our feet." Religious teaching should not aim at merely exciting intellectual interest, nor at solving abstract problems, nor at inculcating authoritative dogmas, but at guiding men into the way of peace and life. Therefore: 1. Do not be disappointed if it adds as many mysteries as it explains; so long as it sheds light on our path we can afford to find that it makes the darkness in some other regions the more visible. 2. Do not be content with hearing, understanding, assenting to religious instruction. It fails wholly of its object if it does not lead us to obey it, to walk in its light.

Ver. 27.—*Fire in the bosom.* I. SIN IS FIRE. Fire has an activity that mocks life; it is full of noise and movement. It hisses like a demon-serpent; it sends forth its tongues of flame like living creatures. Yet it is lifeless and the deadliest enemy to

all life. Though some animals are drowned in water, others are fitted to find it their natural element; but all living creatures perish in fire. The phœnix is an impossibility. So sin mocks life and beauty and healthy energy. But it is only a death-power. 1. It is *destructive*. Fire exists by consuming its victims. So sin does not simply use, it destroys the faculties it works through. 2. It tends to *spread*. Fire leaps from object to object, rushing over a wide prairie, enveloping a whole city. "Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" (Jas. iii. 5). So sin spreads through the soul, and from one man to another. 3. It *converts into fire* everything that it lays hold of. So sin turns all that comes under its power into its own nature. 4. It *rages furiously*. Nothing is so like madness as a great fire. It is infinitely more horrible than the wildest tempest of wind and water. Sin is a fury of passion. 5. It *leaves smouldering embers and dismal heaps of ashes*. When the fire of passion is burnt out, the soul is left charred, empty, dismal, as but dust and ashes.

II. THE SINNER CARRIES FIRE IN HIS BOSOM. 1. It is *in himself*. You cannot kindle the fires of your sin outside your own soul at a safe distance. You cannot even sin with your hands while your heart is untouched. When sin is indulged, it takes up its abode in a man's bosom. It enters his affections, it lies close to his heart, it coils about his very life. 2. Moreover, he who takes this fire in his bosom *cannot readily get rid of it*. It penetrates deeper and deeper and spreads further and further, till it fills the whole man. It is not possible to sin for a moment and leave the scene of guilt scatheless. He who enters the furnace of sin lets the fire of sin enter his own bosom, and when he goes forth carries it with him—himself a furnace of sins!

III. THE SINNER WITH FIRE IN HIS BOSOM WILL FIND IT BURN HIM. Men talk of the fires of retribution as though they were kindled in some remote region by some unknown executioner, and so they are often as little moved by the thought of them as they are affected by the heat of the stars. But the fire in a man's bosom will bring its own retribution. The wicked man has a hell within him. He is becoming like Milton's Satan when he felt the impossibility of escaping from hell because of his own fearful state, and exclaimed, "Myself am Hell!" This is natural. It would require a miracle to prevent the fire in the bosom from burning. But these terrible thoughts are not intended to induce despair. Rather they should so awaken us to the horror of sin as to lead us to shun it as we would run from a house on fire, and make us so realize our danger as to seek safety in that fountain opened for all uncleanness which can quench the fires of sin and stay all their fatal consequences.

Vers. 30, 31.—*Motive and responsibility*. I. GUILT IS TO BE MEASURED BY MOTIVE. The starving pick-pocket is not so wicked as the well-to-do house-breaker. Even in the low depths of crime moral distinctions need to be observed, lest we do grievous injustice to our most unhappy fellow-men. The principle that guilt is commensurate with motive rests on the Christian conception of it as an inward fact. This makes it always difficult to form a correct judgment of other people. The rough external standard of the law must be applied by the administrators of civil justice, because no other standard is within their power. But it still remains true that the judge who pronounces sentence may be a much worse man than the prisoner whom he sends to the hulks.

II. PRIMARY NECESSARIES ARE PRIOR TO CONVENTIONAL LAWS. It is an instinct of the most elementary character that prompts the hungry man to take food. Of course, it is still possible for moral laws to interfere with the pursuit of the object of that instinct, and we must always recognize that moral laws are higher than natural instincts. But in our complicated modern civilization we are not dealing with the direct and simple impact of those lofty and inflexible laws. We are brought into contact with very curious social arrangements, and the laws of right and justice are only allowed to work themselves out by means of an extraordinary social machinery. Under such circumstances there may be room for a protest of instinct against convention, though there can never be an excuse for the enjoyment of any personal desire when that is contradicted by absolute morality. The hero of Victor Hugo's story, 'Les Misérables,' is not regarded as a vulgar thief when he steals the loaf from the baker's shop to feed his starving family. He appears as a revolutionist protesting against what he feels to be an unjust distribution of property. A healthy Christian conscience must

condemn his action; but in such a case every human heart will give great weight to "extenuating circumstances."

III. RESPONSIBILITY CANNOT BE MEASURED BY MOTIVE. Here a new element is introduced—one which cannot be lightly set aside. A man must reap the consequences of his deeds, no matter what motives prompted them. If he acts foolishly from the best of motives, he must suffer for his folly; if he offends against social law, no plea of primary necessity will exonerate him from the penalty. In a world of law and order we must look to the results of our conduct as well as to its inward urging principle. Moreover, if we injure any one without the least malice, but only through what we regard as sheer necessity, the fact of the injury does not vanish, and we are under an obligation to take the first opportunity to make ample amends. Further, it is the duty of society to see that external right is done, even though those who resist it may be acting with the best of excuses. The thief must be punished, though his starving condition rouses our pity. But surely these painful points of casuistry should never arise. It is the duty of Christians to work for a better social order, wherein no injustice can give the semblance of an excuse to crime.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—5.—*The perils of suretyship.* Here we have—

I. A FEATURE OF ANCIENT LIFE. The warnings against incurring this responsibility are very frequent in this book (ch. xi. 15; xvii. 18; xx. 16; xxii. 26). For the bail was treated like the insolvent debtor (2 Kings iv. 1; Matt. xviii. 25). He was subject to distraint or to be sold into slavery. Ben-Sira (xxix. 18, *seq.*) says, "Suretyship hath destroyed many that were doing well, and swallowed them up as a wave of the sea. It hath turned mighty men out of their homes, and they wandered among foreign peoples." The surety struck his hand into that of the debtor, as a sign that he would answer for him. This would be accompanied by a verbal declaration, and hence the man had bound and confined himself—"snared himself by the words of his mouth." The rigidity of ancient custom in this particular told with terrible severity against thoughtless incurrers of responsibility, no matter how kind the motive. Hence—

II. THE URGENT NEED OF PRUDENCE. Ver. 3: "Since thou hast come into the hand [power] of thy neighbour, stamp with thy foot, and storm thy neighbour;" *i.e.* be urgent and insistent with the careless debtor for whom thou hast pledged thyself, press upon him the fulfilment of his responsibilities before it be too late. Exercise a sleepless vigilance (ver. 4, "Tear thyself free like a gazelle from its haunt, and like a bird from the hand of the fowler").

III. MODERN REFLECTIONS AND LESSONS. 1. Let us be thankful that the severity of the ancient laws and customs concerning debt and suretyship has been mitigated. The history of the changes of law is one of the best evidences of Christianity, and proof that prior conceptions of God advance side by side with gentler conceptions of social relations and duties. 2. Prudence is a constant necessity, and its cultivation a virtue, though not the highest. We must learn to adjust the claims of prudence and of neighbourly love. 3. Independence is not only a "glorious privilege," but the firm foundation for the best life-enjoyment and life-work. These are golden words from Ben-Sira, valid for all time: "Take heed to thyself, lest thou fail. *The elements of life are water, bread, and a coat to one's back, and a dwelling to hide unseemliness.* Better the poor man's life in his hut than faring luxuriously in others' houses. . . . It is an ill life from house to house, and not to be able to open your mouth where you are sojourning." To do our own work or God's work well, we should aim at *detachment, disembarrassment, freedom of spirit.*—J.

Vers. 6—11.—*The sluggard admonished.* I. THE PICTURE OF INSECT INDUSTRY. The ant was viewed as the very picture of laboriousness in ancient as in modern times. It is interesting that the German word for "industrious" (*emsig*) seems derivable from *amessi*, "emmet, ant." The like may probably be traceable in some English dialects. 1. The industry of the ant has all the appearance of a *virtue.* For it seems unforced; there is no judge, superintendent, or onlooker, or taskmaster, to superintend its work.

Contrast with the representations on various monuments of the taskmasters with whips superintending gangs of labourers. 2. It is *provident* industry. It lays up against the rainy day. The closer study of ant-life by modern observers opens a world of marvel, and suggests other lines of thought. It is sufficient for didactic purposes to note the general principle; the external appearances of nature reveal *moral analogies.*

II. THE CONTRAST OF HUMAN SLOTH. (Vers. 9—11.) 1. The lazy man seems as if he would sleep *for ever* (ver. 9). 2. He knows not when he has reposed enough (ver. 10). An ironical imitation of his langour, his lazy attitude. The arms ever crossed, instead of being opened and ready for toil. "When I begin to turn about," said the Duke of Wellington, "I turn *out.*" 3. The result of sloth (ver. 11). Poverty surprises him like a robber, and want like an armed man. A striking picture of the *seeming suddenness* with which men may sink into destitution. But it is only seeming; it has been long really preparing.

III. MORAL ANALOGY AND APPLICATION. Sloth in all its forms is ruinous to body and soul. Mental inertness and vacuity is a common form. The mind must be *aroused, interested, filled.* Here is one of the great *sources of drunkenness*, because of *depression.* If you have no occupation, *invent one. Goad your temper* by hopes and fears, if it will not wake up without them. In religion "be not slothful." *Work* at the practical or theoretical side of it, whichever suits your capacity best. Work out your own salvation. *Take it all for granted*, and you will presently find that all has slipped away, and naught remains but an *impoverished intellect, a stagnant will.*—J.

Vers. 12—15.—*A picture of spite.* I. THE SPITEFUL MAN DEFINED GENERALLY. (Ver. 12.) He is "naughty," the old English word being expressive; otherwise "a thing of naught," a "slight man" (Shakespeare); in German *heilloss*, "unsound," "unworthy," and so *worthless.* Gather up the sense and force of these adjectives, and we get the idea comprehensively of *badness*, the sensuous counterpart of which is *rottenness, corruption.*

II. HIS CHARACTERISTICS. (Vers. 13, 14.) 1. In *mien* and *gesture* and *language.* His mouth is twisted to a false expression, and utters false things. There is an obliquity and uncertainty in his glance (comp. ch. x. 10). He is full of shy tricks and hints—the thrust of the foot, nudges and signs with his fingers. "The shrug, the 'hum!' the 'ha!' those petty brands that calumny doth use" (Shakespeare). 2. In *spirit perverse.* It is a nature awry, inwardly deformed. Busily inventive, scheming mischief, breeding quarrels (comp. on ch. iii. 29). It is a mind naturally active and curious, which, disabled from good, swings inevitably to the other extreme.

III. HIS DESTINY. An overthrow, *sudden, utter, irremediable.* 1. This is described constantly as the common doom of all kinds of wickedness. 2. The Bible makes sharp distinctions, and opposes characters in an *absolute* manner. Fine distinctions would run into the infinite. But we must make them in every particular case. 3. The doom ever stands in the relation of *correspondence* to the guilt.—J.

Vers. 16—19.—*A catalogue of abominations.* I. WHAT IS AN ABOMINATION? The *word* (as a verb) is of Roman or pagan origin, and denoted the feeling of abhorrence for what was *ill-omened.* In the moral sphere all evil conduct is like a *bad omen*, exciting dread and aversion, because boding calamity. In the direct language of the Bible, referring all things immediately to God, abominations are defined as "things that Jehovah hates, and that are an aversion to his soul" (ver. 16).

II. AN ENUMERATION OF THESE DIVINE AVERSIONS. The particular *number* is explained by the parallelism of Oriental poetry generally. It has no direct religious significance. 1. *Proud eyes.* Literally, *lofty* eyes. The *grande supercilium*, or *haughty brow*, of the Romans. The sensuous expression contains and implies in every case the *inner mood.* This Divine aversion for pride is deeply marked in the Bible and in ancient thought generally. Pride is an *excess*—the excess of a virtue of due self-valuation. Therefore it is a disturbing element in the moral world, or God's order. It tends to disjoint the social system. 2. *A lying tongue.* The liar is thus a solvent of society. It must break up were lying to become universal, and must decay so far as the vice of individuals becomes the custom of the multitude. 3. *Hands of violence and injustice.* The tyrant is a usurper of God's authority. He "plays such tricks . . . as

angels weep at." The judicial murderer sets at naught the justice both of heaven and earth, the rights of God and of men. 4. *The malicious, scheming heart.* (See on ver. 14.) That quick "forge and working-shop of thought" (Shakespeare) that we call the imagination may become a very devil's smithy, a manufactory of the newest implements of mischief, from the patterns of hell. 5. *Feet that speed to mischief.* All couriers of ill news, eager retailers of slander, all who cannot bear to be forestalled in the hurtful word, who are ambitious of the first deadly blow. 6. *The "breather of lies."* (Ver. 19.) The false witness, the lying informer; all who trade in *falsehood*, and breathe it as their atmosphere. 7. *The mischief-maker.* The instigator of quarrels between brethren (see on ver. 14). All who partake of the leavened bread of malice, rather than of the pure, unfermented, and incorruptible bread of sincerity and truth.

1. Our aversions should be God's aversions. 2. The reasoning antipathy is the counterpart of improper sympathy. 3. Our love and our hate are liable to aberration if not governed by reason and religion. 4. *Instinctive* antipathy means only that we have found in another something that is opposed to our personal sense of well-being; conscientious antipathy, that we have found that which is opposed to the order of God's world.—J.

Vers. 20—24.—*Exhortation to chastity.* I. PREFACE. (Ver. 20; see on ch. v. 1, 2; ch. i. 8.)

II. EXHORTATION TO MINDFULNESS OF EARLY LESSONS. (Ver. 21; see on ch. ii. 3.) It is in *oblivious* moments that we sin. We may forget much that we have learned, having outgrown its need. We can never outgrow the simple, early lessons of piety. The chain that links our days each to each in moral progress is the memory of those lessons.

III. VITAL VIRTUE IN THOSE REMEMBERED LESSONS. They have a true *vis vitalis*. They *guide* in action, *protect* in passive hours (see on ch. iii. 23, 24). In wakeful hours of the night they seem to *talk* to the heart, as it "holds communion with the past." "Spirits from high hover o'er us, and comfort sure they bring." The truth becomes as a guardian angel. There is a junction of light and life in religion (ver. 23). What is seen in the intelligence as *true* translates itself into *health* in the habits.

IV. THEY ARE SPECIALLY PRESERVATIVE AGAINST THE WICKED WOMAN AND HER WILES. (Ver. 24; see on ch. ii. 16; v. 20.) Nothing is said directly of the *reflex* effect of vice upon the mind. It is always the danger externally considered that is pointed out. But this is due to the *objective* presentative form of the biblical thought and speech. We must learn to render the objective into the subjective form, to note how every outward drama has its reflex in the spirit itself; and thus we draw a double benefit from Bible lore. The pictures must be taken first in their *proper* meaning, then be converted into *figures* of the *inner life*.—J.

Vers. 25—35.—*Warning against adultery.* No candid student can ignore the fact that the view of this sin, and the motives deterrent from it, are of far lower order than those of pure Christianity. They do not rise above those of Horace, or any general morality of men of the world. In the sense that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, that the soul is in communion with God, we reach that loftier point of view whence the *odium* of the sin is clearly discernible, and the motives against it are the highest that can be known.

I. SIN SPRINGS FROM THE ROOT OF DESIRE. (Ver. 25.) This is the general law (Jas. i. 14, 15). Hence the last command of the Decalogue (Exod. xx. 17; Matt. v. 28). The objects of desire may be good in themselves, but not lawful for our possession, as *e.g.* anything that belongs to our neighbour. Or the object may only *seem* to be good in itself, and its possession may be both unlawful and pernicious. This is the case with the adulteress. Her beauty is a deceitful show. It is a symbol with *no* moral worth behind it. The beauty, the "twinkling eye," are only sensuous charms. We must not speak of desire abstractly as if *it* were wrong, but of the *indiscriminating* desire, which confounds the lawful with the unlawful, the real with the unreal.

II. ADULTEROUS DESIRE BOTH UNLAWFUL AND PERNICIOUS. 1. The *extravagance and avarice of the adulteress.* (Ver. 26.) This is a commonplace of observation. Excess in one passion affects the whole moral equilibrium, and she who will lavish

away her honour will be reckless of other waste. 2. *She is a spendthrift of her lover's life.* The Hebrew designates the soul or life as *dear*, or *costly*. After making havoc of his possessions, she preys upon his life, more precious than all. 3. The *deadly certainty of those results of such liaisons.* (Vers. 27—29.) By two impassioned questions the teacher conveys the most emphatic denial of what they suggest. 4. The *further certainty of penal consequences on detection.* Conveyed by means of an analogy (vers. 30, 31). The act of the thief who steals to quiet his starving stomach is not overlooked. If apprehended, he is made to restore sevenfold. The Mosaic Law says four or fivefold (Exod. xxi. 36; xxii. 1, *sqq.*; cf. Luke xix. 8). The "sevenfold" merely expresses a round sum generally; the thief might have to buy off his exemption from legal prosecution with all he had. Much less, then, can the graver crime of adultery escape punishment, if detected. And hence the *senselessness* and *suicidal conduct* of the lover (ver. 32). 5. *Other risks of detection.* Castigation and ignominy at the hands of the outraged husband (ver. 33). Exposure to all the fury of excited jealousy, which is unsparing, fiercely vindictive, insatiable, unappeasable (vers. 34, 35).

1. The lower motive—fear of consequences—is the most *powerful* deterrent from crime. 2. But the higher motives, derived from the sense of what crime is in itself and in relation to the doer, are needed when the other is not acting. 3. It is not *being found out* that makes the evil evil,—that is an *accident;* the essence of the crime is in the wrong done to the soul.—J.

Vers. 1—5.—*Answering for others; danger and deliverance.* There are times when we are invited and are bound to answer for other people—it may be with our word, or it may be with our bond. We have all been indebted to the kindnesses of our friends in this direction, and that which we have received from our fellows we should be ready to give to them in return. But it is a matter in which it is very easy to go much too far; in which carelessness is wrong and even criminal; in which, therefore, wise counsel is well worth heeding.

I. THAT GOOD MEN ARE EXPOSED TO SERIOUS DANGER IN THE WAY OF SURETYSHIP. (Vers. 1—3.) Good men, as such. For it is they who are most likely to be in a position to grant the help which is desired, and who are most likely to be induced to do so. The danger is threefold. 1. The appeal is to kindness of heart. It is the young at starting, or it is the unfortunate, or it is those on whom the helpless are dependent, who supplicate our interposition; and it is difficult for the tender-hearted to turn a deaf ear to their entreaty. 2. The peril is easily incurred. It was but the taking of the hand in the presence of two or three witnesses; it is but the signing of a name at the foot of a bond, and the thing is done. 3. The result is remote and uncertain. No evil may ever happen; if it should, it will fall some day in the distance.

II. THAT GODLY PRINCIPLE REQUIRES US TO PUT A STRONG CHECK ON INCLINATION. 1. However much our sympathetic feelings may be stirred, however great the pleasure of compliance, and however deep the pain of refusal, we must forbear, when we have not wherewith to meet the demand that may be made on us. To comply, under such conditions, is simple dishonesty; it is criminal; it is an essentially false action. 2. We should imperil the comfort of our own family. Our first duty is to the wife whom we have solemnly covenanted before God to cherish and care for, and to the children whom the Father has entrusted to our charge. 3. We should be encouraging a culpable spirit of unsound speculation. 4. We should be disregarding the general good. No minister can commend to a Christian community a brother whom he believes to be unfit for the post without sinning against Christ and his Church most seriously. No man can recommend an incompetent or unworthy neighbour or friend to a position of trust and influence without doing a wrong which, if it be not condemned in the Decalogue, will be heavily scored in the Divine account.

III. THAT IF WE FIND WE HAVE ERRED, WE MUST DO EVERY POSSIBLE THING TO GAIN DELIVERANCE. (Vers. 3—7.) There should be: 1. The utmost promptitude (ver. 4). When the blow may not fall for some time to come, there is special temptation to procrastinate until it is too late. Seek safety at once; let not the sun go down before the first step is taken. 2. Energy in action (ver. 5). We should seek to extricate ourselves and those who are dear to us with the vigour with which the roe escapes from the

hunter, the bird from the fowler. 3. If necessary, with self-humiliation (ver. 3). We hate to "humble ourselves," but we ought to be ready to do this rather than allow trouble and ruin to hang over our home.

IV. THAT IF THIS URGENCY BE DUE TO TEMPORAL DANGERS, HOW MUCH MORE IMPERATIVE IS OUR DUTY TO GAIN DELIVERANCE FROM SPIRITUAL PERILS! We may well give "no sleep to our eyes, nor slumber to our eyelids," until the peril is passed of being called by the Divine Creditor to meet a debt when we 'have nothing to pay."—C.

Vers. 6—11.—*Sloth and diligence.* In this land and in this age, in England in the nineteenth century, there is little room for the sluggard; there is comparatively little temptation to sluggishness; the force of a rushing stream carries all along with it at a rapid pace. Nevertheless, it is true—

I. THAT SOME MEN FIND THEMSELVES UNDER SPECIAL TEMPTATION TO SLOTH. This may be a matter of (1) bodily infirmity, the misfortune of an exceptional physical constitution; (2) mental disposition, inherited from others, and to a large extent deserving of pity rather than censure; (3) moral character, the impress of a bad habit—a spiritual result which has to be blamed as much as to be deplored.

II. THAT IT IS TO BE REGARDED AS UNWORTHY OF CHRISTIAN MANHOOD. 1. It is rebuked by the humbler creation (vers. 6—8). That which the ant does instinctively, and without any intelligent guide or instructor, we ought to do, who are endowed with reason, and who have so many human teachers and friends to direct, admonish, and prompt us; who have, moreover, the admonitions of a Divine Teacher and Friend to enlighten and quicken us. 2. It is contemptible in the sight of man, our brother. There is something more than a tone of strong remonstrance, there is a perceptible admixture of contempt in the address, "Thou sluggard" (ver. 6), and also in the raillery of the ninth and tenth verses, "How long wilt thou sleep! . . . Yet a little sleep," etc. The industrious man cannot look at the slothfulness of the sluggard, at the supineness of the careless, at the dilatoriness of the half-hearted, without irrepressible feelings of aversion and contempt; he is compelled to scorn them in his heart.

III. THAT IT MUST BE OVERCOME IN OUR OWN TEMPORAL INTERESTS. (Ver. 11.) Sloth soon ends in ruin. Bankruptcy waits on negligence. Temporal ruin comes: 1. *Unexpectedly.* "Poverty comes as one that travelleth." It has started a long time, it has traversed many a road, crossed many a valley, surmounted many a hill; but, though travelling long, it is only in sight during the last ten minutes of its journey. So ruin begins its course as soon as a man neglects his duties; it travels far and long, its form is hidden behind the hills, it is only just toward the last that its countenance is seen and recognized; then, before he expected it, Poverty stares him in the face, and grasps his hand with cruel clutch. 2. *Irresistibly.* "Want as an armed man." At last no measures can be taken. Friends are alienated, relatives are wearied, all good habits are gone, the courage which might have risen to the occasion is broken by continued sluggishness of spirit; the man is disarmed of every weapon, and is at the mercy of well-armed Want. Indolence not only brings about ruinous circumstances, but it robs us of the spirit by which adversity might be met and mastered; it places us helpless at the feet of the strong.

"Let us, then, be up and doing;" for while sloth is rebuked on every side, and leads down to inevitable ruin, on the other hand, diligence (1) is in accordance with the will of God concerning us (Rom. xii. 11; 1 Tim. v. 8; 2 Thess. iii. 6—14); (2) commands a genuine prosperity (see ch. xxii. 29); (3) braces the character and imparts spiritual strength; (4) places us in a position to show kindness to the unfortunate (Eph. iv. 28); (5) in the sphere of religion ensures ultimate and complete salvation (2 Pet. i. 5, 10, 11; 2 Cor. v. 9).—C.

Vers. 12—15.—*The character and doom of the abandoned.* Perhaps there is no word which more aptly designates the man who is here described than the word "abandoned." The "man of Belial" ("the naughty man") is he who is abandoned, who has abandoned himself, to the promptings of his own evil nature, to the fascinations and tyrannies of sin. Here we see the features of his character and his doom.

I. THAT IN SPEECH HE IS UTTERLY UNPRINCIPLED. "He walks with a froward mouth." He continually and remorselessly uses the language of falsehood, of pro-

fanity, of lewdness, of slander. From his mouth there constantly issues that which God hates to hear, and which is offensive and shameful in the estimation of the good and pure.

II. THAT IN PRACTICE HE HABITUALLY RESORTS TO LOW CUNNING. (Ver. 13.) He has ways of communicating with others only known to the initiated. He cannot afford to be frank and outspoken; he must have recourse to subtlety, to low tricks, to devices which will cover his thoughts from the eye of the upright. This is (1) degrading to himself, and (2) disgusting to others.

III. THAT IN HIS HEART HE IS POSITIVELY MALIGN. (Ver. 14.) He takes a demoniacal pleasure in doing evil. It is not only that he will consent to sacrifice the claims or injure the character of others if he cannot enrich himself without so doing; it is that he finds a horrible and malignant satisfaction in compassing their ruin; he "devises mischief continually; he sows discord." To the pure it is incomprehensible that men can positively delight in impurity; to the kind it seems impossible that men can enjoy cruelty, etc. But it is the last result of a sinful course that the "froward heart" scatters mischief on every hand for the sake of the evil thing itself; to him vice and misery are themselves his reward.

IV. THAT GOD WILL BRING DOWN ON HIS HEAD IRREMEDIABLE DISASTER. (Ver. 15.) The man thinks he can defy his Maker, but he is deceiving himself. God is not mocked; he that sows to the flesh *shall* reap corruption (Gal. vi. 8). He has broken away from all Divine restraints; he has thrown off him the arresting hand of a merciful Redeemer, he has silenced the voice of a pleading spirit; but God is not altogether such as we are (Ps. l. 21). He *will* rebuke, and he will set our sins before our souls again. The hour will come, quite unexpectedly, when judgment will overtake him. It may be (1) public indignation, and the stern rebuke of human society; or (2) ruin in his temporal affairs,—his schemes break down and involve him in their fall, or some one of his victims turns against him; or (3) sudden sickness and pain lay him prostrate on a bed from which he may never rise, and on which his iniquities may confront him; or (4) death and eternity present themselves, and demand that he shall look them full in the face (see ch. xxix. 1).—C.

Vers. 16, 17.—*The condemnation of pride.* The simple, strong language of the text tells us that pride is a thing which God hates. We should therefore make some inquiries concerning it, and know all we can learn about it; for who would like to have in his heart and life that which is positively odious to the Father of his spirit?

I. ITS SEAT IS IN THE SOUL. The wise man speaks of the "proud look" or the "haughty eyes," but he specifies this as it is a most common manifestation of the evil which lies within. Its seat is in the soul, in the lurking thought, in the secret sentiment, in the nursed and nourished convictions, in the false idea. It is in the habit of the heart; it is embedded in the character.

II. IT IS MANIFOLD IN ITS MANIFESTATION. It is most often shown, as intimated, in the proud look, but it may make itself felt in (1) the disdainful tone; (2) the contemptuous silence or non-observance; (3) the cutting sentence; (4) the exclusive action.

III. IT SPRINGS FROM MANY SOURCES. It may arise from: 1. A consciousness of physical superiority—elegance of figure, beauty of face, muscular strength, etc. 2. Consciousness of mental acquisitions—intellectual force, knowledge, eloquence, etc. 3. Social prominence—rank, office, distinction. 4. Recollection of great services rendered.

IV. IT IS HATEFUL IN THE SIGHT OF GOD. This thing "doth the Lord hate." He hates it, for doubtless he sees in it a heinousness and enormity we do not perceive. But he may hate it because: 1. It is an essentially *false* thing. We give ourselves credit for that which is not due. "What have we that we have not received?" The pedestal on which we stand is a false imagining. 2. It is an utterly *unbecoming* thing. Who are we, the sinful children of men, the body of whom is deserving of condemnation, that we should look down superciliously on others? In any human soul pride is unbecoming, unlovely. 3. It is a *cruel* thing. It wounds, and it wounds the most sensitive spirits worst. We place, by itself, as demanding particular reference, one evil in pride for which God condemns it, viz.—

V. IT SHUTS US OUT OF THE KINGDOM OF HIS GRACE. How can we possibly go in humility and faith to the redeeming Lord, our Saviour, while pride occupies the

throne? The man in whom the proud spirit dwells stands afar from the salvation of God. "The Lord resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for *theirs* is the kingdom of heaven." "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."—C.

Vers. 16, 17.—*The Divine dislike of deceitfulness.* (See ch. xii. 22.) God hates "a lying tongue;" "Lying lips are abomination to the Lord." We must consider—

I. WHAT IS THE DECEITFULNESS WHICH GOD DETESTS. It is evident that the "lying tongue" and the "lying lips" are mentioned as the principal instrument of the soul in the sin which is rebuked. It is the sin itself which is the object of the Divine displeasure. That sin is deceitfulness; conveying false impressions to the mind of our neighbour, the wilful blinding of his eyes by untrue words or by false actions. This may be done by: 1. Downright falsehood—the most shameless and shocking of all ways. 2. Covert insinuation or innuendo—the most cowardly and despicable of all ways. 3. Prevarication, the utterance of a half-truth which is also half a lie—the most mischievous, because the most plausible and last detected, of all ways. 4. Acted untruth—one of the most common forms of falsehood, and perhaps as hurtful to the sinner as any, because it avoids apparent guilt, while it really is as culpable as most, if not as any, of these manifestations of deceit.

II. WHY IT IS SO ODIOUS TO THE RIGHTEOUS FATHER. What makes it "hateful," "abominable in his sight"? 1. It is inherently heinous. The soul has to make a very decided departure from rectitude to commit this sin. We may say of it, "Oh, 'tis foul! 'tis unnatural!" It is a "strange" thing in the view of the Holy One and the True. It is something which comes into direct and sharp collision with his Divine principles; which, in its own nature, is a painful, oppressive spectacle to his pure spirit. He loves and lives and desires truth—"truth in the inward parts;" and with the same intensity with which he loves truth, he must hate, with immeasurable abomination, every shape and form of falsehood. 2. It is ruinous to the soul that practises it. Nothing so surely leads down to spiritual destruction as this sin. It breaks down the walls and breaks up the very foundation of all character. For those who habitually decline from the truth, in word or deed, are constantly teaching themselves to consider that there is nothing sacred in truth at all; they are sliding down the incline at the foot of which is the sceptic's question, "What is truth?" A man who is false in language or in action is poisoning his soul by degrees; he is a spiritual suicide. 3. It is mischievous to society. "Putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour; *for we are members one of another.*" Human society depends on truthfulness in its members for its prosperity, comfort, and almost for its very life. What if we constantly doubted one another's word? The men of truth and trustworthiness are the salt of society. The men of lying tongue are its pest and its peril. Our neighbours have a right to claim of us that we shall put away lying lips and shall "speak the truth in love." God, who cares for the well-being of this human world, hates to see his children weakening, wounding, endangering that world of man by falsehood and deceit.

III. WHAT GOD WILL DO WITH THOSE WHO ARE GUILTY. He will surely punish them. He does so (1) by making them bear their penalty in the shape of spiritual demoralization; (2) by bringing down upon them first the distrust and then the reprobation of their fellows; (3) by excluding them firmly and finally from his own fellowship. He that does not "speak the truth in his heart" may not abide in his tabernacle here (Ps. xv. 1); he that deserves to be denominated a liar will be banished from his presence hereafter (Rev. xxii. 15).—C.

Vers. 16—19.—*The brand of God.* God placed a brand on the first murderer's brow, and he carried the curse with him to his grave. He does not mark us thus now with such signs of guilt; nevertheless, he has made it clear as the day that there are some men who are the objects of his very high displeasure. We know from the text that among these are—

I. MEN OF A PROUD HEART. (See above.)

II. MEN OF A FALSE SPIRIT. (See above.)

III. MEN THAT ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR OTHERS' DEATH. (Ver. 17.) Those whose

"hands shed innocent blood" are strongly condemned of him. These include, not only (1) men guilty of murder and manslaughter in the literal sense, but also (2) those who are responsible for the death of the innocent through culpable carelessness (*e.g.* an indifferent and negligent judge or reckless captain), and also (3) those who, by their heartlessness in family or social life, crush the spirit and shorten the life.

IV. MEN THAT PLOT MISCHIEF. "A heart that deviseth wicked imaginations" (ver. 18). These are they who use their inventive faculties, not for the good of their race, nor for the maintenance of their families, but for the base and shameful purpose of bringing some of their fellows into distress, if not into ruin; they contrive their overthrow only to enjoy their discomfiture.

V. CRUEL EXECUTIONERS OF WRATH. "Those whose feet are swift in running to mischief" (ver. 18); these are they who take a savage delight in being the instruments of punishment—the gaoler, the soldier, the executioner, who gloat over their work of severity or blood.

VI. FALSE WITNESSES. (Ver. 19.) One of the most solemn and responsible positions a man can occupy is the witness-box; he stands there, invoking the dread Name of the Eternal himself to cause justice to be done. If then he perjures himself, and "speaketh lies" when actually under oath, he defies his Maker, perverts justice, wrongs the innocent or releases the guilty, is disloyal to his country, outrages his own conscience. Well may *he* be among those whom God especially condemns.

VII. MEN THAT DISTURB HARMONY. "He that soweth discord among brethren" (ver. 19). "Blessed are the peacemakers," said the Master. "Cursed are the mischief-makers," says the text. If we do not actively promote peace and good will, surely we need not be the abettors of strife. There are two degrees of guilt here: there is the mischief-making which is due to culpable thoughtlessness, repeating words which should have been allowed to fall to the ground, unintentional but decided misrepresentation, etc.; and there is the darker wrong, to which a heavier penalty is due, deliberate and wanton disturbance of previous harmony. This is (1) bad in the social circle, (2) worse in the home, (3) worst in the Church of Christ.

Let it be remembered that: 1. God hates these things; they are utterly abhorrent to him. He cannot regard them without Divine repugnance. 2. God is "much displeased" with those who do them; his holy and awful wrath must extend to those who "do such things." 3. God will surely punish those who impenitently persist in them (Rom. ii. 2—9).—C.

Vers. 20—35.—*Sin and safety.* These verses may teach us—

I. THAT MAN LIES OPEN TO STRONG AND SAD TEMPTATIONS. The reference of the text is to the sin of sensuality; the wise man is warning against the wiles of "the evil woman," "the strange woman" (ver. 24). This sin of sensuality may consist in irregularities, or in things decidedly forbidden, or in gross and shameful violations of law and decency; it may be secret and hidden from every eye, or it may be unblushing and may flaunt itself before high heaven. The words of the text may, in part, apply to other sins; *e.g.* to intemperance, and also to gambling. To all of these the strong passions of youth often urge the soul; it finds itself drawn or driven by a powerful impulse which it is difficult to overcome. But the truth must be faced—

II. THAT VICE LEADS DOWN BY A SURE AND SHORT ROAD TO THE WORST INFLICTIONS. It leads to: 1. Self-reproach. The sinner "shall not be innocent" (ver. 29), and will carry the miserable consciousness of guilt with him into every place. 2. Corruption of character—such a one "lacketh heart" (marginal reading), "destroyeth his own soul" (ver. 32); losing all self-respect, his character is as a substance that is smitten, cracked through, ready to fall to pieces, worthless; "a wound" (ver. 33), a deep wound, it has gotten. 3. Shame. Men do not despise a thief who steals to allay the gnawing pangs of hunger; they may compel him to restore sevenfold, but they pity him as much as they despise him (vers. 30, 31). But the adulterer, or the confirmed drunkard, or the man who is impoverishing his family to gratify his lust for gambling, him men do despise in their hearts; they dishonour him in their soul, they cry "shame" upon him (ver. 33). 4. Impoverishment. Loss of money, of occupation, beggary, the humiliation of borrowing, pledging, etc. (ver. 26). 5. Penalty from those who have been wronged (vers. 34, 35). Those who outrage the honour of their fellows

may expect the bitterest revenge. To steal the love of a wife from her husband, or of a husband from his wife, is to make one enemy whose wrath nothing will appease. It is an evil thing, even if it be not a dangerous thing, to go through life bearing the malice, exposed to the intense and inextinguishable hatred of a human soul.

III. THAT THERE IS ONE PATH OF SAFETY. It is that which is suggested in vers. 27, 28, "Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?" etc. The way to escape the evil is *not to touch it*, to steer clear of it altogether, to keep well out of harm's way—to avoid the house and company of the flippant woman, to leave the sparkling cup untasted, to refuse to stake a farthing in any kind of lottery whatever. This is the only secure ground to take. Once begin to talk with the seductive woman, or to taste the pleasure of exhilaration from intoxicants, or to enjoy the sweets of appropriating money gained by nothing but a guess, and who shall say what the end will be? Do not touch the fire, and you will not be burnt.

IV. THAT THE YOUNG SHOULD BEAR THE GUIDING LAMP OF TRUTH ABOUT THEM ALONG THE WHOLE PATH OF LIFE. (Vers. 20—23.) In order to sustain the resolution to keep away from the destroying fires, consult the Word of God. 1. Have it in continual remembrance (ver. 21). 2. Illustrate it in every way open (ver. 20). 3. Find it a steady light, accompanying the steps everywhere (vers. 22, 23).—C.

Ver. 22.—*God's Word—guide, guardian, companion.* Man is insufficient of himself; he needs help from on high. Often in the course of his life he has goings forth, and then he wants direction; often he finds himself helpless, and then he needs a guardian to preserve him; often he is alone, and then he craves a friend who will commune with him. All this he has in the Word of the living God. It is—

I. IN ACTION, OUR GUIDE. "When thou goest, it shall lead thee." We go "from home," "into business," "to sea," "abroad," etc. In all these goings forth we want that which will lead us in the right and the wise way—the way of truth, purity, righteousness, happiness. The Word of the heavenly Father will supply this.

II. IN DANGER, OUR DEFENCE. "When thou sleepest, it shall keep thee." Not only when we are "asleep" on our couch are we in danger from those who might wish to injure us, but when we are unconscious of the spiritual dangers by which we are surrounded; when in a state of "innocence," of being uninitiated into the secrets of sin; when we are not alive to duty and opportunity as we should be;—then the Word of God will be a fence, a security. Following it, coming to it to learn God's will, we shall know which way to take, what courses to avoid, how to revive and to be reanimated with holy energy and zeal.

III. IN LONELINESS, OUR COMPANION. "When we awake," when we find ourselves with our faculties all in force, and no one to hold fellowship with us, then the Word of God will "talk with us." It will speak to us of God our Father, of the supreme value of our spiritual nature, of the path of life, of the kingdom of Christ and the salvation in him, of the heavenly home. "Lamp of our feet, whereby we trace," etc. (ver. 23).—C.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER VII.

Vers. 1—27.—13. *Thirteenth admonitory discourse*, containing a warning against adultery, treated under a different aspect from previous exhortations, and strengthened by an example. In this chapter and the following a contrast is drawn between the adulteress and Wisdom.

Ver. 1.—**My son, keep my words.** The teacher enjoins his pupil, as in ch. ii. 1, to observe the rules which he gives. **Lay up,** as a precious treasure (see on ch. ii. 1 and 7). The LXX. adds here a distich which is not in the Hebrew or in any other version, and is not germane to the context, however excellent in itself: "My son, honour the Lord, and thou shalt be strong, and beside him fear no other." With this we may compare Luke xii. 5 and Isa. viii. 12, 13.

Ver. 2.—**Keep my commandments, and live** (see on ch. iv. 4). **As the apple of thine eye**; literally, *the little man* (*ishon*, diminutive of *ish*) *of the eye*; so called from the miniature reflection of objects seen in the pupil, specially of the person who looks into another's eye. It is a proverbial expression for anything particularly precious

and liable to be injured unless guarded with scrupulous care (comp. Ps. xvii. 8; Zech. ii. 8). Similarly the Greeks called this organ κόρη, "damsel" or "puppet," and the Latins *pupilla*.

Ver. 3.—**Bind them upon thy fingers.** Wear my precepts like a ring on thy finger, so that they may go with thee, whatever thou takest in hand. Others think that the so-called *tephillin*, or phylacteries, are meant. These were worn both on the hand and the forehead, and consisted of a leather box containing strips of parchment, on which were written four texts, viz. Exod. xiii. 1—10; 11—16; Deut. vi. 4—9; xi. 13—21. The box was attached to a leather strap wound seven times round the arm, three times round the middle finger, and the remainder passed round the hand (see (Exod. xiii. 9, 16; Jer. xxii. 24). **Write them upon the table of thine heart** (see on ch. iii. 3 and vi. 21; and comp. Deut. vi. 9).

Vers. 4 and 5 contain earnest admonitions to the pursuit of Wisdom, which is worthy of the purest love.

Ver. 4.—**Say unto Wisdom, Thou art my sister.** Wisdom is personified, and the connection with her indicated by the relationship which best expresses love, purity, confidence. In the Book of Wisdom viii. she is represented as wife. Christ calls those who do God's will his brother, and sister, and mother (Matt. xii. 50). **Call Understanding thy kinswoman**; *moda*, "familiar friend." Let prudence and sound sense be as dear to thee as a close friend.

Ver. 5.—**That they may keep thee from the strange woman** (see on ch. ii. 16 and vi. 24). When the heart is filled with the love of what is good, it is armed against the seductions of evil pleasure or whatever may entice the soul from God and duty. Septuagint, "That she (Wisdom) may keep thee from the strange and evil woman, if she should assail thee with gracious words."

Vers. 6—23.—To show the greatness of the danger presented by the seductions of the temptress, the writer introduces no mere abstraction, no mere personification of a quality, but an actual example of what had passed before his own eyes.

Ver. 6.—**For.** The particle introduces the example. **At the window of my house.** He gives a graphic delineation of a scene witnessed outside his house. **I looked through my casement**; *eshnâb*, "the lattice," which served the purpose of our Venetian blinds, excluding the sun, but letting the cool air pass into the room (comp. Judg. v. 28). A person within could see all that passed in the street without being himself visible from without (Cant. ii. 9). The Septuagint reads the sentence as spoken of the woman: "For from the window glancing out of her house into the streets, at one whom she might see of the senseless children, a young man void of understanding."

Ver. 7.—**And beheld among the simple ones.** Though it was night (ver. 9), there was light enough from moon or stars or from illuminated houses to show what was passing. "The simple" are the inexperienced, who are easily led astray (see on ch. i. 4). Looking forth into the street on the throng of young and thoughtless persons passing to and fro, among them **I discerned . . . a young man void of understanding**; a fool, who, without any deliberate intention of sinning, put himself in the way of temptation, played on the borders of transgression. The way of escape was before him, as it is in all temptations (1 Cor. x. 13), but he would not take it. Such a one may well be said to lack understanding, or heart, as the Hebrew expresses it (ch. vi. 32, where see note).

Ver. 8.—**Near her corner.** He kept near the corner of the house of the woman for whom he waited. Another reading gives, "near a corner;" *juxta angulum*, Vulgate; παρὰ γωνίαν, Septuagint; *i.e.* he did not take to the broad, open street, but sneaked about at corners, whence he could watch the woman's house without being observed by others. **He went the way to her house.** He sauntered slowly along, as the verb signifies. Septuagint, "Passing by a corner in the passages of her house (ἐν διόδοις οἴκων αὐτῆς)."

Ver. 9.—**In the twilight, in the evening of the day.** So termed to distinguish it from the morning twilight. The moralist sees the youth pacing to and fro in the early evening hours, and still watching and waiting when the darkness was deepest (comp. Job xxiv. 15). **In the black and dark night**; literally, *in the pupil of the eye of night and in darkness.* We have the same expression in ch. xx. 20 (where see note) to denote midnight. Its appropriateness is derived from the fact that the pupil of the eye is the dark centre in the iris. Septuagint: the youth "speaking in the darkness of evening, when there is the stillness of night and gloom."

Ver. 10.—**And, behold, there met him a woman.** His long watch is rewarded; the woman comes forth from her house into the street—a proceeding which would at once show what she was, especially in the East, where females are kept secluded, and never appear at night or unattended. With **the attire of an harlot.** There is no "with" in the original, "woman" and "attire" being

in apposition: "There met him a woman, a harlot's dress" (*shith*, Ps. lxxiii. 6); her attire catches the eye at once, and identifies her (comp. Gen. xxxviii. 14). In Rev. xvii. 4 the harlot is "arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls;" and in the present case the female is dressed in some conspicuous garments, very different from the sober clothing of the pure and modest. **Subtil of heart** (נְצָרַת לֵב); literally, *of concealed heart;* i.e. she hides her real feelings, feigning, perhaps, affection for a husband, or love for her paramour, while she seeks only to satisfy her evil passions. The versions have used a different reading. Thus the Septuagint: "Who makes the hearts of young men flutter (ἐξίπτασθαι);" Vulgate, *præparata ad capiendas animas*, "ready to catch souls."

Vers. 11 and 12 describe the character and habits of this woman, not as she appeared on this occasion, but as she is known to the writer.

Ver. 11.—**She is loud**; boisterous, clamorous, as ch. ix. 13. The description applies to a brute beast at certain periods. **Stubborn**; ungovernable, like an animal that will not bear the yoke (Hos. iv. 16). Vulgate, *garrula et vaga*, "talkative and unsettled;" Septuagint, *ἀνεπτερωμένη καὶ ἄσωτος*, "flighty and debauched." **Her feet abide not in her house.** She is the opposite of the careful, modest housewife, who stays at home and manages her family affairs (Titus ii. 5). The Vulgate inserts another trait: *quietis impatiens*, "always restless."

Ver. 12.—**Now is she without, now in the streets.** At one moment outside her own door, at another in the open street. Septuagint: "At one time she roams without (ἔξω ῥέμβεται)." The woman is represented not as a common prostitute, but as a licentious wife, who, in her unbridled lustfulness, acts the part of a harlot. **Lieth in wait at every corner**; seeking to entice some victim. Then the narrative proceeds; the writer returns to what he beheld on the occasion to which he refers.

Ver. 13.—**So she caught him, and kissed him**; being utterly lost to shame, like Potiphar's wife (Gen. xxxix. 12). **With an impudent face said**; literally, *strengthened her face and said;* put on a bold and brazen look to suit the licentious words which she spoke. Wordsworth quotes the delineation of the "strange woman" drawn by St. Ambrose ('De Cain. et Abel.,' i. 4): "Domi inquieta, in plateis vaga, osculis prodiga, pudore vilis, amictu dives, genas picta: meretricio procax motu, infracto per delicias incessu, nutantibus oculis, et ludentibus jaculans palpebris retia, quibus pretiosas animas juvenum capit."

Ver. 14.—**I have peace offerings with me.** *Shelamim*, "peace or thank offerings," were divided between Jehovah, the priests, and the offerer. Part of the appointed victim was consumed by fire; the breast and right shoulder were allotted to the priests; and the rest of the animal belonged to the person who made the offering, who was to eat it with his household on the same day as a solemn ceremonial feast (Lev. iii.; vii.). The adulteress says that certain offerings were due from her, and she had duly made them. **This day have I payed my vows.** And now (the day being reckoned from one night to the next) the feast was ready, and she invites her paramour to share it. The religious nature of the feast is utterly ignored or forgotten. The shameless woman uses the opportunity simply as a convenience for her sin. If, as is probable, the "strange woman" is a foreigner, she is one who only outwardly conforms to the Mosaic Law, but in her heart cleaves to the impure worship of her heathen home. And doubtless, in lax times, these religious festivals, even in the case of worshippers who were not influenced by idolatrous proclivities, degenerated into self-indulgence and excess. The early Christian agapæ were thus misused (1 Cor. xi. 20, etc.); and in modern times religious anniversaries have too often become occasions of licence and debauchery, their solemn origin and pious uses being entirely thrust aside.

Ver. 15.—**Therefore came I forth to meet thee.** As though she would invite the youth to a pious rite, she speaks; she uses religion as a pretext for her proceedings, trying to blind his conscience and to gratify his vanity. **Diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee** (see on ch. i. 28). She tries to persuade her dupe that he is the very lover for whom she was looking, whereas she was ready to take the first that offered. Spiritual writers see in this adulteress a type of the mystery of iniquity, or false doctrine, or the harlot described in Revelation (ii. 20, etc.; xvii. 1, etc.; xviii. 9, etc.).

Ver. 16.—She describes the preparation she has made for his entertainment. **Coverings of tapestry**; *marbaddim*, "cushions," "pillows." The expression occurs again in ch. xxxi. 22. It is derived from רָבַד, "to spread," and means cushions spread out ready for use. The Septuagint has *κειρίαις*; Vulgate, *funibus*, "cords." These versions seem to regard the word as denoting a kind of delicate sacking on which the coverlets were laid. **Carved** works, **with fine linen of Egypt**; literally, *striped, or variegated, coverings, Egyptian linen.* The words are in

apposition, but the latter point to the material used, which is אֵטוּן, *etun* (ἄπαξ λεγόμενον), "linon yarn or thread," hence equivalent to "coverlets of Egyptian thread." This was of extreme fineness, costly, and much prized. By "carved works" (Hebrew, חֲטֻבוֹת, *chatuboth*) the Authorized Version must refer to bed-poles or bed-boards elaborately carved and polished; but the word is better taken of coverlets striped in different colours, which give the idea of richness and luxury. Vulgate, *trapetibus pictis ex Ægypto*, "embroidered rugs of Egyptian work;" Septuagint, ἀμφιτάποις τοῖς ἀπ' Αἰγύπτου, "shaggy cloth of Egypt." The mention of these articles denotes the foreign commerce of the Hebrews, and their appreciation of artistic work (comp. Isa. xix. 9; Ezek. xxvii. 7). The Prophet Amos (vi. 4) denounces those that "lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches."

Ver. 17.—**I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.** The substances mentioned were dissolved in or mixed with water, and then sprinkled on the couch. The love of such things is reckoned as a sign of luxury and vice (Isa. iii. 20, etc.). The three perfumes are mentioned together in Cant. iv. 14; "myrrh, aloes, and cassia," in Ps. xlv. 8. Septuagint, "I have sprinkled my couch with saffron, and my house with cinnamon." Myrrh is nowadays imported chiefly from Bombay, but it seems to be found in Arabia and on the coasts of the Red Sea and Persian Gulf. It is a gummy substance exuding from the bark of the balsamodendron when wounded, and possessing an aromatic odour not particularly agreeable to modern tastes. It was one of the ingredients of the holy oil (Exod. xxx. 23), and was used in the purification of women (Esth. ii. 12), as well as in perfuming persons and things, and, mixed with aloes, in embalming dead bodies (John xix. 39). Aloes is the inspissated juice of the leaves of the aloe, a leguminous plant growing in India, Cochin China, Abyssinia, and Socotra. The ancients used the dried root for aromatic purposes. It is mentioned by Balaam (Numb. xxiv. 6). Cinnamon, which is the same word in Hebrew and Greek, is the fragrant bark of a tree growing in Ceylon and India and the east coast of Africa.

Ver. 18.—**Let us take our fill of love;** *let us intoxicate ourselves* (*inebriemur*, Vulgate); as though the reason were overthrown by sensual passion as much as by drunkenness. The bride in Cant. i. 2 says, "Thy love is better than wine" (see ch. v. 15, 19, and note there).

Ver. 19.—The temptress proceeds to encourage the youth by showing that there is no fear of interruption or detection. **The goodman is not at home.** "Goodman" is an old word meaning "master of the house," or husband (Matt. xx. 11, etc.); but the Hebrew is simply "the man," which is probably a contemptuous way of speaking of the husband whom she was outraging. **He is gone a long journey;** he has gone to a place at a great distance hence. This fact might assure her lover that he was safe from her husband's jealousy (ch. vi. 34); but she has further encouragement to offer.

Ver. 20.—**He hath taken a bag of money with him;** not only to defray the expenses of the journey (a fact which need not be dwelt upon), but because he has some pecuniary business to transact which will occupy his time, and prevent his return before the appointed hour. **And will come home at the day appointed;** better, as the Revised Version, *he will come home at the full moon* (*in die plenæ lunæ*, Vulgate). כֶּסֶא here, and כֵּסֶה Ps. lxxxi. 4, are rightly translated "the full moon," this rendering being supported by the Syriac *kêso*, though the etymology is doubtful. As it has before been mentioned that the night was dark (ver. 9), it is plain that there were still many days to run before the moon was full, and the husband returned.

Ver. 21.—Thus far we have had the adulteress introduced speaking; now the narrative proceeds. **With her much fair speech she caused him to yield.** First, she influenced his mind, and bent his will to her purpose by her evil eloquence. The Hebrew word means "doctrine, or learning"—devil's pleading (ch. i. 5; ix. 9). St. Jerome has *irretivit*, "she netted him;" Septuagint, "She caused him to go astray (ἀπεπλάνησε) by much converse." She talked him over, though indeed he had put himself in the way of temptation, and had now no power to resist her seductions. **Then with the flattering of her lips she forced him;** *drew him away.* His body followed the lead of his blinded mind; he acceded to her solicitations. Septuagint, "With the snares of her lips she ran him aground (ἐξώκειλε), drove him headlong to ruin."

Ver. 22.—**He goeth after her straightway;** *suddenly*, as though, casting aside all scruples, he gave himself up to the temptation, and with no further delay accompanied her to the house. Septuagint, "He followed, being cajoled (κεπφωθείς), ensnared like a silly bird" (see the article on *Cepphus Larus*, in Erasmus's 'Adag.,' *s.v.* "Garrulitas"). **As an ox goeth to the slaughter.** He no more realizes the serious issue of his action than an irrational beast which, without prevision of the future, walks contentedly to the slaughter-house, and is stupidly placid in the face of death. **Or as a fool to the correction of the stocks.** There is some diffi-

culty in the translation of this clause. The Authorized Version, with which Delitzsch virtually agrees, is obtained by transposition of the nouns, the natural rendering of the Hebrew being "as fetters to the correction of a fool." The sense thus obtained is obvious: the youth follows the woman, as a fool or a criminal is led unresisting to confinement and degradation. Doubtless there is some error in the text, as may be seen by comparison of the versions. Septuagint (with which the Syriac agrees), "As a dog to chains, or as a hart struck to the liver with an arrow;" Vulgate, "As a frisking lamb, and not knowing that as a fool he is being dragged to bondage." The commentators are much divided. Fleischer, "As if in fetters to the punishment of the fool," *i.e.* of himself; Ewald, "As when a steel trap (springs up) for the correction of a fool," *i.e.* when a hidden trap suddenly catches an incautious person wandering where he has no business. The direct interpretation, that the youth follows the harlot, as fetters the proper punishment of fools, is unsatisfactory, because the parallelism leads us to expect a living being instead of "fetters." We are constrained to fall back on the Authorized Version as exhibiting the best mode of reconstructing a corrupt text. The youth, with his insensate passion, is compared to the madman or idiot who is taken away, unconscious of his fate, to a shameful deprivation of liberty.

Ver. 23.—**Till a dart strike through his liver.** This clause would be better taken with the preceding verse, as in the Septuagint, or else placed in a parenthesis; then the following clause introduces a new comparison. The youth follows the harlot till his liver, the seat of the passions, is thoroughly inflamed, or till fatal consequences ensue. Theocr., 'Id.,' xi. 15—

Ἔχθιστον ἔχων ὑποκάρδιον ἕλκος
Κύπριος ἐκ μεγάλας τὸ οἱ ἧπατι πᾶξε βέλεμνον.

"Beneath his breast
A hateful wound he bore by Cypris given,
Who in his liver fixed the fatal dart."

Delitzsch would relegate the hemistich to the end of the verse, making it denote the final result of mad and illicit love. The sense thus gained is satisfactory, but the alteration is quite arbitrary, and unsupported by ancient authority. **As a bird hasteth to the snare.** This is another comparison (see ch. i. 17, the first proverb in the book, and note there). **And knoweth not that it is for his life**; *i.e.* the infatuated youth does not consider that his life is at stake, that he is bringing upon himself, by his vicious rashness, temporal and spiritual ruin (ch. v. 11).

Ver. 24.—The narrative ends here, and the author makes a practical exhortation deduced from it. **Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children.** He began by addressing his words to one, "my son" (ver. 1); he here turns to the young generally, knowing how necessary is his warning to all strong in passion, weak in will, wanting in experience. The Septuagint has "my son," as in ver. 1.

Ver. 25.—**Let not thine heart decline to her ways.** The verb *satah* is used in ch. iv. 15 (where see note) of turning aside from evil; but here, as Delitzsch notes, it is especially appropriate to the case of a faithless wife whose transgression, or declension from virtue, is described by this term (Numb. v. 12). **Go not astray in her paths.** The LXX. (in most manuscripts) has only one rendering for the two clauses: "Let not thine heart incline unto her ways."

Ver. 26.—**For she hath cast down many wounded.** Delitzsch, "For many are the slain whom she hath caused to fall." The harlot marks her course with ruined souls, as a ruthless conqueror leaves a field of battle strewn with corpses. **Yea, many strong** (*atsum*) men **have been slain by her.** One thinks of Samson and David and Solomon, the victims of illicit love, and suffering for it. Vulgate, *et fortissimi quique interfecti sunt ab ea.* But the Septuagint and many moderns take *atsum* in the sense of "numerous," as Ps. xxxv. 18; ἀναρίθμητοι, "innumerable are her slain." The former interpretation seems preferable, and avoids tautology.

Ver. 27.—**Her house is the way to hell** (*sheol*). A warning found in ch. ii. 18 and ch. v. 5. *Viæ inferi domus ejus.* The plural דַּרְכֵי is well expressed by Hitzig: "Her house forms a multiplicity of ways to hell." Manifold are the ways of destruction to which adultery leads; but they all look to one awful end. **Going down to the chambers of death.** Once entangled in the toils of the temptress, the victim may pass through many stages, but he ends finally in the lowest depth—destruction of body and soul. Spiritual writers see here an adumbration of the seductions of false doctrine, and the fate to which it brings all who by it are led astray.

## HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—3.—*Keeping the commandments.* We are all familiar with the expression, "keeping the commandments." But do we all fully comprehend what this involves? Let us consider some of the requisites.

I. REMEMBER THE COMMANDMENTS. "Lay up my commandments with thee." The Law was treasured in the ark. It is important that great principles should be so impressed upon our minds as to perpetually haunt our memories, and recur to our vision in critical moments. The school-task of committing the ten commandments to memory will not be enough. The text does not refer to the Law of Moses, but to parental instruction. Great Christian principles are what we need to treasure up.

II. LET NOTHING TAMPER WITH THE COMMANDMENTS. "Keep my law as the apple of thine eye." We cannot bear the smallest speck of dust in the eye. The slightest wound is most painful. Let us beware of allowing the least injury to the healthy condition of the law within us. Moral scepticism is most dangerous.

III. BRING THE COMMANDMENTS TO BEAR ON DAILY LIFE. "Bind them upon thy fingers." Thus they will be always before us, and brought into contact with practical affairs. It is useless to keep the Law only in the closet. It must be carried with us to the workshop, the market-place, the senate-house. How many people's religion never reaches their fingers! Like men with feeble circulation, they have cold extremities.

IV. CHERISH THE COMMANDMENTS AFFECTIONATELY. "Write them upon the table of thine heart." This means impressing them upon the whole being—understanding, memory, affection. The secret of feeble circulation at the extremities is defective action of the heart. If we are to obey the Law we must pray that God will "incline our hearts to keep" it.

Vers. 6—27.—*Profligacy.* [It would not, perhaps, be wise for any one to discuss this subject in the presence of a general congregation. The sin is so fearfully contaminating that it is scarcely possible to touch it in any way without contracting some defilement; and the few who might benefit by a public exposure of the evils of profligacy would be greatly outnumbered by the multitude of people, especially the young, to whom the direction of attention to it would be unwholesome. But on special occasions, and before special audiences, a strong, clear denunciation of this sin may be called for. We can avoid the subject too much, and so leave the sin unrebuked. Certainly some men do not seem to realize how fearfully wicked and how fatally ruinous it is.]

I. IT IS A DESECRATION OF THE TEMPLE OF GOD. It is a sin against God as well as an offence against society. Utterly abandoned men will set little weight by such a consideration, because they have long lost all serious care for their relations with God. But it is important that they who are in danger of falling should remember the solemn words of St. Paul, and the lofty point of view from which he regards the subject (1 Cor. vi. 18, 19). The Christian is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Every man is designed to be such a temple. See that this temple is not converted into a nest of corruption.

II. IT IS RUINOUS TO ANY ONE WHO SUCCUMBS TO IT. It ruins the mind, degrading the whole tone and energy of thought. It is the most gross and disastrous *dissipation*. It ruins the physical health. It ruins wholesome interest in pure delights. It ruins business prospects. It ruins reputation. It brings other sins in its train. It ruins the soul. He who abandons himself to it is indeed a lost man.

III. IT IS HEARTLESSLY CRUEL. The heaviest guilt lies with the tempter. When a man has deluded and ruined a woman, society regards the woman with loathing and contempt, while the man often escapes with comparative impunity. This is one of the grossest instances of injustice that the future judgment will surely rectify. But in any case of profligacy great selfishness and cruelty are shown. The miserable creatures who live by sin could not continue their wretched traffic if men did not encourage it. The demand creates the supply, and is responsible for the hopeless misery that results.

IV. IT IS FATAL TO SOUND SOCIAL ORDER. It is a gangrene in society, eating out its very heart. Nothing more surely undermines the true welfare of a people. It is fatal to the sanctities of the home—sanctities on which the very life of the nation depends.

V. ALL THIS ACCOMPANIES THE INDULGENCE OF WHAT IS PURSUED SOLELY AS A SELFISH PLEASURE. The profligate man has not the thief's excuse, who may rob because he is starving (see ch. vi. 30—32); nor can he pretend that he is benefiting any one else by his wickedness.

In conclusion: 1. Let the Legislature be urged to repeal any laws that make the indulgence of this sin more easy by counteracting its natural penalties. 2. Let all men avoid the smallest temptation towards it—all amusements and scenes that lead thither. 3. Let employers endeavour to protect young people under their charge from the fearful dangers of city life. 4. Let Christians seek to save the falling and rescue the fallen in the spirit of Christ, who received penitent sinners.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—27.—*A tragedy of temptation.* This is a fine piece of dramatic moral description, and there is no reason why it should not be made use of, handled with tact and delicacy, with an audience of young men.

I. THE PROLOGUE. (Vers. 1—5.) On ver. 1, see ch. i. 8; ii. 1; vi. 20. On ver. 2, see on ch. iv. 4. Here an expression not before used occurs. "Keep my doctrine as thine eye-apple;" literally, "the little man in thine eye." It is an Oriental figure for what is a treasured possession (Deut. xxxii. 10; Ps. xvii. 8). On ver. 3, see on ch. iii. 3; vi. 21. "Bind them on thy fingers," like costly rings. Let Wisdom be addressed and regarded as "sister," Prudence as "intimate friend" (ver. 4). On ver. 5, see on ch. ii. 16; vi. 24. On the prologue as a whole, remark (1) it is intense in feeling, (2) concentrated in purpose, and hence (3) exhaustive in images of that which is precious and desirable before all else. It is an overture which gives the theme of the drama with the deepest impressiveness.

II. THE FIRST ACT. (Vers. 6—9.) The teacher looked through a grated loophole, or *eshnâb*, and saw among the silly fools, the simple ones, who passed by or stood chatting, one simpleton in particular, who attracted his notice. He watched him turn a corner (hesitating, and looking around a moment, according to Ewald's explanation), and pass down a street. The Hebrew word finely shows the deliberacy, the measured step, with which he goes; he has made up his mind to rush into sin. It was late in the evening—"*dark, dark, dark*," says the writer, with tragic and suggestive iteration—dark in every sense. The night is *prophetic*.

III. THE SECOND ACT. (Vers. 10—20.) A woman—"the attire of a harlot" (as if she were *nothing but* a piece of dress), with a heart full of wiles, meets him. She was excitable, noisy, uncontrollable, gadding—now in the streets, now in the markets, now at every corner (vers. 11, 12). Her characteristics have not changed from ancient times. And so with effrontery she seizes and kisses the fool, and solicits him with brazen impudence. Thank offerings had "weighed upon" her in consequence of a vow; but this day the sacrificial animal has been slain, and the meat which, according to the Law, must be consumed within two days, has been prepared for a feast. And she invites him to the entertainment, fires his fancy with luxurious descriptions of the variegated tapestries and the neat perfumes of her couch, and the promise of illicit pleasures. She alludes with cool shamelessness to her absent husband, who will not return till the day of the full moon (ver. 20). "This verse glides smoothly, as if we could hear the sweet fluting of the temptress's voice." But it is as the song of birds in a wood before an awful storm.

IV. THE THIRD ACT. (Vers. 21—23.) Her seductive speech, the "fulness of her doctrine," as the writer ironically says, and the smoothness of her lips, overcome the yielding imagination of her victim. Ver. 22 implies that he had hesitated; but "all at once," passion getting the better of reflection, he follows her like a brute under the dominion of a foreign will driven to the slaughter-house. He is passive in the power of the temptress, as the fool who has got into the stocks. "Till a dart cleave his *liver*"—the supposed seat of passion. Hastening like a bird into the net, he knows not that his life is at stake.

V. THE EPILOGUE. (Vers. 24—27.) On ver. 24, see on ch. v. 7. "Let not thy heart turn aside to her ways, and go not astray on her paths." Properly, "reel not"

(*shâgâh*), as in ch. v. 20. Beware of that intoxication of the senses and fancy which leads to such an end. For she is a feller of men, a cruel murderess (ver. 26). Her house is as the vestibule of hell, the *facilis descensus Averni*—the passage to the chambers of death (see on ch. ii. 18; v. 5).

LESSONS. 1. Folly and vice are characteristically the same in every age. Hence these scenes have lost none of their dramatic power or moral suggestion. 2. Only virtue is capable of infinite diversity and charm. The pleasures of mere passion, violent at first, pass into monotony, thence into disgust. 3. The character of the utter harlot has never been made other than repulsive (even in French fiction, as Zola's 'Nana') in poetry. What exists in practical form is mere dregs and refuse. 4. The society of pure and refined women is the best antidote to vicious tastes. For to form a correct taste in any matter is to form, at the same time, a distaste for coarse and spurious quality. Perhaps reflections of this order may be more useful to young men than much declamation.—J.

Vers. 1—27.—*The two ways.* Here we have—

I. THE WAY OF SIN AND DEATH. This is: 1. The way of *thoughtlessness.* It is the "simple ones," the "young men void of understanding" (ver. 7), those who go heedlessly "near the corner," "the way to the house" of the tempter or the temptress (ver. 8). It is those who "do not consider," who do not think who they are, what they are here for, whither they go, what the end will be;—it is these who go astray and are found in the way of death. 2. The way of *darkness.* (Ver. 9.) Sin hates the light; it loves the darkness. It cannot endure the penetrating glance, the reproachful look, of the good and wise man. It prefers to be where it can better imagine that it is unseen of God. 3. The way of *shame.* (Vers. 10—20.) The result of habitual sin is to rob woman of her native purity, to make her impudent and immodest. How sad, beyond almost everything, the effect of guilt that will put shameful thoughts into a woman's mind, shameless words into a woman's lips! If sin will do this, what enormity of evil will it not work? 4. The way of *falsehood,* of pretence, of imposture. (Vers. 14, 15.) 5. The way of *weakness and defeat.* (Vers. 21, 22.) A man, under the power of sin, yields himself up; he is vanquished, he surrenders his manliness, he has to own to himself that he is miserably beaten. The strong man is slain by sin, the wounded is cast down (ver. 26). He who has gained victories on other fields, and won trophies in other ways, is utterly defeated, is taken captive, is humiliated by sin. 6. The way of *death and damnation.* (Ver. 27.)

II. THE WAY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND LIFE. (Vers. 1—5.) This is: 1. The way of *attention.* The will of God must first be heeded and understood. 2. The way of *holy love.* We must take Divine wisdom to our heart, and love it as that which is near and dear to us (ver. 4). 3. The way of *wise culture.* (Vers. 1—3.) We are to take the greatest pains to keep God's thought in our remembrance, before the eyes of our soul. We are to take every needful measure to keep it intact, whole, flawless in our heart. We are to find it a home in the inmost chamber, in the sacred places of our spirit. Then will this path of righteousness prove to us to be: 4. The path of *life.* Keeping his commandments, we shall "live" (ver. 2). We shall live the life of virtue, escaping the snares and wiles of the vicious (ver. 5). We shall live the life of piety and integrity, beloved of God, honoured of man, having a good conscience, cherishing a good hope through grace of eternal life.—C.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER VIII.

Vers. 1—36.—14. *Fourteenth admonitory discourse* concerning Wisdom—her excellence, her origin, her gifts. She is contrasted with the strange woman of ch. vii., and the exceeding greatness of the blessings which she offers exhibits in the most marked manner the nothingness of the deceiver's gifts. One is reminded of the celebrated episode of the choice of Hercules, delineated by Xenophon, 'Memorab.,' ii. 1. 21, etc. The chapter divides itself into four sections. (1) Introductory (vers. 1—3); Wisdom calls on all to listen, and gives reasons for trusting to her (vers. 4—11). (2) She displays her

excellence (vers. 12—21). (3) She discourses of her origin and action (vers. 22—31). (4) She again inculcates the duty of hearkening to her instructions (vers. 32—36).

Ver. 1.—**Doth not Wisdom cry?** (see on ch. i. 20, and Introduction). The interrogative form, which expects an affirmative answer, is a mode of asserting a truth universally allowed. Wisdom is personified, though we are not so plainly confronted by an individual, as in the preceding case of the harlot. But it must be remembered that, whatever may have been the author's exact meaning, however worldly a view the original enunciation may have afforded, we, reading these chapters by the light cast upon them by later revelation, see in the description of Wisdom no mere ideal of practical prudence and good sense, no mere poetic personification of an abstract quality, but an adumbration of him who is the Wisdom of God, the coeternal Son of the Father. The open, bold, and public utterances of Wisdom are in happy contrast to the secret and stealthy enticements of Vice. So Christ, the true Wisdom, says, "I have spoken openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogues, and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and in secret spake I nothing" (John xviii. 20). The Septuagint changes the subject of this verse, and makes the pupil addressed: "Thou shalt proclaim (κηρύξεις) wisdom, that understanding (φρόνησις) may obey thee;" which seems to mean that, if you wish to acquire wisdom, so that it may serve you practically, you must act as a herald or preacher, and make your desire generally known. St. Gregory has some remarks about wilful ignorance of what is right. "It is one thing," he says, "to be ignorant; another to have refused to learn. For not to know is only ignorance; to refuse to learn is pride. And they are the less able to plead ignorance in excuse, the more that knowledge is set before them, even against their will. We might, perhaps, be able to pass along the way of this present life in ignorance of this Wisdom, if she herself had not stood in the corners of the way" ('Moral.,' xxv. 29).

Ver. 2.—**She standeth in the top of high places, by the way.** She takes her stand, not in thievish corners of the streets, like the harlot, but in the most open and elevated parts of the city, where she may be best seen and heard by all who pass by (see ch. i. 21, and note there). **In the places of the paths;** *i.e.* where many paths converge, and where people meet from different quarters.

Ver. 3.—The expressions in the text indicate the position which she takes and its capabilities. **At the hand of the gates** (1 Sam. xix. 3). She posts herself at the side of the city gates, under the archway pierced in the wall, where she is sure of an audience. **At the mouth of the city,** inside the gate, where people pass on their way to the country. **At the coming in at the doors,** by which persons enter the town. Thus she catches all comers, those who are entering, as well as those who are leaving the city. Here standing, as in the Agora or Forum, **she crieth;** she calls aloud, saying what follows (vers. 4—36). It is a fine picture of the comprehensiveness of the gospel, which is meant for high and low, prince and peasant; which is proclaimed everywhere, in the courts of kings, in the lanes of the country, in the hovels of the city; which sets forth the infinite love of God, who is not willing that any should perish, but would have all men come to the knowledge of the truth (2 Pet. iii. 9). Septuagint, "By the gates of the mighty she sits, in the entrances she sings aloud (ὑμνεῖται)."

Vers. 4—11.—She summons various classes of persons to attend to her, showing how trustworthy she is, and how precious her instruction.

Ver. 4.—**Unto you, O men, I call.** "Men," *ishim* (אִישִׁים); equivalent to ἄνδρες, *viri*, men in the highest sense, who have some wisdom and experience, but need further enlightenment (Isa. liii. 3; Ps. cxli. 4). **The sons of man;** בְּנֵי אָדָם, "children of Adam;" equivalent to ἄνθρωποι, *homines*, the general kind of men, who are taken up with material interests. St. Gregory notes ('Moral.,' xxvii. 6) that persons (*homines*) of perfect life are in Scripture sometimes called "men" (*viri*). And again, "Scripture is wont to call those persons 'men' who follow the ways of the Lord with firm and steady steps. Whence Wisdom says in the Proverbs, 'Unto you, O men, I call.' As if she were saying openly, 'I do not speak to women, but to men; because they who are of an unstable mind cannot at all understand my words'" ('Moral.,' xxviii. 12, Oxford transl.).

Ver. 5.—**O ye simple, understand wisdom.** "The simple," those not yet perverted, but easily influenced for good or evil. See on ch. i. 4, where also is explained the word *ormah*, used here for "wisdom;" equivalent to *calliditas* in a good sense, or πανουργία, as sometimes employed in the Septuagint; so here: νοήσατε ἄκακοι πανουργίαν, "subtlety." **Ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart.** For "fools" (*khesilim*), the intellectually heavy and dull, see on ch. i. 22. The heart is considered the seat of the mind or understanding (comp. ch. xv. 32; xvii. 16, etc.). Septuagint, "Ye that are untaught, take in

heart (ἔνθεσθε καρδίαν)." The call thus addressed to various classes of persons is like the section in 1 John ii., "I write unto you, little children," etc.

Ver. 6.—**I will speak of excellent things**; *de rebus magnis*, Vulgate; σεμνὰ γὰρ ἐρῶ, Septuagint. The Hebrew *nagid* is elsewhere used of persons; *e.g.* a prince, leader (1 Sam. ix. 16; 1 Chron. xxvi. 24); so it may here be best translated "princely," "noble"—an epithet which the subject-matter of Wisdom's discourse fully confirms (comp. ch. xxii. 20, though the word there is different). Hitzig and others, following the Syriac, prefer the meaning, "plain, evident truths" (comp. ver. 9); but the former interpretation is most suitable. **The opening of my lips shall be right things.** That which I announce when I open my mouth is just and right (ch. xxiii. 16). Septuagint, ὀρθά.

Ver. 7.—Another co-ordinate reason for attention. **My mouth**; *chek*, "palate" (ch. v. 3, where see note); the organ of speech. **Shall speak truth**; *emeth* (see on ch. iii. 3). The verb הָגָה (*hagah*) properly means "to speak with one's self," "to meditate;" and so the versions translate here, *meditabitur*, μελετήσει; but this idea is not appropriate to the word joined with it, "the palate," and it must be taken to signify "to utter," as in Ps. xxxv. 28; xxxvii. 30, etc. **Wickedness is an abomination to my lips.** *Resha*, "wickedness," is the contrary of moral truth and right. Septuagint, "False lips are abominable in my sight."

Ver. 8.—**In righteousness**; *i.e.* joined with righteousness, equivalent to "righteous." In ch. iii. 16 the Septuagint has an addition which may perhaps be an echo of this passage: "Out of her mouth proceedeth righteousness, and she beareth upon her tongue law and mercy." But more probably it is derived partly from Isa. xlv. 23, and partly from ch. xxxi. 26. There is **nothing froward or perverse in them.** In the utterances of Wisdom there is nothing crooked, no distortion of the truth; all is straightforward and direct.

Ver. 9.—**They are all plain to him that understandeth.** The man who listens to and imbibes the teaching of Wisdom finds these words intelligible, and "to the point." Opening his heart to receive Divine instruction, he is rewarded by having his understanding enlightened; for while "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. ii. 14), yet "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him" (Ps. xxv. 14), and "mysteries are revealed unto the meek" (Ecclus. iii. 19, Complutensian $\aleph^2$). **Right to them that find knowledge** (ver. 10). They form an even path without stumbling-blocks for those who have learned to discern right from wrong, and are seeking to direct their lives in accordance with high motives. Septuagint, "They are all present (ἐνώπια) to those that understand, and right (ὀρθά) to those that find knowledge."

Ver. 10.—**Receive my instruction, and not silver**; *i.e.* acquire wisdom rather than silver, if ever the choice is yours. **And knowledge rather than choice gold** (comp. ver. 19; ch. iii. 14). (For "knowledge," *daath*, see on ch. ii. 10.) The comparison is implied rather than expressed in the first clause, while it is made clear in the second. Thus Hos. vi. 6, "I desired mercy, and not sacrifice," the second matter mentioned being, not necessarily of no importance, but always in such cases of inferior importance to the other. We may quote Horace's complaint of the worldliness of his countrymen, a marked contrast to the inspired counsel of Proverbs ('Epist.,' i. 1. 52)—

"Vilius argentum est auro, virtutibus aurum.
O cives, cives! quærenda pecunia primum est,
Virtus post nummos."

Ver. 11.—(See ch. iii. 14, 15, and notes.)

Vers. 12—21.—Wisdom tells of her own excellence.

Ver. 12.—**I wisdom dwell with prudence**; rather, as in the Revised Version, *I have made subtilty* (ver. 5) *my dwelling*. Wisdom inhabits prudence, animates and possesses that cleverness and tact which is needed for the practical purposes of life. So the Lord is said to "inhabit eternity" (Isa. lvii. 15). Septuagint, "I wisdom dwelt (κατεσκήνωσα) in counsel and knowledge," which recalls, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt (ἐσκήνωσεν) among us" (John i. 14). In 1 Tim. vi. 16 we find the expression, "Who alone hath (μόνος ἔχων) immortality," exchanged with the phrase, "Who dwelleth (οἰκῶν) in the unapproachable light." **And find out knowledge of witty inventions.** This rendering refers to the production and solution of dark sayings which Wisdom effects. But the expression is better rendered, "knowledge of deeds of discretion" (ch. i. 4), or "of right counsels," and it signifies that Wisdom presides over all well-considered designs, that they are not beyond her sphere, and that she has and uses the knowledge of them. Septuagint, "I (ἐγὼ) called upon understanding," *i.e.* it is I who inspire all good and righteous thought.

Ver. 13.—**The fear of the Lord is to hate evil.** Wisdom here enunciates the proposition which is the foundation of all her teaching, only here, as it were, on the reverse side, not as the beginning of wisdom (ch. i. 7; ix. 10), but as the hatred of evil; she

then proceeds to particularize the evil which the Lord hates. Taking the clause in this sense, we have no need to alter the persons and forms of the verbs to "I fear the Lord, I hate evil," as Dathe and others suggest; still less to suppress the whole paragraph as a late insertion. These violent measures are arbitrary and quite unnecessary, the present text allowing a natural and sufficient exposition. There can be no fellowship between light and darkness; he who serves the Lord must renounce the works of the devil. **Pride and arrogancy,** which are opposed to the sovereign virtue of humility, are the first sins which Wisdom names. These are among the things which the Lord is said to hate (ch. vi. 17, etc.). "Initium omnis peccati est superbia" (Ecclus. x. 15, Vet. Lat.). **The evil way;** *i.e.* sins of conduct, "way" being, as commonly, equivalent to "manner of life." **The froward mouth;** literally, *mouth of perverseness,* sins of speech (see on ch. ii. 12; and comp. x. 31); Vulgate, *os bilingue.*

Ver. 14.—Having said what she hates, Wisdom now says what she is, and what she can bestow on her followers. **Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom.** There is some doubt about the meaning of the word translated "sound wisdom" (*tushiyyah*). The Vulgate has *æquitas;* the Septuagint, ἀσφάλεια, "safety." The word occurs elsewhere in this book and in Job, but only in two other places of Scripture, viz. Isa. xxviii. 29 and Micah vi. 9. It means properly "elevation" or "furtherance," or, as others say, "substance;" and then that which is essentially good and useful, which may be wisdom, aid, or security (see on ch. ii. 7). Wisdom affirms that she possesses counsel and all that can help forward righteousness; see Job xii. 13, 16, passages very similar to the present (comp. Wisd. viii. 9, etc.). **I am understanding.** Wisdom does not merely possess these attributes; they are her very nature, as it is said, "God is love." St. Jerome's *mea est prudentia,* and the LXX.'s ἐμὴ φρόνησις, lose this trait. **I have strength.** Wisdom directs the energies and powers of her pupils, which without her control would be spent wrongly or uselessly (comp. Eccles. vii. 19). Wisdom, understanding, and might are named among the seven gifts of the Spirit in Isa. xi. 2; and we may see in the passage generally an adumbration of him who is called "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God" (Isa. ix. 6).

Ver. 15.—**By me kings reign.** By possession of wisdom kings are enabled to discharge their functions duly and righteously. So Solomon prayed for wisdom to enable him to rule his subjects properly (1 Kings iii. 9; Wisd. ix. 4). **Princes** (*rozenim,* ch. xxxi. 4); either those who are weighty, inflexible, or those who weigh causes; the latter explanation seems most suitable. Vulgate, *legum conditores;* Septuagint, *οἱ δυνάσται.* These are said to decree justice; literally, *to engrave just decrees on tablets;* γράφουσι δικαιοσύνην, Septuagint. Early expositors take these words as spoken by Christ, to whom they are very plainly applicable (comp. Isa. xxxii. 1).

Ver. 16.—**Princes;** here *sarim,* "leaders." **All the judges of the earth.** These words stand without a conjunction, in apposition to what has preceded, by what is called *asyndeton summativum* (ch. i. 21), and gather in one view kings, princes, and leaders. Thus the Book of Wisdom, which speaks of the duties of rulers, commences by addressing *οἱ κρίνοντες τὴν γῆν,* "ye that are judges of the earth." In the East judgment of causes was an integral part of a monarch's duties. The reading of the Authorized Version is supported by the Septuagint, which gives *κρατοῦσι γῆς.* The Vulgate, Syriac, and Chaldee read, צדק, "justice," in place of ארץ, "earth;" but this seems to have been an alteration of the original text derived from some idea of the assertion there made being too comprehensive or universal. Nowack compares Ps. ii. 10 and cxlviii. 11, "Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth." The Fathers have taken these verses as spoken by God, and as asserting his supremacy and the providential ordering of human government, according to St. Paul's saying, "There is no power but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. xiii. 1; see St. Augustine, 'De Civit. Dei,' v. 19).

Ver. 17.—**I love them that love me.** So Christ says (John xiv. 21), "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him." Love attracts love. "Magnes amoris est amor." They who love virtue and wisdom are regarded with favour by God, whose inspiration they have obeyed, obtaining grace for grace. So Ben Sira says, "Them that love her the Lord doth love" (Ecclus. iv. 14); so Wisd. vii. 28, "God loveth none but him that dwelleth with Wisdom." The Septuagint changes the verbs in this clause, though they are parts of the same word in the Hebrew: Ἐγὼ τοὺς ἐμὲ φιλοῦντας ἀγαπῶ. This reminds one of the passage in the last chapter of St. John (xxi. 15—17), where a similar interchange is made. **Those that seek me early shall find me** (see the contrast in ch. i. 28). "Early" may mean from tender years; but more probably it is equivalent to "earnestly," "strenuously," as people deeply interested in any pursuit rise betimes to set about the necessary work (comp. Isa. xxvi. 9; Hos. v. 15). The Septuagint, "They who seek (ζητοῦντες) me shall find."

So the Lord says (Matt. vii. 7), "Seek (ζητεῖτε), and ye shall find;" Ecclus. iv. 12, "He that loveth her loveth life; and they that seek to her early (οἱ ὀρθρίζοντες πρὸς αὐτὴν) shall be filled with joy" (comp. Luke xxi. 38).

Ver. 18.—**Riches and honour are with me** (see ch. iii. 16). Wisdom has these things in her possession to bestow on whom she will, as God gave them to Solomon in reward of his petition for wisdom (1 Kings iii. 13). **Durable riches and righteousness.** Things often regarded as incompatible. *Durable*, קֶדֶם (*atheḳ*), occurs only here (but see Isa. xxiii. 18), and means "old," "venerable," "long accumulated;" hence firm and lasting. Righteousness is the last reward that Wisdom bestows, without which, indeed, all material blessings would be nothing worth. Wealth obtained in a right way, and rightly used, is durable and stable. This was especially true under a temporal dispensation. We Christians, however, look not for reward in uncertain riches, but in God's favour here and happiness in another world. The Septuagint, "Possession of many things, and righteousness." What is denoted by "righteousness" is further explained in the following verses, 19—21.

Ver. 19.—**My fruit is better than gold.** We have had Wisdom called "a tree of life" (ch. iii. 18), and the gain from possessing her compared to gold and silver (ch. iii. 14). **Fine gold** (*paz*); Septuagint and Vulgate, "precious stone." The word signifies "purified gold"—gold from which all mixture or alloy has been separated. **My revenue**; Vulgate, *genimina mea;* Septuagint, γεννήματα; Hebrew, *tebuah*, "produce," "profits."

Ver. 20.—**I lead in the way** (better, *I walk in the way*) **of righteousness.** I act always according to the rules of justice. **In the midst of the paths of judgment.** I swerve not to one side or the other (ch. iv. 27). So the psalmist prays, "Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end;" "Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk" (Ps. cxix. 33; cxliii. 8). And the promise is given to the faithful in Isa. xxx. 21, "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." Virtue, as Aristotle has taught us, is the mean between two extremes.

Ver. 21.—**That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance;** יֵשׁ (*yesh*), ὕπαρξις, "real, valuable possessions." Those who love Wisdom will walk in her path, follow her leading, and therefore, doing God's will, will be blessed with success. Such will lay up treasure in heaven, will provide bags which wax not old, will be preparing for "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away" (Matt. vi. 20; Luke xii. 33; 1 Pet. i. 4). The LXX. here inserts a paragraph as a kind of introduction to the important section which follows: "If I declare unto you the things which daily befall, I will remember to recount the things of eternity;" *i.e.* thus far I have spoken of the advantages derived from Wisdom in daily circumstances; now I proceed to narrate her origin and her doings from all eternity. But the addition appears awkward, and is probably not now in its original position.

Vers. 22—31.—Wisdom speaks of her origin, her active operations, the part which she bore in the creation of the universe, her relation to God (see on ch. i. 20 and iii. 19, and Introduction). It is impossible to decide what was the exact view of the writer with regard to the wisdom of which he speaks so eloquently; but there can be no doubt that he was guided in his diction so as to give expression to the idea of him whom St. John calls the Word of God. The language used is not applicable to an impersonal quality, an abstract faculty of God. It describes the nature and office of a Person; and who that Person is we learn from the later Scriptures, which speak of Christ as the "Wisdom of God" (Luke xi. 49) and "the Power of God and the Wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i. 24). If we confine our inquiry to the question—What was in the mind of the author when he indited this wonderful section concerning Wisdom? we shall fail to apprehend its true significance, and shall be disowning the influence of the Holy Spirit, which inspires all Scripture, which prompted the holy men who spake to utter words of which they knew not the full spiritual significance, and which could only be understood by subsequent revelation. There is, then, nothing forced or incongruous in seeing in this episode a portraiture of the Second Person of the blessed Trinity, the essential Wisdom of God personified, the Logos of later books, and of the gospel. This interpretation obtained universally in the Church in the earliest times, and has commended itself to the most learned and reverent of modern commentators. That much which was contained in their own utterances was unknown to the prophets of old, that they did not fully perceive the mysteries which they darkly enunciated, we learn from St. Peter,

who tells us that they who prophesied of the grace of Christ sought and searched diligently what the Spirit of God that was in them did point unto, and were shown that not unto themselves, but unto us, they ministered those things, secrets which angels themselves desire to look into (1 Pet. i. 10, etc.). Wisdom as a human endowment, animating all intellectual and even physical powers; Wisdom as communicating to man moral excellence and piety; Wisdom as not only an attribute of God, but itself as the eternal thought of God;—under these aspects it is regarded in our book; but under and through all it is more or less personified. *Khochmah* is contrasted in the next chapter, not with an abstraction, but with an actual woman of impure life—a real, not an imaginary, antagonist. The personality of the latter intimates that of the former (see Liddon, 'Bampt. Lects.,' ii.).

Ver. 22.—**The Lord possessed me.** Great controversy has arisen about the word rendered "possessed." The verb used is קָנָה (*kanah*), which means properly "to erect, set upright," also "to found, form" (Gen. xiv. 19, 22), then "to acquire" (ch. i. 5; iv. 5, 7, etc.) or "to possess" (ch. xv. 32; xix. 8). The Vulgate, Aquila, Theodotion, Symmachus, Venetian, give "possessed;" Septuagint, ἔκτισε, "made," and so Syriac. The Arians took the word in the sense of "created" (which, though supported by the LXX., it seems never to have had), and deduced therefrom the Son's inferiority to the Father—that he was made, not begotten from all eternity. Ben Sira more than once employs the verb κτίζω in speaking of Wisdom's origin; *e.g.* Ecclus. i. 4, 9; xxiv. 8. Opposing the heresy of the Arians, the Fathers generally adopted the rendering ἐκτήσατο, *possedit*, "possessed;" and even those who received the translation ἔκτισε, explained it not of creating, but of appointing, thus: The Father set Wisdom over all created things, or made Wisdom to be the efficient cause of his creatures (Rev. iii. 14). May we not say that the writer was guided to use a word which would express relation in a twofold sense? Wisdom is regarded either as the mind of God expressed in operation, or the Second Person of the Holy Trinity; and the verb thus signifies that God possesses in himself this essential Wisdom, and intimates likewise that Wisdom by eternal generation is a Divine Personality. St. John (John i. 1), before saying that the Word was God, affirms that "the Word was with God (ὁ Λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν)." So we may assert that Solomon has arrived at the truth that Wisdom was πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, if he has left it for later revelation to declare that ἡ Σοφία or ὁ Λόγος Θεὸς ἦν. Whichever sense we assign to the verb on which the difficulty is supposed to hang, whether we take it as "possessed," "formed," or "acquired," we may safely assume that the idea conveyed to Christian minds is this—that Wisdom, existing eternally in the Godhead, was said to be "formed" or "brought forth" when it operated in creation, and when it assumed human nature. **In the beginning of his way.** So the Vulgate, *in initio viarum suarum*. But the preposition "in" does not occur in the original; and the words may be better translated, "as the beginning of his way" (Septuagint, ἔκτισέ με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ); *i.e.* as the earliest revelation of his working. Wisdom, eternal and uncreated, first puts forth its energy in creation, then becomes incarnate, and is now called, "the Firstborn of all creation (πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως)" (Col. i. 15). Thus in Ps. ii. 7, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee" (Heb. i. 5); and, "When he bringeth in the Firstborn into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him" (Heb. i. 6). In the present clause, the ways of God are his works, as in Job xxvi. 14 and xl. 19, where behemoth is called "chief among the ways of God" (comp. Ps. cxlv. 17, where "ways" stands as a parallel to "works"). **Before his works of old.** These words are better regarded (with Delitzsch) as a second parallel object, קֶדֶם (*kedem*), translated "before," being not a preposition, but denoting previous existence. Hence we translate, "The foremost of his works of old;" *i.e.* the earliest revelation of his energy. There is a curious passage in the 'Book of Enoch,' ch. xlii., which speaks of the personality and pre-existence of Wisdom, of her desire to dwell among men, frustrated by man's wickedness: "Wisdom found no place where she could dwell; therefore was her dwelling in heaven. Wisdom came forth in order to dwell among the sons of men, and found no habitation; then she returned to her place, and took her seat among the angels." We may add Wisd. viii. 3, "In that she dwelleth with God (συμβίωσιν Θεοῦ ἔχουσα), she magnifieth her nobility."

Ver. 23.—**I was set up from everlasting.** The verb used here is remarkable. It is נָסַךְ (*nasak*), in niph.; and it is found in Ps. ii. 6, "I have set my King upon my holy hill." Both here and there it has been translated "anointed," which would make a noteworthy reference to Christ. But there

seems no proof that the word has this meaning. It signifies properly "to pour forth" (as of molten metal), then "to put down," "to appoint or establish." The versions recognize this. Thus the Septuagint, "he established (ἐθεμελίωσε) me;" Vulgate, *ordinata sum;* Aquila, κατεστάθην; Symmachus, προεχείρισμαι: Venetian, κέχυμαι (comp. Ecclus. i. 9). So what is here said is that Wisdom was from everlasting exalted as ruler and disposer of all things. To express eternal relation, three synonymous terms are used. *From everlasting;* πρὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος, Septuagint, as Delitzsch notes, points back to infinite distance. **From the beginning;** *i.e.* before the world was begun to be made; as St. John says (John i. 1), "In the beginning was the Word;" and Christ prays, "Glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John xvii. 5). **Or ever the earth was.** This looks to the most remote time after the actual creation, while the earth was being formed and adapted.

Ver. 24.—The pre-existence of Wisdom is still more expressly set forth. **When there were no depths** (vers. 27, 28). The waste of waters which covered the face of the earth is meant—that great deep on which primeval darkness brooded (Gen. i. 2). Before even this, man's earliest conception of the beginning of the world, uncreated Wisdom was. Septuagint, "before he made the abysses" (see on ch. iii. 20). **I was brought forth;** Vulgate, *et ego jam concepta eram;* Septuagint, at the end of ver. 25, γεννᾷ με, "he begetteth me." The verb here is חול (*chul*), which is used of the travailing of women, and is rightly translated, "brought forth by generation." It indicates in this place the energizing of Wisdom, her conception in the Divine mind, and her putting forth in operation. **When** there were **no fountains abounding with water;** *i.e.* springs in the interior of the earth (Gen. vii. 11; comp. Job xxii., xxvi., xxxviii.). Septuagint, "Before the springs of the waters came forward (προελθεῖν)."

Ver. 25. — **Before the mountains were settled** (Job xxxviii. 6). It is questioned *where* the mountains were supposed to be fixed, and some have thought that they are represented as fixed in the depths of the earth. But, as we learn from Gen. i. 9, they are regarded as rising from the waters, their foundations are laid in the great deep. So the psalmist, speaking of the waters, says, "They went up by the mountains, they went down by the valleys, unto the place which thou hast founded for them" (Ps. civ. 8; comp. Ps. xxiv. 2). What is here affirmed of Wisdom is said of Jehovah in Ps. xc. 2, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God."

Ver. 26.—**The earth, nor the fields.** The distinction intended is land as cultivated and occupied by buildings, etc., and waste uncultivated land outside towns. Septuagint, "The Lord made countries and uninhabited places (ἀοικήτους);" Vulgate, *Adhuc terram non fecerat, et flumina.* Hebrew, *chutsoth;* things without, abroad, hence open country. The Vulgate rendering, and that of Aquila and Symmachus, ἐξόδους, are plainly erroneous, as waters have already been mentioned (ver. 24). **The highest part of the dust of the world;** literally, *the head of the dusts of the world.* Some have interpreted this expression of "man," the chief of those creatures which are made of the dust of the ground (Gen. iii. 19; Eccles. iii. 20). But the idea comes in awkwardly here; it is not natural to introduce man amid the inanimate works of nature, or to use such an enigmatical designation for him. St. Jerome has, *cardines orbis terrarum,* "the world's hinges;" Septuagint, "the inhabited summits of the earth beneath the heavens;" according to St. Hilary ('De Trinit.,' xii.), "cacumina quæ habitantur sub cœlo." Others take the term to signify the capes or promontories of the world, the peaks and elevations; others, the clods of dry, arable land, in contrast to the untilled waste of waters; others, the chief elements, the matter of which the earth is composed. This last interpretation would lead us back to a period which has already been passed. Amid the many possible explanations, it is perhaps best (with Delitzsch, Nowack, etc.) to take *rosh,* "head" as equivalent to "sum," "mass," as in Ps. cxxxix. 17, "How great is the sum (*rosh*) of them!" Then the expression comprehensively means all the mass of earth's dust.

Ver. 27.—After asserting the pre-existence of Wisdom, the writer tells her part in the work of creation. **When he prepared the heavens, I was there.** When God made the firmament, and divided the waters above it and below (Gen. i. 7), Wisdom co-operated. **When he set a compass upon the face of the depth.** חוג (*chug*), "circle," or "circuit" (as Job xxii. 14), means the vault of heaven, conceived of as resting on the ocean which surrounds the earth, in partial accordance with the notion in Homer, who speaks of the streams of ocean flowing back into itself (ἀψόῤῥοος), 'Iliad,' xviii. 399; 'Odyssey,' x. 508, etc. That the reference is not to the marking out a limit for the waters is plain from the consideration that this interpretation would make the verse identical with ver. 29. Thus in Isa. xl. 22 we have, "It is he that sitteth above the circle (*chug*) of the earth;" *i.e.* the vault of heaven that encircles the earth. Septuagint, "When he

marked out (ἀφώριζε) his throne upon the winds." The translators have referred *tchom*, "depth," to the waters above.

Ver. 28.—**When he established the clouds above.** The reference is to the waters above the firmament (Gen. i. 7), which are suspended in the ether; and the idea is that God thus made this medium capable of sustaining them. Vulgate, *Quando æthera firmabat sursum;* Septuagint, "When he made strong the clouds above" (comp. Job xxvi. 8). **When he strengthened the fountains of the deep;** rather, as in the Revised Version, *when the fountains of the deep became strong;* i.e. when the great deep (Gen. vii. 11) burst forth with power (comp. Job xxxviii. 16). The Septuagint anticipates the following details by here rendering, "When he made secure the fountains of the earth beneath the heaven."

Ver. 29.—**When he gave to the sea his decree** (*chok*, as Job xxviii. 26; Jer. v. 22); or, *its bounds*. The meaning is much the same in either case, being what is expressed in Job xxxviii. 8, etc., "Who shut up the sea with doors . . . and prescribed for it my decree, and set bars and doors, and said, Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?" The LXX. omits this hemistich. **When he appointed the foundations of the earth.** Job xxxviii. 4, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? . . . Who determined the measures thereof? or who stretched the line upon it? Wherein were the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner-stone thereof?"

Ver. 30.—**Then I was by him.** Wisd. ix. 9, "Wisdom was with thee; which knoweth thy works, and was present when thou madest the world." So John i. 2, "The Word was with God." **As one brought up with him;** Vulgate, *cuncta componens;* Septuagint, Ἥμην παρ' αὐτῷ ἁρμόζουσα, "I was with him arranging things in harmony." The Hebrew word is אָמוֹן (*amon*), "an artificer," "workman" (Jer. lii. 15). Thus in Wisd. vii. 22 Wisdom is called ἡ πάντων τεχνῖτις, "the worker of all things." The Authorized Version takes the word in a passive state, as equivalent to *alumnus*, "foster-child," and this interpretation is etymologically admissible, and may possibly, as Schultens suggests, be glanced at in St. John's expression (i. 18), "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father." But as the point here is the creative energy of Wisdom, it is best to take the term as denoting "artificer." It will then accord with the expression δημιουργός, applied by the Fathers to the Word of God, by whom all things were made (Eph. iii. 9, Textus Receptus, and Heb. i. 2). **And I was daily his delight;** literally, *I was delights day by day*, which may mean either as in Authorized Version, or "I had delight continually," *i.e.* it may signify (1) either that God took pleasure in the wisdom which displayed his workmanship, saw that it was very good (Gen. i. 4, etc.), looked with delight on the beloved Son in whom he was well pleased (Matt. iii. 17, etc.); or (2) it may mean that Wisdom herself rejoiced in her power and her work, rejoiced in giving effect to the Creator's idea, and so "founding the earth" (ch. iii. 19). Vulgate, *delectabar per singulos dies.* The Septuagint adopts the former of these views, "I was that wherein he took delight." But the second interpretation seems most suitable, as the paragraph is stating rather what Wisdom is in herself than what she was in the eyes of Jehovah. What follows is a parallel. **Rejoicing always before him;** Vulgate, *ludens coram eo omni tempore*, as though the work of creation was a sport and pastime of a happy holiday. The expression is meant to denote the ease with which the operations were performed, and the pleasure which their execution yielded. David uses the same word, speaking of his dancing before the ark, when he says, "Therefore will I *play* before the Lord" (2 Sam. vi. 21; comp. ch. x. 23).

Ver. 31.—**Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth.** Wisdom declares wherein she chiefly delighted, viz. in the world as the habitation of rational creatures. "And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Gen. i. 31); comp. Ps. civ. 31, and see the eloquent account of Wisdom in the book so named (vii. 22—viii. 1). **My delights were with the sons of men.** Man, made in the image of God, is the principal object of creative Wisdom's pleasure; and her joy is fulfilled only in the Incarnation. When the Word became flesh, then was the end and design of creation exhibited, and the infinite love of God towards man made, as it were, visible and palpable. Septuagint, "Because he rejoiced when he completed the world (τὴν οἰκουμένην), and rejoiced in the children of men."

Vers. 32—36.—Wisdom renews the exhortation before given (ch. v. 7; vii. 24), but now on higher, and not merely moral or social grounds. She deduces, from her Divine origin and her care for man, the lesson that she is to be sought and prized and obeyed above all things.

Ver. 32.—**Now therefore**—having regard to what I have revealed of myself—**hearken unto me, O ye children;** Septuagint, "Hear me, my son." **Blessed** are they that **keep my ways.** The expression is interjectional: "Blessings on the man! salvation to the

man!" as in ch. iii. 13. For the *ways* of Wisdom, see ch. iii. 17.

Ver. 33.—**Be wise.** This will be the effect of attending to the injunction, **Hear instruction** (see on ch. iii. 4). The Vatican text of the Septuagint omits this verse; it is added in the Alexandrian and Sin.[2]

Ver. 34.—**Watching daily at my gates.** The idea suggested has been variously taken; *e.g.* as that of eager students waiting at the school door for their teacher's appearance; clients besieging a great man's portals; Levites guarding the doors of the temple; a lover at his mistress's gate. This last notion is supported by Wisd. viii. 2, "I loved her, and sought her out from my youth; I desired to make her my spouse, and I was a lover of her beauty." **Waiting at the posts of my doors;** keeping close to the entrance, so as to be quite sure of not missing her whom he longs to see.

Ver. 35.—**For whoso findeth me findeth life.** Here is the reason why the man is blessed who attends to the instruction of Wisdom. A similar promise is made at ch. iii. 16, 18, 22. The truth here enunciated is also spoken of the Word of God, the everlasting Son of the Father. John i. 4, "In him was life; and the life was the light of men;" John iii. 36, "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life;" John xvii. 3, "This is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ" (comp. John viii. 51; 1 John v. 12; Ecclus. iv. 12). **Shall obtain favour of the Lord;** Vulgate, *hauriet salutem,* which happily renders the Hebrew verb (ch. xii. 2). The grace of God bringeth salvation (Titus ii. 11). Septuagint, "For my outgoings (ἔξοδοι) are the outgoings of life, and the will is prepared by the Lord (καὶ ἑτοιμάζεται θέλησις παρὰ Κυρίου)." This latter clause was used by the Fathers, especially in the Pelagian controversy, to prove the necessity of prevenient grace (see St. Augustine, 'Enchiridion,' ii. 32; 'De Gratia,' vi. 16, 17).

Ver. 36.—**He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul.** So Septuagint and Vulgate. And the truth stated is obvious—he who refuses to obey Wisdom, and transgresses her wholesome rules, will smart for it. Every sin involves punishment, injures the spiritual life, and demands satisfaction. But Delitzsch and others take חֹטְאִי, "my sinning one," "my sinner," in the older sense of "missing," as Job v. 24, the derived meaning of "sinning" springing naturally from the idea of deviating from the right way or failing to hit the mark. So here the translation will be "he who misseth me," which is a good contrast to "whoso findeth me," of ver. 35. He who takes a path which does not lead to wisdom is guilty of moral suicide. **All that hate me love death** (ch. vii. 27). "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John iii. 36). They who will not hearken to Wisdom, and who scorn her counsels, do virtually love death, because they love the things and the practices which lead to death, temporal and spiritual Job xii. 10, "They that sin are enemies to their own life" (comp. Wisd. i. 12).

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 5.—*Wisdom for the simple.* We may divide the simple into three classes. 1. There are those who think themselves wise while they are but fools: there is no hope for such. 2. There are people who make no pretence to wisdom, but who have chosen folly, and are quite indifferent to the claims and charms of wisdom. 3. There are anxious seekers after wisdom, who feel their present ignorance and incompetence with acute distress, and long to be among the wise, but despair of reaching the privileged circle. The first class will refuse to believe that the call of wisdom is for them, but to the other two it may come with effect.

I. THE SIMPLE NEED WISDOM. This reflection should concern the second class—those who as yet have despised and rejected wisdom. 1. *Wisdom is a joy.* Even pleasure is rejected in the renunciation of truth, knowledge, thought, the vision of God, and the revelation of his will. The narrow mind is a dark mind, and when the light of God breaks in it will be seen that many new delights of knowledge and joys of Divine truth, which have long been missed, can now be happily received. 2. *Wisdom is a safeguard.* Men stumble in the dark. Snares are set for the unwary. In this great, mysterious world we may easily go astray and be lost, perhaps be entrapped in fearful soul-perils. It is much to know the way, to know ourselves, to know our dangers, to know the will of God and how to have his guiding and saving help. 3. *Wisdom is life.* The foolish soul is but half alive, and it is on the road to destruction. Mere knowledge itself is a free intellectual life, and the exercise of thought in the practical application of the truth which we have assimilated, i.e. *wisdom,* is a living activity. It is most

unfortunate that many young men in the present day seem to despise all intellectual pursuits, and confine the attention of their leisure moments to idle amusements or at best to athletics. They fail to see the mental death that they are courting. But infinitely worse are they who turn from the moral side of wisdom—the fear of the Lord—and pursue the folly of godlessness, for this is soul-death.

II. THE SIMPLE MAY HAVE WISDOM. Here is the encouragement for the third class of the simple. It is for children, for weak minds, and for uneducated people. 1. *Mental improvement is attainable.* Where there is a will to rise, the young man under most disadvantageous circumstances will find the means to cultivate self-education. 2. *The highest wisdom is spiritual.* This wisdom is not like Greek philosophy—only open to intellectual culture. It is the truth of God that may be revealed to "babes and sucklings" (Matt. xxi. 16), and yet it is the highest truth. To be spiritually wise we need not be mentally clever. What is wanted is a sincere love of truth, a pure heart, and a childlike teachableness. 3. *The gospel brings wisdom to the simple.* That gospel was scoffed at for its apparent simplicity. Yet it was indeed the wisdom as well as the power of God (1 Cor. i. 24). Christ comes to us as the eternal Wisdom incarnate. The simple may know him, and when such receive Christ they receive the Light of the world and a loftier wisdom than was ever reached by the sages of antiquity or can ever be attained in the cold light of science.

Ver. 9.—*Plain words.* The words of wisdom are here described as "plain words." This expression has been so often abused that it is almost as important to see what it does not mean as to consider what it does mean.

I. WHAT THE EXPRESSION DOES NOT MEAN. 1. *Lack of grace.* A mistake arising from the confusion of two meanings of the term "plain" has been pointed out by Archbishop Whately, and yet it is often repeated. "Plain" means smooth, simple, easy, intelligible; "plain" also means bare, unadorned, unbeautiful. The two meanings are quite distinct. But some have thought that a plain sermon must be a sermon wanting in all grace of style and beauty of illustration. This is an inappropriate use of the word "plain." The words of Christ were plain, *i.e.* clear and simple; yet they were very beautiful and full of living illustrations. The duty to be plain is no excuse for slovenliness of speech. 2. *Intellectual feebleness.* Some people insist on having a "simple gospel" in a way that leads one to think they would condemn all vigour of thought. They forget that the teaching of St. Paul, which they admire so much, teemed with the highest intellectuality, and that he regarded the truth of the crucified Christ as the wisdom of God, and only as falsely mistaken for foolishness by the Greeks. It is the charm of the highest thinking that it can simplify difficulties. We sometimes fail to detect the great intellectual power of a writer just because this has been so perfect as to disguise all effort and make the result of processes of thought clear; while the laboured attempts of weaker minds induce us to mistake obscurity for profundity. Any subject looks simple in the hands of a master. 3. *Rudeness and offensiveness.* Disagreeable people make a virtue of being plain-spoken when they are really harsh and inconsiderate. There is no unkindness about the plain words of the Bible. The Christian teacher should remember the admonitions, "Be pitiful, be courteous."

II. WHAT THE EXPRESSION DOES MEAN. 1. It signifies that the words of wisdom are *intelligible.* The first object of revelation, of course, is to reveal. The first object of speech is to declare thoughts. It is the neglect of this simple point that has given an excuse for the sarcasm that "words were invented to conceal thoughts." The first duty of the speaker is to be plain. Afterwards he may be ornate if he will. But when the decorations of speech encumber its free movement and prevent it from accomplishing its practical ends, they are altogether encumbrances. And when intellectual power is wasted on a mere display of its own exercise, or confined to inventing difficulties and making obscure what was originally clear and simple, this also is misdirected. The Divine wisdom of the Bible claims to be intelligible. It is true that many people find great difficulties in its pages, and all of us must confess that they are not to be fully measured and sounded. But (1) they who approach them in a right way, having a spiritual mind, so necessary for the discernment of spiritual things, will be able to understand the main, most important truths of Christianity; and (2) whatever disputes

may be raised about the meaning of the more abstract doctrines, the directions of duty and the indications of the things we are to do for our soul's welfare are plain; indeed, the obscurity of religious subjects varies proportionately with their abstractness, with their separation from our life and duty. 2. It signifies that the words of wisdom indicate *a plain and simple course of action*. They are "right," or rather "straight to those that find knowledge." We are not called to any complicated course of action. The intricacies of casuistry are not to be found in the Book of Proverbs nor anywhere else in the Bible. The way of duty is simple and straightforward.

Ver. 13.—*Hatred of evil.* I. RELIGION INCLUDES MORALS. This is the broad lesson of the text. It should be accepted as a self-evident truism. Yet it has been often obscured by dangerous sophisms. Thus some have regarded religion as consisting in correctness of creed or in assiduity of devotion—things treated by God as worthless unless accompanied by righteousness of conduct (Isa. i. 10—17). There is a common impression that religious merits may be pleaded as a set-off against moral deficiencies. No assumption can be more false, nor can any be more degrading or more injurious. The reverse is true. Religiousness increases the guilt of unrighteousness of life by raising the standard up to which one is supposed to live, and also adds the sin of hypocrisy. True religion is impossible without a proportionate devotion to righteousness, because it consists in the fear of God. But God is holy; to reverence him must involve the adoration of his character—the love of goodness and the corresponding detestation of its opposite.

II. RELIGION INSPIRES MORALS WITH STRONG EMOTION. Morality is to obey the law. Religion goes further, and *hates* evil. It is not a matter of outward conduct only. It goes down to the secret springs of action. It rouses the deepest passions of the soul. We cannot accept Mr. M. Arnold's definition of religion as "morality touched with emotion," because it ignores the foundation of religion in "the fear of the Lord," in devotion to a personal God; but the phrase may serve as an apt description of an essential characteristic of religion. The difficulty we all feel is that, while we know the better way we are often so weak as to choose the worse. A cold, bare exposition of morality will be of little use with this difficulty. What we want is a powerful impulse, and that impulse it is the function of religion to supply. It makes goodness not only visible but beautiful and attractive, and it inspires a hunger and thirst after righteousness, a passion for a God-like life in the love of God, a yearning after the likeness of Christ in devotion of heart to him. It also makes evil appear hideous, detestable, by its horrible opposition to these affections.

III. AMONG RELIGIOUS EMOTIONS IS THE PASSION OF HATRED. Religion is not based upon hatred. It begins with "the fear of the Lord," with reverence for God rising up to love. No strong thing can rest on a mere negation. Neither morality nor religion starts from an attitude in regard to evil. But they lead on to this, and they are not perfect without it. The passion of hatred is natural; it has a useful, though a low, place in the array of spiritual forces. It is abused when it is spent upon persons, but it is rightly indulged against evil principles and practices. We are morally defective unless we can feel "the hate of hate, and scorn of scorn." One of the means by which we are helped to resist sin is found in this hatred of it. It is not enough that we disapprove of it. We must loathe and abhor it from the very bottom of our hearts.

IV. RELIGIOUS HATRED IS DETESTATION OF EVIL ITSELF, NOT THE MERE DISLIKE OF ITS CONSEQUENCES. When Paley, in his 'Moral Philosophy,' described the function of religion in aiding morality as the addition of the prospect of future rewards and promises, he expressed a common-sense truth, but a very low truth detached from more spiritual ideas and a very partial representation of the case. Religious morality is not simply nor chiefly the fear of God as a Judge who will punish us if we do wrong. It is reverence for a holy Father leading to hatred of all that is displeasing to him. We have no religion till we go beyond the instinctive dislike for pain that follows sin to hatred of sin itself. This is the test of true religion—that we love goodness and hate evil *for their own sakes*. It is interesting to observe that the sin selected for special abhorrence on the part of those who are inspired by "the fear of the Lord" is pride. This is spiritual wickedness of the most fatal character. In its feeling of personal merit and self-sufficiency it excludes both repentance and faith—the two

fundamental conditions of spiritual religion. Therefore the spirit of the Pharisee and all pride must be hated above all things, and will be hated by those who have true reverence for the great and holy God, and true love for the lowly Christ who promised the kingdom of heaven to the "poor in spirit" (Matt. v. 3).

Ver. 17.—*The blessedness of loving and seeking Christ.* Wisdom is here personified. This is only the beginning of a process that is to grow through subsequent ages, manifesting itself in the Books of Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus, and finally developing into the doctrine of the "Logos" and the great revelation of Christ as the incarnate Word of God. We must not pretend to see the perfected thought in its earliest germ. The first personification of wisdom is little more than a figure of speech, an instance of the rich imaginative habits of Oriental thinking. Nevertheless, we know Christ to be the full, living embodiment of God's wisdom. What is true of that wisdom is true of him. And, therefore, though the writer of the words before us had no thought of Jesus Christ the Son of God and Son of man, his teaching concerning Divine wisdom may be most useful when we connect it with the one perfect revelation of wisdom in our Saviour.

I. LOVE FOR LOVE. 1. *Love to Christ must precede a deep knowledge of Christ.* We love before we seek and find. Of course, we must know something of him to arouse our love; but when this initial knowledge is attained, Love must have her perfect work before knowledge can ripen. 2. *Love to Christ must be based on what is lovable in him.* Wisdom is beautiful and attractive, and can excite love. How much more, then, should the incarnation of Wisdom in our brother man do this! The contemplation of the beautiful life of Christ and the study of his perfect character urge us to love him; but surely what he has done for us, his sacrifice of himself, his death on our behalf, must be our chief grounds for loving him. 3. *This love to Christ will be met by his love in return.* It is true that his love precedes ours, nay, that it is the great source of our love. But (1) it is not felt and enjoyed till it is returned, so that then it seems to come afresh as an answer to our love; and (2) there must be a stronger, more tender, more intimate love to those who appreciate it than can be given to others. Christ loved all men, but not as he loved St. John. Christians loving Christ enjoy his peculiar love. 4. *To be loved by Christ is the best reward of loving him.* True love is satisfied with nothing less than a return of love, but it is satisfied with this. If we have nothing else we have a pearl of great price in the love of Christ. Then we can afford to lose all earthly good things, can count them but dung, that we may win Christ.

II. FINDING FOR SEEKING. 1. *We must seek Christ if we would possess him.* He offers himself to all as a Saviour and a Master. But he must be followed and found. Our love to him will be the great attraction ever drawing us nearer to him. 2. *The search for Christ must be earnest if it is to be successful.* He will not answer a half-hearted call. Till we seek him with determination, reality, persistence, we shall meet no response. We must seek him before all things, must make Christ the chief end of life. 3. *This earnest seeking will be rewarded by the receiving of Christ.* Wisdom comes to him who seeks laboriously and patiently; much more will Wisdom incarnate, Wisdom with a heart to sympathize. Such a response will be the best reward of seeking. Better than anything that Christ could send us will be his own coming to dwell in our hearts. This will be the satisfaction of anxious inquiry in a full response, the blessing of love with love and close communion.

Vers. 22—31.—*The primeval glory of Divine wisdom.* I. THE HIGHEST WISDOM IS CREATED BY GOD. "The Lord created me as the first of his way." This idea was suggested to the Greeks in the myth of Athene, who sprang from the head of Zeus. It is the poetic form of the great truth that God is the Creator of thoughts as well as of things; and it suggests that he not only called individual intelligences into being, but originated the primary laws and conditions of all intelligence, just as he ordained the laws of nature and the conditions of physical existence as well as the rocks and plants and animals subsequently created.

II. DIVINE WISDOM WAS ANTECEDENT TO MATERIAL CREATION. "'Twas wrought from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." Thought precedes action. Design anticipates execution. The architect comes before the builder.

Archetypal ideas precede creative work. In the awful depths of primeval antiquity the great Thinker wrought out the plans of the universe which as the great Worker he has been since evolving in visible existences.

III. WISDOM ACCOMPANIED AND DIRECTED PHYSICAL CREATION. "I was by him as a master-worker." Wisdom did not cease when force appeared. The two wrought together. The result of their joint operation is the energetic cosmos—force and thought triumphing over death and chaos. When we endeavour to discover the secrets of nature, we are searching out the wisdom of God. When we learn the laws and processes of nature, we are able to think the thoughts of God. The naturalist should walk reverently, for he is treading in the footsteps of the mind of God. It should be our aim in studying nature to find God in his wisdom.

IV. THE DIVINE WISDOM IN CREATION LEADS ON TO THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE AND ORDER. First there is the confusion of the elements. Gradually these elements are marshalled into order till Wisdom is able to "rejoice in his earthly world." The onward movement of all things here indicated and illustrated very fully by recent science reveals the wisdom of God with increasing clearness. Instead of thinking of that wisdom as chiefly manifested in primitive creation, we should see that it is most active and most glorious in the latest and richest development of the life of the universe.

V. THIS WISDOM IS ONE OF THE MOST GLORIOUS OF THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES. God has glory of thought as well as glory of character. There must be all phases of perfection in the perfect Mind. God is not only to be regarded on the side of moral law and religious worship. He is the great Mathematician, Architect, Philosopher, Poet. Our thoughts of God are too "Churchy." God is not only in the church. He is much in the fields. He has his workshops as well as his temples; nay, they are his best temples. Let us try to find him in "secular" thought and work, and worship him the more for the wisdom seen in his "earthly world."

Ver. 29.—*The decree of the sea.* We live under the reign of law. This fact is taken to be the late revelation of modern science. But it is embedded in Old Testament teaching. There we see that the laws of nature, which are but the ways of God on earth, are recognized as fixed and stable. But the Bible helps us in two ways in examining those laws. First, it traces them back to their origin in a personal will. These are not merely channels of a blind force. They are decrees of an authority. Secondly, it teaches us to believe that they are good, wisely directed and tending to righteousness. They come from a wise, holy, just, and benevolent source. The decree of the sea has a special significance.

I. IT HAS A VAST DOMAIN. The sea covers three parts of the surface of the globe. Leagues upon leagues of spreading ocean roll round the earth with every tide. The sea is deep, and hides in its many waters myriads of living creatures. The fearful storms that sweep its surface tell sad tales of its more than giant strength. Here we are face to face with a frightful nature-power. Yet that power is under law. God's decree encircles it, and his hand reins it in with irresistible might. The sea is great, but God is greater; strong, but God is stronger. As we look at the fearful might and majesty of the ocean, we are called to bow before the infinitely greater Power who holds its waters in the hollow of his hand. If we tremble before its terror, we may remember that it is but the inanimate slave of our Father in heaven.

II. IT IS ENSHRINED IN MYSTERY. Men have discovered some of the laws of tides, currents, storms, etc. Yet the ocean is still, in many respects, a great mystery. What caverns are hidden beneath its dark waters? What monsters of the deep may still elude the grasp of man's observation? What secret terrors may burst upon his astounded gaze? Here is indeed a mystery. Yet this is all known to God, governed by God, subject to his law, humbly obedient to his decree. God rules over all the mysteries of the universe.

III. IT GOVERNS CHANGE. The sea is the symbol of fickleness and deception—to-day smooth as a mirror, "green calm below, blue quietness above" (Whittier); to-morrow a black and storm-tossed chaos. Its restless waves never cease to crawl to and fro on the quietest day; its tides are ever ebbing and flowing. Yet it obeys law. There are laws of change, as in night and day, the seasons, etc. God rules over all the vicissitudes of life. Change does not mean chance.

IV. IT OVERRULES CONFUSION. God's decree does not prevent the tempest, but the tempest itself obeys the law of God. The wild and wintry waste of waters, flecked with foam, and scoured with angry billows, is all under law and order. It is so in life. God does not prevent trouble; but he overrules it and limits its extent.

This decree of the sea is typical of the Divine government of what looks most tumultuous and lawless in life. Apply it throughout with the four points—vastness, mystery, change, and confusion—(1) to earthly circumstances; (2) to the ocean of human life; (3) to the soul, that sea of many storms.

Ver. 30.—*The pre-eminent glory of Christ.* This is affirmed of wisdom, and wisdom in the Proverbs is always an abstraction, an attribute of God, or a grace conferred upon man. Thus we have the highly imaginative picture of a certain *quality of thought* described like a personal favourite in the heavenly presence. But surely it is not necessary for us to rest with this idea. The New Testament cannot be out of our minds when we read the Old. It was not long before Jews learnt to personify wisdom, and when Christ appeared he realized in his own Person what had previously been ascribed to an abstract quality. Christ is "the Truth" (John xiv. 6) and "the Wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i. 24). His pre-existence is affirmed by himself (John viii. 58) and repeatedly asserted by his apostles (*e.g.* Col. i. 16). We may, then, think of Christ embodying this wisdom of God in the awful ages of the past, and see how truly what is here predicated of wisdom applies to him in whom that wisdom dwelt.

I. WISDOM IN CHRIST WAS WITH GOD. "I was by him." 1. *Wisdom was always with God*, always at his right hand. There was never a time when God acted blindly, imperfectly, without full consciousness. We have no ground for thinking of a lawless chaos previous to the exercise of Divine wisdom and power in creation. Even when the world was "without form and void" (Gen. i. 2), God's wise thought presided over it. God's mind did not grow like ours, from infantile simplicity. He was ever fully God. 2. *Christ was similarly eternal with God.* "The Word was with God" (John i. 1). When he came to our earth he came forth from God. His condescension was seen in this, that he left his place by the right hand of his Father and came down to dwell with men.

II. WISDOM IN CHRIST WAS CONCERNED IN CREATION. 1. *God made the universe in wisdom.* It bears the impress of thought. Deep purposes have impregnated it. Creation is a parable of infinite ideas. 2. *God created all things through Christ.* "By whom he made the worlds" (Heb. i. 2). Of course, the humanity of Jesus was not then existing. But the Divine side of our Lord was not only eternal; it was even directly active. Therefore there is a Christ-spirit in nature.

III. WISDOM IN CHRIST WAS GOD'S DAILY DELIGHT. 1. *God rejoices over his work*, as an artist over the thing of beauty that his hand has fashioned according to the dream of his heart. "God saw that it was good" (Gen. i. 10). The thought that is in God's work is his especial delight. He cares not for mere exhibitions of brute force. He loves wisdom. 2. *God rejoices over Christ.* So Christ is God's "beloved Son" (Matt. iii. 17). There are times when we grieve our Father, though at other seasons he may smile upon us. But Christ always dwelt under the smile of his Father, a daily delight—rejoiced in for his wisdom and the holy and gracious use he made of it.

IV. CHRIST, BY HIS WISDOM, WAS REJOICING ALWAYS BEFORE GOD. Wisdom is a source of joy. Wisdom devoted to God is doubly joyous. Christ had an ancient joy (John xv. 11). He left a happy home to come to us. The word for this joy is "sporting." Is there humour in nature? May there be in heaven those lighter, innocent joys which make up so much of the mirth of children on earth? Why should Christ have been always solemn?

Vers. 35, 36.—*Life and favour with God.* It is common to see this and similar passages applied directly to the soul's possession of God, or to the special Christian faith in Jesus Christ. Now, it is quite true that we have here in germ what will lead up to those experiences. But apart from the mistake of ignoring the distinction between the elementary truth and its full development, there is a practical considera-

tion that is too often overlooked. It is thought to be good policy to "Christianize" these passages of the Old Testament; *i.e.* it is thought they are thus most profitably used. On this low ground even an answer can be given—it may be shown that the policy is bad. The more Christian idea is true in itself. But it is expressed clearly enough in the New Testament. We gain no new light, therefore, if we contrive to see it here. We simply repeat a lesson that we have learnt elsewhere. But if we take the more literal meaning of the words, then, though the thought given to us may not be so exalted nor so valuable as the perfected Christian thought, it may have a distinct worth and use of its own, and therefore may add somewhat to our knowledge of Divine things —an addition which we should not have if we read the words as a mere repetition of what we had already learnt elsewhere, however much more important that other lesson might be. The New Testament teaches us that we have life in Christ. We who have that later and fuller revelation gain little or nothing by reading the same truth in the Book of Proverbs. That life is to be found in the Divine wisdom may be a less valuable thought. But it is a distinct thought, and therefore some addition to our knowledge; and as such it should be spiritually helpful to us. For this reason, though it may be perfectly legitimate for us to show how the words of our text foreshadow the great truths of Christianity, it may be more profitable for us to keep to their simple meaning, and see how life and Divine favour are received through the finding of Divine wisdom.

I. WHAT IS MEANT BY FINDING DIVINE WISDOM. 1. It is not the mere *knowledge of religious doctrine.* Many have this, and yet miss the life eternal. We may know the Bible without knowing God. 2. It is not the results of some rare *intuition,* nor the achievements of elaborate *intellectual effort;* it is neither the vision of the mystic nor the secret of the Gnostic. For this wisdom is repeatedly offered to the simple with a most general invitation (*e.g.* vers. 4, 5). 3. To find Divine wisdom is to come to the *knowledge of God* as far as this affects our own *conduct,* to know his disposition towards us, his will regarding our conduct, the way of life to which he calls us; it is further to know so much of God's ways and thoughts as to be able to set them before us as a pattern, and thus to imbibe some of the great primeval wisdom described in the preceding verses; lastly, it is to set these thoughts in relation to practice and to make the knowledge of Divine things the rule of life.

II. HOW LIFE AND THE FAVOUR OF GOD RESULT FROM THE FINDING OF WISDOM. 1. *Life.* (1) In this wisdom we see the way to life—that life which is to Christians here on earth as well as hereafter the life eternal. (2) The only life worth living is that lived with thoughts of God and aims directed by the knowledge of God. Eternal life consists in this knowledge of God. 2. *The favour of God.* God is pleased with us in so far as we walk in his ways. Divine wisdom only can direct us aright, so that we may please God. But the very habit of mind that consists in the thinking of Divine thoughts and the desiring and attempting to accomplish the purposes of Divine wisdom must be pleasing to God.

> "Base-minded they that want intelligence;
> For God himself for wisdom most is prais'd,
> And men to God thereby are nighest rais'd."
>
> (Spenser.)

III. HOW SELF-INJURY AND DEATH RESULT FROM THE LOSS OF THIS WISDOM. "He that misseth me," etc. 1. The *common evils* of life will lead to our ruin unless we are saved by higher means. The traveller who rejects the guide may perish in the perils of his path; the patient who disobeys the physician may die of his disease. We shall ruin ourselves in sin "if we neglect so great salvation." 2. The *rejection of Divine wisdom* is itself a fatal sin. It is our duty to hearken to its voice. If we refuse to do this, we shall suffer as a penalty for our wilful disobedience to the message from Heaven.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—9.—*Wisdom's proclamation.* Again it is a poetical personification of truth, of God's Word, of religion, morality, sense, prudence; for all these are included in the comprehensive conception of wisdom that is placed before us.

I. THE PROCLAMATION OF TRUTH HAS NEVER FAILED IN THE WORLD. The cry is coeval with the world, with the conscience of man. The preacher has an institution second to none in antiquity and in honour.

II. THE PREACHER MUST BE CONSPICUOUS TO AND AUDIBLE BY ALL. (Vers. 2, 3.) On raised ground, in lonely paths (ver. 2), in the open air, in the field and forest; and (ver. 3) in the towns and cities, at the places of public resort and traffic, at the gates in the Orient, in the centre of Western cities, the preacher's voice has been heard. All eminent teachers in books are truly agents of Wisdom, and heralds of the kingdom of God.

III. THE SUBSTANCE OF TRUE PREACHING MUST BE THE SAME IN EVERY AGE. 1. It is *human* (ver. 3), and therefore intelligible, rational, practical. 2. It is especially addressed to *inexperience*—to the foolish and the thoughtless (see on ch. i. 4). 3. It deals with *clear* and *manifest* truth (see Hitzig's reading of ver. 6), and so commends itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. 4. It is *disinterested*, free from sophistry and compromise (ver. 7). 5. It is *just—correct* and *accurate* in knowledge of human nature and of Divine things (ver. 8). And thus it is: 6. *Acceptable* and irresistible by the "honest and good heart" (ver. 9).—J.

Vers. 10—21.—*Wisdom's pleadings.* She has nothing novel to say concerning her nature, value, and blessings. Preaching must in the main be repetition; the iteration of the old, not with dry and sterile monotony, but with that freshness which comparison with everyday facts and illustrations gives. New combinations of facts are ever arising in which to frame the old precepts and set them forth. Besides, love gives novelty to old truth, as the old song is enjoyed from the lips of the latest sweet singer.

I. SHE APPEALS TO COMPARISON. (Vers. 10, 11.) By comparison we increase and strengthen our perceptions. In the knowledge of man, books, art, life, comparison is everything. We are to compare Wisdom with *material objects of sense*, such as gold and silver, that we may see her to be incomparable; and so each for ourselves repeat the choice of Solomon (comp. on ch. iii. 14, 15).

II. SHE APPEALS TO ASSOCIATION. (Ver. 12.) Wisdom dwells with prudence. In modern language, the general implies the particular. Wisdom is intelligence in general; prudence, the appreciation of it in particular cases. In the poetical mode of representation we should say that Piety and Prudence are sisters, and go hand-in-hand, daughters of the voice of God, as Wordsworth said of duty. So, too, Wisdom has insight into enigmas, dark sayings, and generally deep things of God (see on ch. i. 4).

III. SHE UNFOLDS THE CONTENTS OF HER MIND. (Vers. 13, 14.) One of her many *aliases* is the fear of Jehovah. And this is religion, which includes all *wholesome aversions*, viz. *wickedness* in general, and in particular *assumption*, *arrogance*, *evil habits*, *perverted* speech. In other words, her sympathies are all with *lowliness*, *purity*, *love*, and *truth*. *Insight* or sharp and deep perception is another of her attributes, and *force* (comp. on ch. ii. 7).

IV. SHE CLAIMS SUPREME AUTHORITY. (Vers. 15, 16.) Kings, rulers, princes, potentates, judges,—all received those places and fulfil those functions through her and her alone. Authority in politics rests on consent or on force, or both. And these are traceable ultimately to reason, and reason is the "inspiration of the Almighty." Exceptions form no part of this representation. In modern language, we say that government, as a principle or institute, rests on an ultimate Divine basis. The text says *no less* than this, nor does it say *more*.

V. SHE IS IN RECIPROCAL RELATION TO HER SUBJECTS. (Ver. 17.) Her love is conditioned by love; the winning of her by the wooing. The notion that we can be *passive*, whether in knowledge or goodness, is an entire illusion. Such an illusion once prevailed as the doctrine of "innate ideas" now exploded in philosophy. All that

becomes the portion of head or heart *implies, necessitates* a previous spiritual activity in us. We are ignorant because we will not learn, unhappy because we will not love.

VI. SHE COMMANDS WEALTH AND HONOUR AND THE AVENUES TO THEM. (Vers. 18—21.) Riches, honour, "self-increasing goods, and righteous" (comp. on ch. iii. 16). The righteous here is elucidated by the next two verses; she shows the *right way* to all earthly good. She is a tree of life, and yields *incomparable* fruit both for value and abundance (ver. 19). She *guarantees* possessions to her votaries. The connection between *righteous* and worldly wealth is insisted on. Not that it is *always obvious*. Nor again are we to expect notice of exceptions in teaching that is from first to last absolute in form. The stringency of the connection is what we have to recognize; the knowledge of its complete application to all cases opens the relations of eternity and demands the omniscience of God.—J.

Vers. 22—36.—*Wisdom in eternity and in time.* This sublime view lifts us at once above the seeming contradictions of time, and suggests the solution of all its problems in God.

I. SHE IS OF THE DIVINE BEGINNINGS OR ELEMENTS. (Ver. 22.) An element in chemistry is the last simple substance we can reach in analysis. An element in thought is the last simple notion yielded by the dialectic of the understanding. Wisdom is thus *before* the visible creation—the earth, the sea, the mountains. The verses do but repeat and iterate this one simple and sublime thought. We may in like manner vary it in any form of thought and expression familiar to us. She is the Divine *a priori;* the logic of nature and spirit; the last and first, the ground of all existence; the eternal reason, the transcendent cause, the alpha and omega of the cosmic alphabet. We are trying to express the inexpressible, utter the unutterable, define the undefinable, find out God to perfection, if we press beyond these poor forms of speech and ignore the limit which separates the known from the unknowable, and reason from faith.

II. THE CREATION PROCEEDING FROM THE DIVINE WISDOM FULFILS ITS COURSE BY WISDOM. (Ver. 27.) What we term in science the discovery of law is for religion the revelation of the mind of God in the world and in us. The cosmos is here conceived under the forms of the poetic imagination—the heavens and their outstretched circle or vault; the clouds as massive bags or skins; the springs on earth as set in motion by direct Divine activity; the sea as bounded by a positive *fiat;* the earth as fixed on firm pillars, by one act as it were of the Divine Architect. And then was Wisdom at his side as mistress of the work (ver. 30), and was in delight day by day (ver. 30), "playing before him always; playing on the circle of the earth, and I had my delight in men" (ver. 31). One of the best illustrations of the poetical force and sense of this passage is in the Wisdom of Sirach xxiv.: "I went forth from the mouth of the Highest, and as a mist I covered the earth. I pitched my tent in the heights, and my throne was as a pillar of cloud. The gyre of heaven I encircled alone, and in the depths of abysses I walked about. In the billows of the sea, and in all the earth, and among every people and nation, I was busy" (vers. 3—6).

III. WISDOM'S APPEAL AND PROMISES. (Vers. 32—36.) 1. *The appeal.* "Listen to me, listen to instruction!" Drink out of this spring of eternity, whose currents flow through all the tracts of nature and of man. "Resist not!" for to resist is to oppose the law of things and to invite destruction. Let them be so eager to listen and to know that they shall *daily* apply, daily stand as suppliants or visitors at her door! 2. *The promises. Happiness* is repeatedly foretold (vers. 32, 34). *Life* in all senses, *intensive* and *extensive* (ver. 35). *Favour with Jehovah* (ver. 35). And it follows, as the night the day, that he who sins against Wisdom, whether by neglect or direct disobedience, is guilty of a *moral* suicide, and shows a contempt for life and happiness, a perverse preference for death (see on ch. iv. 13, 22; vii. 27; comp. Ezek. xviii. 21).—J.

Vers. 1—21.—*The excellency of Divine wisdom: No.* 1. In these verses we have portrayed to us the surpassing excellency of the wisdom of God.

I. IT IS AUDIBLE TO EVERY ONE. "Doth not Wisdom cry," etc.? (ver. 1; see homily on ch. i. 20—23).

II. IT IS URGENT AND IMPORTUNATE. (Vers. 2—4; see homily on ch. i. 20—23.)

III. IT MAKES ITS APPEAL TO UNIVERSAL MAN. (Vers. 4, 5.) "Unto you, O men,

I call," etc. There is nothing exclusive or partial in its address. Its sympathies are wide as the human soul. It draws no lines of latitude or longitude in any kingdom, beyond which it does not pass. It appeals *to man*—Jew and Gentile, male and female, bond and free, learned and ignorant, wise and foolish (simple), moral and immoral (fools).

IV. IT IS IN FULL HARMONY WITH ALL THAT IS BEST WITHIN US. Some voices that address us make their appeal to that which is lower or even lowest in our nature. Divine wisdom appeals to that which is highest and best. 1. To our sense of what is right and good (vers. 6, 7). 2. To our love of that which is true (ver. 7).

V. IT IS AN APPRECIABLE THING. (Ver. 9.) Though it takes high ground, not rooting itself in anything base, but making its appeal to that which is purest and noblest in our nature, it is still appreciable by all who can estimate anything at its true worth. To "him that understandeth," to the man who is capable of any discernment, the words of heavenly wisdom will be plain—they will "receive them gladly:" while to those who have reached any height in attainment, the teaching of wisdom will be recognized as the excellent thing it is. The students of law will find in it the illustration of all true order; the disciples of ethics will perceive in it all that is morally sound and satisfying to the conscience; those who admire "the beautiful" will recognize that which is exquisite, admirable, sublime. The teaching of Divine wisdom is "right to them that find knowledge."

VI. IT IS INTIMATELY ASSOCIATED WITH INTELLIGENT OBSERVATION. It consequently results in useful contrivances (ver. 12). So far from heavenly wisdom being confined, in its principles and its results, to the realm of the abstract and unseen, it is most closely allied with, and is constantly found in the company of, simple, homely discretion, the careful, intelligent observation of all surrounding objects and passing incidents. It issues, therefore, in "witty inventions."

VII. IT ISSUES IN, AND IS ILLUSTRATED BY, MORAL AND SPIRITUAL WORTH. (Ver. 13.) "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and the fear of the Lord is so intimately and essentially bound up with the hatred of evil, that they may be practically identified; we may say that "the fear of the Lord is to hate evil"—evil in all its forms, "pride, arrogancy," etc.—C.

Vers. 1—21 (continued).—*The excellency of Divine wisdom: No.* 2. We have also these features of the wisdom of God—

I. IT ENDOWS WITH THE WEALTH WHICH IS THE PRODUCT OF VIRTUE. (Vers. 20, 21.) It leads in that "way of righteousness" and those "paths of judgment" which result in "inheriting substance," and being "filled with treasures." It places in the hand of its followers all that measure of earthly good which they can regard with holy satisfaction and enjoy with a good conscience.

II. IT IS A SOURCE OF STRENGTH AND INFLUENCE IN HUMAN SOCIETY. (Vers. 14—16.) It is attended with that breadth of understanding, that knowledge of affairs, that insight into "men and things," which gives sagacity to statesmen and stability to thrones.

III. IT RECIPROCATES AN ATTACHMENT. (Ver. 17.) The more we know, the more attractive does knowledge become to our admiring spirit. The further we advance into its domain, the firmer becomes our footing and the brighter becomes the light. Moreover, the highest peaks attainable by man are only reached by those who begin to climb in the days of their youth (*vide* homily *infra*).

IV. IT IS OF INCOMPARABLE VALUE TO THE HUMAN SOUL. (Vers. 10, 11, 18, 19.) If the choice should lie between wealth and wisdom, it is better far to choose the latter; for: 1. While wealth will not buy wisdom, wisdom will lead to wealth, later if not sooner, of one kind if not of another. 2. Wisdom itself *is* wealth; it is the possession of the mind, it is the inheritance of the soul, it *is* "durable riches and righteousness."

The excellency of Divine wisdom: No. 3 (see below).—C.

Vers. 1—21.—"*Christ the Wisdom of God:*" *No.* 1. Though it is not to be supposed that Jesus Christ was in the mind of the writer of this passage, yet as he does personify wisdom, and as wisdom was incarnated in that Son of man who was the Son of God, we should expect to find that the words of the wise man in the text would apply, in large measure, to the Lord Jesus Christ. They do so, and suggest to us—

I. THE MANNER OF HIS TEACHING. (Vers. 1—3.) He "spake openly to the world,

. . . taught in the synagogue, and in the temple," etc. (John xviii. 20; see Luke iv. 15; John vii. 14, 26, 28; Mark vi. 34; Matt. v. 1, 2).

II. HIS APPEAL TO ALL CLASSES AND CONDITIONS OF MEN. (Vers. 4, 5.) He came unto the world at large, to "draw all men unto him." None were, none are, so poor or so rich, so ignorant or so learned, so simple or so subtle, so degraded or so refined, so spiritually destitute or so privileged, as to be out of range of his heavenly voice. All need his message; all are welcome to his kingdom.

III. HIS MANIFESTATION OF THE TRUTH. (Vers. 6—8.) He came "to bear witness unto the truth" (John xviii. 37). He came to *be* the living Truth himself (John xiv. 6), so that the more we know of him and grow up into him, the more of Divine truth do we receive into our souls.

IV. THE APPRECIABLENESS OF HIS MESSAGE. (Ver. 9.) When he spake with his own lips, men received his words, wondering at his wisdom and his grace (see Luke ii. 47; iv. 22, 32; Matt. vii. 28, 29). "Never man spake like this Man," said the officers to the chief priests (John vii. 46). "The common people heard him gladly" (Mark xii. 37). And now that he speaks to mankind from heaven, his message of truth and love is comprehensible to all who care to know his mind. To those who earnestly seek, the way becomes plain; to those who have "spiritual discernment," the deeper things of God are intelligible; to those who "know him," his dealings are seen to be right and true.

V. HIS RESPONSIVENESS. (Ver. 17.) (See succeeding homily.)

VI. HIS INCOMPARABLE WORTH. (Vers. 10, 11.) Jewels, *compared with him, are* empty toys; gold, compared with him, *is* sordid dust. So great is his worth to the hungering heart, to the suffering spirit, to living, dying man, that all forms of earthly good are not to be named or counted in comparison.

VII. HIS SERVICE ISSUES IN THE BEST OF ALL POSSIBLE RECOMPENSE. (Vers. 18—21.) The fruit of the service of Christ is honour, joy (including peace), righteousness (ver. 20), the "inheritance which is incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away" (ver. 21; 1 Pet. i. 4).—C.

Vers. 10, 11.—*Wisdom and wealth.* The immeasurable preference of heavenly wisdom to earthly wealth may be seen if we consider—

I. THE FAILURE OF WEALTH. Wealth is continually found to fail; for: 1. It cannot even buy happiness. It may purchase a certain amount of excitement and jollity, but it will not secure contentment, even for one brief year. 2. Much less can it buy blessedness. That happy state of which our Lord so often spoke as blessedness—the deep and true gladness of heart which God plants within the soul, and which all may well wish to possess—this wealth is utterly unable to impart. 3. It will equally fail to buy wisdom. Indeed, it may be truly said that: 4. It often stands positively in the way of its acquisition (Mark x. 23—25).

II. THE CAPACITY OF WISDOM. 1. It tends to provide men with competency, if not with abundance. Honesty, purity, sobriety, diligence, frugality, those virtues which go with the "fear of the Lord," tend to supply a man's home with all that is needful and desirable. 2. It secures peace and joy of heart. 3. It, itself, is man's chief treasure. Better the knowledge of God, the love of Christ, a holy, manly, loving spirit, than any external advantages whatsoever (see Jer. ix. 23, 24). 4. It prepares for the enjoyment of the treasures which are in heaven (Matt. vi. 19—21).—C.

Ver. 17.—*The responsiveness of Christ.* Adapting these words to him who became, and for ever will be, the Wisdom of God, they may speak to us of—

I. CHRIST'S INITIATIVE LOVE. It is quite true that "we love him because he first loved us." We should first consider "the great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins" (Eph. ii. 4, 5). All our love to Christ springs from, has its source in, his spontaneous love toward us, unexcited by our affection, flowing from his own exceeding grace.

II. HIS RESPONSIVE LOVE. This involves much. 1. His special interest in those who are inquiring at his feet. "Jesus beholding him, *loved him*, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest" (Mark x. 21). Zacchæus (Luke xix.). 2. His Divine favour accorded to those who have accepted him as their Lord. "I love them that love me" (see John xi. 5). These are his friends and his guests (John xiv. 23; xv. 14, 15; Rev. iii.

20). 3. Spiritual blessings which he will impart. He will dwell with us by his Spirit, and the fruits of the Spirit will abound in us. If, then, our interest in Christ, and the yielding of our hearts to him, result in his close friendship and in those highest impartations which flow therefrom, how wise must be—

III. EARLY DISCIPLESHIP TO HIM! For if we would make sure of finding him and possessing his friendship, we should seek him without delay. Delay is always dangerous. There may intervene between ourselves and him: 1. Other objects which may fascinate our souls and lead us away from him. 2. The growth of the deadly spirit of procrastination. 3. A sudden close of our present life. But early discipleship, the coming in faith to his feet, to his cross, to his kingdom, to his vineyard, means the certainty of holiness and usefulness below and the assurance of blessedness above.—C.

Vers. 22—31.—*The excellency of Divine wisdom: No.* 3. We have here additional features of the wisdom of God, viz.—

I. THAT THE WISDOM EVERYWHERE ILLUSTRATED DWELT IN THE DIVINE ONE FROM ETERNITY. (Vers. 22—26.) Before anything visible was created, in the "far backward and abysm of time," even to eternity, wisdom was an attribute of the infinite God.

II. THAT CREATION AND PROVIDENCE ARE THE DELIBERATE OUTWORKING OF THE DIVINE IDEA. "When he prepared the heavens ... then I was by him" (vers. 27—30). All things were constructed after the model in the Divine mind. Perfect intelligence, seeing through and foreseeing everything, directed everything according to absolute wisdom; thus the kindest end was gained by the surest means; thus beauty and serviceableness, grandeur and loveliness, are bound together in the visible world because they existed together in the mind of the great Architect (see Ps. civ. 24).

III. THAT THE WISDOM OF HIS WORK WAS A CONSTANT SOURCE OF SATISFACTION TO THE MIND OF GOD. (Ver. 30.) "I was daily his delight." We find a pure and God-given satisfaction in the execution of any work on which we have spent our utmost energy. We might have hesitated to refer this to the Supreme Intelligence, but the Word of God warrants us in doing this (Gen. i. 31; Ps. civ. 31). We may, therefore, believe that the glories and beauties of creation are not only the source of joy to our minds (and the deeper and fuller in proportion to our purity and piety), but that they are also a source of satisfaction to him who made them what they are.

IV. THAT MAN IS THE SPECIAL OBJECT OF THE WISE ONE'S CARE. (Ver. 31.) "My delights were with the sons of men." 1. When God made man upright he "blessed him" (Gen. i. 28), and rejoiced in him as in his noblest work on earth. 2. When man fell God was grieved; the heavenly Father's heart was saddened at his children's disobedience and wrong-doing. 3. When man returns to righteousness God is well pleased (Luke xv. 23, 24). There is no such wisdom shown in creation or in providence as in redemption. To arrange the laws of a material universe, to direct the affairs of an illimitable kingdom,—there is wondrous wisdom in these Divine doings; but there is deeper wisdom still in redeeming a lost world, reconciling an alienated world, cleansing a guilty world, sanctifying an unholy world and fitting it for the society of the sinless in heaven.—C.

Vers. 22—31.—"*Christ the Wisdom of God:*" *No.* 2. Again regarding the Lord Jesus Christ as the Wisdom of God incarnate, we may let these words suggest to us—

I. HIS ETERNITY. (Vers. 22—26.)

II. HIS SONSHIP. (Vers. 22, 30.)

III. HIS AGENCY IN CREATION. (Vers. 37—29; see also John i. 3, 10; Eph. iii. 9; Col. i. 16; Heb. i. 2, 3, 10; 1 Cor. viii. 6.)

IV. HIS PRIMAL BLESSEDNESS. (Ver. 30; and see John xvii. 5; Phil. ii. 6.)

V. HIS SUPREME INTEREST IN MAN. (Ver. 31.) "His delights were with the sons of men." The interest taken by our Lord in ourselves was that of a (1) Creator, (2) Divine Ruler, (3) Redeemer; it is now that of a (4) sovereign Saviour.—C.

Vers. 32—36.—*The convincing argument.* Here is a very strong, "Now, therefore." The excellency of Divine wisdom has been so forcibly, so irresistibly urged that the speaker is entitled to drive his argument home and make a practical application. But

the urgency of the case is summed up in the few following sentences. This is the reasoning: since—

I. INATTENTION TO THE VOICE OF WISDOM IS THE DEPTH OF FOLLY. For: 1. It is self-robbery. "He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul" (ver. 36). The man that shuts his ears when God speaks robs himself of all those precious things which might make his heart rich and his life noble—of spiritual peace, of sacred joy, of heavenly hope, of an elevating faith, of holy love, of Divine comfort, of the best forms of usefulness. 2. It is self-destruction. "All they that hate me love death" (ver. 36). To harden our heart against the invitations and warnings of Divine wisdom is to tread the path which leads straight to the gates of spiritual and eternal death.

II. ATTENTION TO THE VOICE OF WISDOM IS OUR HIGHEST INTEREST. 1. It leads to "blessedness" (vers. 32, 34); it ensures that state of soul which the eternal God declares to be the only enviable one, to be that which should be the object of our earnest aspiration. 2. It secures his own Divine favour (ver. 35)—the "favour of the Lord," the sunshine of his smile, the benediction of his voice; he will "lay his hand upon us" in fatherly love; he will surround us with his "everlasting arms" of powerful protection. 3. It constitutes life in its very essence and substance. "Whoso findeth me findeth life" (ver. 35). To be wise with the wisdom which is from above, to "know God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent," "to understand and know the Lord that exerciseth loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness," to have gained "the secret of the Lord," to have learnt by blessed experience "that the Lord is gracious," "to be filled with the knowledge of his will,"—this *is* life, human life at its highest, its best, its noblest. Moreover, it is that which issues in the eternal life on the other side the river, in the land where life is enlarged and ennobled far beyond the reach of our present thought. Since these things are so, "now, therefore," we conclude that—

III. DILIGENT DISCIPLESHIP IS THE ONLY OPEN COURSE. "Hearken," "hear instruction," "refuse it not," etc. (vers. 32—34). This includes: 1. Earnest attention, hearkening, watching, waiting. Something much more than allowing ourselves by force of custom to be found where wisdom is discoursed, "putting in an appearance" at the sanctuary. It implies an earnest heedfulness of spirit; a diligent, intelligent, patient inquiry of the soul; a hungering of the heart for the saving truth of the living God. 2. Practical obedience—"keeping the ways" of wisdom (ver. 32). "If we know these things, happy are we if we do them" (John xiii. 17; see Matt. vii. 21—27). As earnest disciples of Jesus Christ, the way to "keep his ways" is (1) to accept himself as our Saviour and Lord, with our whole heart; (2) to strive daily to embody his will in all the relations we sustain. That is to say, first enter into right relation to himself, making him the Saviour of our soul, the Friend of our heart, the Lord of our life; then strive to carry out his commandments in all the transactions and relationships of our human life.—C.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER IX.

Vers. 1—18.—15. *Fifteenth admonitory discourse*, containing in a parabolic form an invitation of Wisdom (vers. 1—12), and that of her rival Folly (vers. 13—18). The chapter sums up in brief the warnings of the preceding part.

Ver. 1.—Wisdom was represented as having a house at whose portals persons waited eagerly for admission (ch. viii. 34); the idea is further carried on. **Wisdom hath builded her house.** (For the plural form of *khochmoth*, "wisdom," a plural of excellency, see on ch. i. 20.) As the "strange woman" in ch. vii. possessed a house to which she seduced her victim, so Wisdom is represented as having a house which she has made and adorned, and to which she invites her pupils. Spiritual writers see here two references—one to Christ's incarnation, when he built for himself a human body (John ii. 19); and another to his work in forming the Church, which is his mystical body (1 Pet. ii. 5). And the sublime language used in this section is not satisfied with the bare notion that we have here only an allegorical representation of Wisdom calling followers to her. Rather we are constrained to see a Divine intimation of the office and work of Christ, not only the Creator of the world, as in ch. viii., but its Regenerator. **She hath hewn out her seven pillars.** Architecturally, according to Hitzig and others, the pillars

of the inner court are meant, which supported the gallery of the first story. Four of these were in the corners, three in the middle of three sides, while the entrance to the court was through the fourth side of the square. The number seven generally denotes perfection; it is the covenant number, expressive of harmony and unity generally, the signature of holiness and blessing, completeness and rest. So in the Apocalypse the whole Church is represented by the number of seven Churches (Rev. i. 4, etc.; see on ch. xxvi. 16). Wisdom's house is said to be thus founded because of its perfection and adaptability to all states of men. But doubtless there is a reference to the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit, which rested upon the Christ (Isa. xi. 2, etc.), and which are the support and strength of the Church, being symbolized by the seven-branched candlestick in the temple.

Ver. 2.—**She hath killed her beasts.** So in the parable of the marriage of the king's son (Matt. xxii., which is parallel to the present), the king sends his servants to notify the guests that the oxen and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready. Wisdom has stores of nourishment for understanding and affection; and Christ has offered himself as a Victim in our behalf, and now makes bounteous offers of grace, and especially has ordained the sacrament of the Lord's Supper for the strengthening and refreshing of the soul. **She hath mingled her wine;** Septuagint, "She hath mixed (ἐκέρασεν) her wine in a bowl." The wine which, untempered, was too luscious or too fiery to drink, was made palatable by a certain admixture of water. It was always so mixed at the Passover; and the ancient Christian Liturgies direct the mixture in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, doubtless from traditional use. Some, however, think that allusion is here made to the custom of adding drugs to wine in order to increase its potency. Among the Greeks, ἄκρατος οἶνος meant "wine without water," and in Rev. xiv. 10 we have ἄκρατον κεκερασμένον, "undiluted wine mixed." And probably in the text the notion is that the fluid for the guests' delectation is properly prepared, that there may be no trouble when they arrive (see on ch. xxiii. 30). **She hath also furnished her table,** by arranging the dishes, etc., thereon (Ps. xxiii. 5, "Thou preparest a table before me," where the same verb, *arak*, is used; comp. Isa. xxi. 5). Moralizing on this passage, St. Gregory says, "The Lord 'killed the sacrifices' by offering himself on our behalf. He 'mingled the wine,' blending together the cup of his precepts from the historical narration and the spiritual signification. And he 'set forth his table,' *i.e.* Holy Writ, which with the bread of the Word refreshes us when we are wearied and come to him away from the burdens of the world, and by its effect of refreshing strengthens us against our adversaries" ('Moral.,' xvii. 43, Oxford transl.).

Ver. 3.—**She hath sent forth her maidens,** as in Matt. xxii. 3, to call them that were bidden to the feast. The Septuagint has τοὺς ἑαυτῆς δούλους, "her servants," but the Authorized Version is correct, and feminine attendants are in strict harmony with the rest of the apologue. By them are represented the apostles and preachers and ministers, who go forth to win souls for Christ. St. Gregory sees in their being called "maidens" an intimation that they are in themselves weak and abject, and are only useful and honoured as being the mouthpiece of their Lord ('Moral.,' xxxiii. 33). **She crieth upon the highest places of the city,** where her voice could best be heard, as in ch. viii. 2; Matt. x. 27. She is not satisfied with delegating her message to others; she delivers it herself. Septuagint, "calling with a loud proclamation to the cup (ἐπὶ κρατῆρα);" Vulgate, *Misit ancillas suas ut vocarent ad arcem et ad mœnia civitatis*, "She has sent her handmaids to invite to the citadel, and to the walls of the town." On which rendering St. Gregory comments, "In that while they tell of the interior life, they lift us up to the high walls of the city above, which same walls, surely, except any be humble, they do not ascend" ('Moral.,' xvii. 43).

Vers. 4—12.—Here follows the invitation of Wisdom, urging the attendance of guests at the sumptuous banquet which she has prepared (comp. Rev. xix. 9).

Ver. 4.—**Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither.** This is a direct address to the imprudent and inexperienced (see on ch. vii. 7), calling them to turn aside from the way on which they are going, and to come to her. Vulgate, *si quis est parvulus veniat ad me*, which reminds one of Christ's tender words, "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish" (Matt. xviii. 14). As for **him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him** what follows (so ver. 16). Wisdom's own speech is interrupted, and the writer himself introduces this little clause. She calls on the simple and the unwise, both as necessarily needing her teaching, and not yet inveterate in evil, nor wilfully opposed to better guidance. "The world by wisdom knew not God," and he "hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised,

hath God chosen" (1 Cor. i. 21, 26, etc.; comp. Matt. xi. 25).

Ver. 5.—**Come, eat ye of my bread.** Wisdom now directly addresses the simple and the foolish (comp. Rev. xxii. 17). **And drink of the wine which I have mingled** (see on ver. 2). Bread and wine represent all needful nourishment, as flesh and wine in ver. 2. So Christ says (John vi. 51), "I am the living Bread which came down from heaven . . . and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Compare the invitation in Isa. lv. 1, "Ho, every one that thirsteth!" etc. The Fathers see here a prophecy of the gospel feast, wherein Christ gave and gives bread and wine as symbols of his presence (Matt. xxvi. 26, etc.).

Ver. 6.—**Forsake the foolish, and live;** Vulgate, *relinquite infantiam;* Septuagint, ἀπολείπετε ἀφροσύνην, "leave folly." These versions take the plural פְּתָאִים (*petaim*) as equivalent to an abstract noun, which gives a good sense; but the plural is not so used in our book, so we must admit the rendering of the Authorized Version, "Quit the class, give up being of the category of fools," or else we must take the word as vocative, "Leave off, ye simple ones" (Revised Version), *i.e.* quit your simplicity, your folly. *And live* (see on ch. iv. 4). It is not a mere prosperous life on earth that is here promised, but something far higher and better (John vi. 51, "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever"). The LXX. saw something of this when they paraphrased the clause, "Leave ye folly, that ye may reign for ever." **Go in the way of understanding.** Leaving folly, stay not, but make real progress in the direction of wisdom. Septuagint, "Seek ye prudence, and direct understanding by knowledge."

Vers. 7—10.—These verses form a parenthesis, showing why Wisdom addresses only the simple and foolish. She giveth not that which is holy unto dogs, nor casteth pearls before swine (Matt. vii. 6).

Ver. 7.—**He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame.** He who tries to correct a scorner (see on ch. i. 22 and iii. 34), one who derides religion, loses his pains and meets with ribald mockery and insult. It is not the fault of messengers or message that this should be, but the hardness of heart and the pride of the hearer make him despise the teaching and hate the teacher (Matt. xxiv. 9). **He that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot;** rather, *he that reproveth a sinner, it is his blot.* Such a proceeding results in disgrace to himself. This is not said to discourage the virtuous from reproving transgressors, but states the effect which experience proves to occur in such cases. Prudence, caution, and tact are needed in dealing with these characters. Evil men regard the reprover as a personal enemy, and treat him with contumely, and hence arise unseemly bickerings and disputes, injurious words and deeds. To have wasted teaching on such unreceptive and antagonistic natures is a shameful expenditure of power. St. Gregory thus explains this matter: "It generally happens that when they cannot defend the evils that are reproved in them, they are rendered worse from a feeling of shame, and carry themselves so high in their defence of themselves, that they take out bad points to urge against the life of the reprover, and so they do not account themselves guilty, if they fasten guilty deeds upon the heads of others also. And when they are unable to find true ones, they feign them, that they may also themselves have things they may seem to rebuke with no inferior degree of justice" ('Moral.,' x. 3, Oxford transl.).

Ver. 8.—**Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee** (see the last note, and comp. ch. xv. 12, and note there). There are times when reproof only hardens and exasperates. "It is not proper," says St. Gregory, "for the good man to fear lest the scorner should utter abuse at him when he is chidden, but lest, being drawn into hatred, he should be made worse" ('Moral.,' viii. 67). "Bad men sometimes we spare, and not ourselves, if from the love of those we cease from the rebuking of them. Whence it is needful that we sometimes endure keeping to ourselves what they are, in order that they may learn in us by our good living what they are not" (ibid., xx. 47, Oxford transl.). **Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.** So Ps. cxli. 5, "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be as oil upon the head; let not my head refuse it" (comp. ch. xix. 25; xxv. 12; xxvii. 6).

Ver. 9.—**Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser.** The Hebrew is merely "give to the wise," with no object mentioned; but the context suggests "instruction," even though, as in ver. 8, it takes the form of rebuke. Vulgate and Septuagint, "Give an opportunity to a wise man, and he will be wiser" (comp. Matt. xiii. 12; xxv. 29). To make the best use of all occasions of learning duty, whether they present themselves in a winning or a forbidden shape, is the part of one who is wise unto salvation (see ch. i. 5, and note there). **Teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.** Wisdom being a moral, and not merely an intellectual, quality, there is a natural interchange of "wise" and "just," referring to the same individual,

in the two clauses. Vulgate, *festinabit accipere;* Septuagint, "Instruct a wise man, and he shall have more given him." The wise are thus rewarded with larger measures of wisdom, because they are simple, humble, and willing to learn, having that childlike spirit which Christ commends (Matt. xviii. 3).

Ver. 10.—Wisdom returns to the first apothegm and principle of the whole book (ch. i. 7). Without the fear of God no teaching is of any avail. **The knowledge of the holy is understanding.** The word translated "the holy" is קְדֹשִׁים, a plural of excellence (see on ch. xxx. 3) like *Elohim*, and equivalent to "the Most Holy One," Jehovah, to which it answers in the first hemistich. God is called "Holy, holy, holy" (Isa. vi. 3), in his threefold nature, and as majestic beyond expression. The only knowledge worth having, and which is of avail for the practical purposes of life, is the knowledge of God (see on ch. ii. 5). Septuagint, "The counsel of the holy (ἁγίων) is understanding," with the explanatory clause; "for to know the Law is the character of good thought." This occurs again at ch. xiii. 15, though in the Hebrew in neither place.

Ver. 11.—The parenthetical explanation being concluded, in which Wisdom has intimated why it is useless to appeal to the scorner and the wilful sinner, she now resumes the direct address interrupted at ver. 7, presenting a forcible reason for the advice given in ver. 6, though there is still some connection with ver. 10, as it is from the wisdom that comes from the fear of the Lord that the blessings now mentioned spring. **For by me thy days shall be multiplied** (see ch. iii. 2, 16; iv. 10, where long life is promised as a reward for the possession and practice of wisdom). The same result is attributed to the fear of God (ch. x. 27; xiv. 27, etc.). In ver. 6 the address is in the plural; here it is singular. A similar interchange is found in ch. v. 7, 8 (where see note).

Ver. 12.—**If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself.** A transition verse. Wisdom will bring thee good; as thou hast laboured well, so will be thy reward (1 Cor. iii. 8). The LXX. (Syriac and Arabic), with the idea of perfecting the antithesis, adds, καὶ τοῖς πλησίον, "My son, if thou art wise for thyself, thou shalt be wise also for thy neighbours"—which contains the great truth that good gifts should not be selfishly enjoyed, but used and dispensed for the advantage of others (Gal. vi. 6). In support of our text we may quote Job xxii. 2, "Can a man be profitable unto God? Surely he that is wise is profitable unto himself." **But if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it;** *i.e.* atone for it, bear the sin, as it is expressed in Numb. ix. 13, "For every man shall bear his own burden" (Gal. vi. 5). Thus Wisdom ends her exhortation. Septuagint, "If thou turn out evil, thou alone shalt bear (ἀντλήσεις) evils." And then is added the following paragraph, which may possibly be derived from a Hebrew original, but seems more like a congeries made up from other passages, and foisted by some means into the Greek text: "He that stayeth himself on lies shepherdeth winds, and himself pursueth flying birds; for he hath left the ways of his own vineyard, and hath gone astray with the wheels of his own husbandry; and he goeth through a waterless desert, and over a land set in thirsty places, and with his hands he gathereth unfruitfulness."

Vers. 13—18.—This section contains the invitation of Folly, the rival of Wisdom, represented under the guise of an adulteress (ch. ii. 16; v. 3, etc.; vi. 24, etc.; vii.).

Ver. 13.—**A foolish woman**; literally, *the woman of folly*, the genitive being that of apposition, so that this may well be rendered, in order to make the contrast with Wisdom more marked, "the woman Folly." She is regarded as a real person; and between her and Virtue man has to make his choice. **Is clamorous**; turbulent and animated by passion (as ch. vii. 11), quite different from her calm, dignified rival. She is **simple**; Hebrew, "simplicity," in a bad sense; she has no preservative against evil, no moral fibre to resist temptation. **And knoweth nothing** which she ought to know. Ignorance is the natural accompaniment of Folly; in this case it is wilful and persistent; she goes on her way reckless of consequences. Septuagint, "A woman foolish and bold, who knows not shame, comes to want a morsel."

Ver. 14.—**She sitteth at the door of her house.** She, like Wisdom, has a house of her own, and imitates her in inviting guests to enter. She does not send forth her maidens; she does not stand in the streets and proclaim her mission. Vice has an easier task; all she has to do is to sit and beckon and use a few seductive words. Her house is not supported by seven pillars, built on the grace of God and upheld by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, like that of Wisdom (ver. 1); it is an ordinary habitation of no stately proportions, but its meanness impedes not the uses to which she puts it, her own charms causing her victims to disregard her environments. **On a seat in the high places of the city.** Her house is in the highest and most conspicuous part of the city, and she sits before her door in reckless immodesty, plying her shameful trade (comp. Gen. xxxviii. 14; Jer. iii. 2). The mimicry of her rival again ap-

pears, for Wisdom "crieth upon the highest places of the city" (ver. 3).

Ver. 15.—**To call passengers who go right on their ways.** With shameless effrontery she cries to all that pass by, she addresses her solicitations to persons who are going straight on their way, thinking nothing of her, having no idea of deviating from their pursued object. As they walk in the path of right and duty, she tries to turn them aside. Septuagint, "Calling to herself (*προσκαλουμένη*) those that pass by and are keeping straight in their ways." The Fathers find here a picture of the seductions of heretical teaching, which puts on the mask of orthodoxy and deceives the unwary. Wordsworth notes that, in the Apocalypse, the false teacher bears some emblems of the Lamb (Rev. xiii. 11). All false doctrine retains some element of truth, and it is because of this admixture that it procures adherents and thrives for a time.

Vers. 16, 17.—These verses contain the invitation which Vice, in imitation of Virtue, and assuming her voice and manner, offers to the wayfarers.

Ver. 16.—**Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither.** She uses the very same words which Wisdom utters (ver. 4). The latter had addressed the simple because they were inexperienced and undecided, and might be guided aright; the former now speaks to them because they have not yet made their final choice, can still be swayed by lower considerations, and may be led astray. Such persons find it hard to distinguish between the good and the evil, the false and the true, especially when their sensual appetite is aroused and sides with the temptress. No marvel is it that such are easily deceived; for we are told that, under certain circumstances, Satan transforms himself into an angel of light (2 Cor. xi. 14). **That wanteth understanding.** This is the other class addressed by Wisdom, and which Folly now solicits, urging them to follow her on the path of pleasure, promising sensual enjoyment and security.

Ver. 17.—This is what she says: **Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.** The metaphor of "stolen waters" refers primarily to adulterous intercourse, as to "drink waters out of one's own cistern" (ch. v. 15, where see note) signifies the chaste connection of lawful wedlock. Wisdom offered flesh and wine to her guests; Folly offers bread and water. Wisdom invites openly to a well-furnished table; Folly calls to a secret meal of barest victuals. What the former offers is rich and satisfying and comforting; what Vice gives is poor and mean and insipid. Yet this latter has the charm of being forbidden; it is attractive because it is unlawful. This is a trait of corrupt human nature, which is recognized universally. Thus Ovid, 'Amor.,' iii. 4. 17—

"Nitimur in vetitum semper, cupimusque negata;
Sic interdictis imminet æger aquis."

Things easily attained, the possession of which is gotten without effort or danger or breach of restraint, soon pall and cease to charm. To some minds the astuteness and secrecy required for success have an irresistible attraction. Thus St. Augustine relates ('Conf.,' ii. 4) how he and some companions committed a theft, not from want and poverty, nor even from the wish to enjoy what was stolen, but simply for the pleasure of thieving and the sin. They robbed a pear tree by night, carried off great loads, which they flung to the pigs, and their only satisfaction was that they were doing what they ought not ("dum tamen fieret a nobis, quod eo liberet quo non liceret"). Septuagint, "Taste ye to your pleasure secret bread, and sweet water of theft." Where water is a precious commodity, as in many parts of Palestine, doubtless thefts were often committed, and persons made free with their neighbour's tank when they could do so undetected, thus sparing their own resources and felicitating themselves on their cleverness. On the metaphorical use of "waters" in Holy Scripture, St. Gregory says, "Waters are sometimes wont to denote the Holy Spirit, sometimes sacred knowledge, sometimes calamity, sometimes drifting peoples, sometimes the minds of those following the faith." He refers to these texts respectively: John vii. 38, etc.; Ecclus. xv. 3; Ps. lxix. 1; Rev. xvii. 15 ("the waters are peoples"); Isa. xxii. 20; and he adds, "By water likewise bad knowledge is wont to be designated, as when the woman in Solomon, who bears the type of heresy, charms with crafty persuasion, saying, 'Stolen waters are sweet'" ('Moral.,' xix. 9).

Ver. 18.—The deluded youth is supposed to be persuaded by the seductions of Folly, and to enter her house. The writer, then, in a few weighty words, shows the terrible result of this evil compliance. **But he knoweth not that the dead are there** (see on ch. ii. 18 and vii. 27). There are none "there," in her house, who can be said to be living, they are *rephaim*, shadowy ghosts of living men, or else demons of the nether world. The Septuagint and Vulgate, with a reference to Gen. vi. 4, translate *γηγενεῖς* and *gigantes*. **Her guests are in the depths of hell** (*sheol*); Septuagint, "He knows not that giants perish at her side, and he meets with a trap of hell." The terrible warning may profitably be repeated more than once.

It is like Christ's awful saying, three times enunciated, "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark ix. 44, 46, 48). The LXX. has another paragraph at the end of this verse, which has no counterpart in the Hebrew: "But start away, delay not in the place, nor put thy name ['eye,' *al.*] by her; for thus shalt thou pass over (διαβήσῃ) strange water; but abstain thou from strange water, and of a strange spring drink not, that thou mayest live long, and years of life may be added to thee."

## HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—5.—*The banquet of wisdom.* I. THE BANQUET-HOUSE. 1. It is *substantial.* A house, not a mere tent. The feast of wisdom is no brief repast, rarely enjoyed. It is a lasting delight, a frequent refreshment always ready. 2. It is *magnificent.* Seven pillars are hewn out for the house. It is fitting that the house of God should be more beautiful than a man's dwelling. He who enters into the habitation of God's thoughts will find it beautiful and glorious. There is nothing mean about Divine truth. It is all large, noble, magnificent. He who comes into communion with it will find himself in no poor hovel. He will be in a palace of splendour, with which the material grandeur of marble columns, delicate tracery, etc., cannot vie.

II. THE PROVISION. Rich and abundant—slaughtered beasts, spiced wine, a well-furnished table. Nothing looks more sordid than poor fare in splendid apartments. This shall not be seen in the house of Divine wisdom, but, on the contrary, enough for all, and that of the best quality. No thoughts are so full nor so rich as the thoughts of revelation. There is variety here as in the viands of the banquet. And "all things are ready." The table is spread. It waits for the guests. While we are praying for light, the light is shining about us. God has revealed his truth. Christ, the Light of the world, has appeared among us. The feast of the truths of the glorious gospel of the blessed God is ready for all who will come and share in its bounties.

III. THE INVITATION. The maidens are sent forth—not one, but many—that the message may go to all quarters. They cry in the highest places of the city, that the message may have the greatest publicity, may spread over the widest area, may reach all classes. This is the character of the call of God to us in his truth. He seeks us before we seek him. He has already sought us. The gospel is preached, proclaimed as by heralds; and this gospel contains the invitation to the rich banquet of Divine truth.

IV. THE GUESTS. "The simple;" "him that lacketh understanding." So in our Lord's parable, "the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind" are called (Luke xiv. 21). The whole need not the physician; the full need not the feast. They who are satisfied with their own knowledge will not sit humbly at the feet of a Divine revelation. It is they who feel themselves to be foolish, who acknowledge their ignorance and grope dimly after the light, who will be able to enjoy the banquet of wisdom; and these people are specially invited. The heathen, the illiterate, the weak-minded, are all called to receive the saving truth of Christ.

V. THE SATISFACTION. "Eat of my bread, and drink of the wine," etc. 1. Divine truth is *nourishing.* "By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live" (Deut. viii. 3). Christ, the "Word," is the Bread of life. 2. Divine truth is a *source of joy.* At the banquet there is wine that maketh glad the heart of man. The gospel offers no prison fare. It kills the fatted beast. It gives wine—spiced wine, things of pleasure and luxury. Yet the pleasure is not enervating; the gospel wine is not harmfully intoxicating. How much better this banquet than the injurious and really less pleasing feast of folly (vers. 13—18)!

Ver. 8.—*Reproof.* I. HOW TO GIVE REPROOF. The duty of reproving is one of the most difficult and delicate ever attempted. The people who are most rash in adventuring upon it too often fall into the greatest blunders, while those who are really fitted to undertake it shrink from the attempt. The mere utterance of a protest is generally worse than useless. It only raises anger and provokes to greater obstinacy. Unless there is some probability of convincing a man of the wrongness of his conduct, there is little good in administering rebukes to him. It is not the duty of any man to raise up

enemies without cause. We should all seek, as far as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men. Of course, it may be incumbent upon us sometimes so to act that we shall provoke opposition. Jesus Christ could have avoided the enmity of the Jews, but only by unfaithfulness to his mission. Where we are in the way of our mission, or when any duty will be accomplished or any good done, we must not shrink from rousing antagonism. To do so is cowardice, not peaceableness. But if no good is done, we may only bring a nest of hornets about our heads by our indiscretion. Let us understand that while we are never to sanction evil-doing, we are only called to rebuke it when the rebuke will not be certainly rejected; then we must risk insult for the sake of righteousness. The practical point, then, is that we consider the character of a man before attempting to rebuke him, and that we be not so anxious to protest against sin as to counsel the sinner and guide him to better ways. If he is in a hard, scornful mood, we had better wait for a more fitting opportunity. If he is too strong for us, we shall only injure the cause of right by attempting to grapple with him. Weak champions of Christianity have often only hurt themselves, discredited their cause, and afforded a triumph to powerful opponents by their rash encounters. In all cases to reprove well requires wisdom, tact, simplicity, humanity.

II. How to receive reproof. He who hates the reprover will become himself a scorner; the wise man will love the reprover. Our manner of accepting merited reproof will therefore be a test of our character. Thus viewed, may not the text class many of us with the scorners, though we had little suspected where our true place was to be found? It is too common for a man to reject all reproof with rage. Not inquiring whether the accusation is true, he unjustly regards it as an attack upon himself, as a personal insult. There may be fault with the reprover—very often there is. But a wise man will not shelter himself behind that. Granting that the method of reproof was unwise, harsh, offensive; still, was there no ground for any reproof? To be angry at all reproof is to be one of the worst of scorners—to scorn right and truth. For the conscientious man will not dare to reject appeals to his conscience; he will feel bound to listen to them, no matter how unwelcome the voice that speaks them. He will desire to be free from faults. Should he not, therefore, thank those people who show them to him? If he loves goodness, he ought to love those whose advice will help him to remove the greatest hindrances to attaining it. If he hates sin as the disease of his soul, he should accept reproof as medicine, and treat the reprover as a valuable physician.

Ver. 9.—*An open mind.* There are two classes of minds that seem to be armour-proof against the invasion of new light. One contains those people who, to use the phraseology of the Roman Catholic Church, are in a state of "invincible ignorance." The other contains the much more numerous people who know just enough to feel a pride of superiority to their fellows, and who wrap themselves up in the infallibility of self-conceit. To these persons Pope's often misapplied maxim may be fairly appropriated—

> "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing;
> Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring."

The truly wise man will be the first to see the limits of his knowledge and the infinite night of ignorance with which the little spot of light that he has as yet gained is surrounded. Having drunk of the wells of truth, he will have found his thirst not slaked, but stimulated; he will be a philosopher, a lover of wisdom. Such a man will have an open mind.

I. Consider the characteristics of an open mind. 1. It is not an empty mind. A man may be prepared to receive fresh light without abandoning the light he already possesses. The seeker after truth need not be a sceptic. There may be many things clearly seen and firmly grasped in the mind of one who is ready to welcome all new truth. 2. It is not a weak mind. If a man is not a bigot, he need not be like a shuttle-cock, driven about by every wind of doctrine. He will sift truth. He will consider new ideas calmly, impartially, judicially. 3. An open mind is willing to receive truth from any quarter. It may come from a despised teacher, from a rival, from an enemy. The open mind will not exclaim, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" 4. An open mind is ready to receive unpleasant truth. The new light may threaten to

interfere with the vested interests of ancient beliefs, it may expose the folly of long-cherished crotchets, it may unsettle much of one's established convictions, it may reveal truths which are themselves unpalatable, or it may wound our pride by exposing our errors. Still, the open mind will receive it on one condition—that it *is* genuine truth. 5. Such characteristics must be based on wisdom and justice. It is the wise man and the just who is ready to receive instruction. No small amount of practical wisdom is requisite for the discernment of truth amidst the distractions of prejudice. Justice is a more important characteristic. Indeed, it is one of the fundamental conditions of truth-seeking. Science and philosophy would progress more rapidly, and theology would be less confused by the conflicts of bitter sectaries, if men could but learn to be fair to other inquirers, and to take no exaggerated views of the importance of their own notions.

II. THE ADVANTAGES OF AN OPEN MIND. 1. The open mind will attain most truth. Truth is practically infinite. But our knowledge of it varies according as we are able to attain to a large and yet a discriminating receptivity. To the nut its shell is its universe. The man who locks himself up in the dungeon of prejudice will never see anything but his own prison-walls. 2. Every attainment in knowledge prepares the way for receiving more knowledge. It intensifies the desire of possessing truth. Thus the inquirer may say—

> "The wish to know—that endless thirst,
> Which ev'n by quenching is awak'd,
> And which becomes or blest or curst
> As is the fount whereat 'tis slak'd—
> Still urged me onward, with desire
> Insatiate, to explore, inquire."

But not only is the thirst thus stimulated. Future knowledge grows upon past experience. Knowledge is not an endless level plain, to reach one district of which we must leave another. It is more like a great building, and as we rise from story to story, we gain new treasures by mounting on those previously possessed. The more we know, the easier is it to increase knowledge. This applies to religious as well as to secular things. Prophets and devout people were the first to welcome the advent of the Light of the world (see Luke ii. 25—38). The more the Christian knows, the more will he be able to see of new spiritual truths. Thus he will come to welcome instruction with thankfulness.

Ver. 12.—*True self-interest.* It is the duty of the Christian to bear his brother's burden, and the duty of every man to love his neighbour as himself; it is also the privilege of the saint to lose his life for Christ's sake, and to "spend and be spent" in the service of man. But there still remains a right and lawful, and even an obligatory, regard to self-interest. For one thing, if a man's own heart and life are wrong, his work in the world must be wrong also.

I. HE IS NOT TRULY WISE WHOSE OWN SOUL IS NOT SAFE. 1. *He may know the truth.* The wisdom that can unravel many mysteries is his. He has searched into the deep truths of revelation. A diligent reader of the Bible, he is well acquainted at least with the words that God teaches. But he has never regarded the practical bearing of all this truth. It has been to him but a shadow. Then his own soul may be wrecked, though the way to the haven is clear. 2. *He may enlighten others.* Perhaps he is a preacher of the gospel, and is able to hold up the torch to many a wayfarer. He is even urgent in pressing the truth upon his hearers. Or he is a champion for the defence of the truth, arguing vehemently with unbelievers. But all the while he never applies this truth to his own case. Saving others, he is himself a castaway (1 Cor. ix. 27). The pilot leads the imperilled mariners home, but is drowned himself. Surely this is the height of folly!

II. HE WHO IS TRULY WISE WILL PROFIT BY HIS WISDOM. 1. *He will see the necessity of applying truth to himself.* This will be a part of his wisdom. We are all sadly tempted to delude ourselves into a false sense of security, and we need light and guidance to show us our danger and our course of safety. It is a mark of God-given wisdom to choose that course. 2. *He will recognize the practical bearings of truth.* It

will do little good to regard one's self only as a sort of example to which certain truths are attached. Mere self-examination of the most lucid and honest character will not save our souls. We have to go a step further, and act according to the knowledge that we gain in the light of God's truth. 3. *He will find the application of wisdom directly helpful.* When a man does not hold aloof from it as from some curiosity only to be inspected, but embraces the truth of Christ, taking it home to his own heart, he discovers that it is a saving truth. By the personal reception of this Divine wisdom he reaches the way of salvation. Above all, when we remember that Christ is "the Wisdom of God," we may see that for a man to receive that wisdom, *i.e.* to receive Christ, is to be wise for himself, because Christ brings the light of God's truth, and Christ's presence is the source of sure salvation.

Ver. 17.—"*Stolen waters.*" A fatal fascination, arising out of its very lawlessness, attaches itself to sin. Illicit pleasures are doubly attractive just because they are illicit. Let us consider the secret of these evil charms.

I. THE PROVOCATION OF RESTRAINTS. There are many things which we do not care to have so long as they are within our reach, but which are clothed with a sudden attractiveness directly they are shut out from us. If we see a notice, "Trespassers will be prosecuted," we feel an irritating restraint, although we have had no previous desire to enter the path that it blocks. Innumerable fruits grew in Eden, but the one forbidden fruit excited the greatest longing of appetite. Advertisers sometimes head their placards with the words, "Don't read this!"—judging that to be the best way to call attention to them. If you say, "Don't look!" everybody is most anxious to look. To put a book in an *index expurgatorius* is the surest means of advertising it.

II. THE VALUE GIVEN BY DIFFICULTY OF ACQUISITION. We value little what we can buy cheaply. Rarity raises prices. If we have been to great labour and have run heavy risks in obtaining anything, we are inclined to measure the worth of it by what it has cost us. Many designs of sin are only achieved with great difficulty. They involve terrible dangers. When once accomplished, they are the more valued for this. The pleasures of adventure, the Englishman's peculiar delights of the chase, are enlisted in the cause of wickedness.

"All things that are,
Are with more spirit chased than enjoyed."

III. THE SENSE OF POWER AND LIBERTY. If you have gained your end in spite of law and authority, there is a natural elation of triumph about it. When you have succeeded in breaking bounds, you taste the sweets of an illicit liberty.

IV. THE ENJOYMENT OF SECRECY. To some minds there is a peculiar charm about this. To them especially "bread eaten in secret is pleasant." Let it be all open and above-board, let it be of such a nature that one would have no objection to the world knowing it, and the pleasure loses its most pungent element. The air of mystery, the sense of superiority in doing what those about one little suspect, become elements in the pleasures of sin. But surely the highest natures must be too simple and frank to feel the force of such inducements to sin!

V. THE FASCINATION OF WICKEDNESS. Pure, naked evil will attract on its own account. There is a charm in absolute ugliness. Some men really seem to love sin for its own sake. A wild intoxication, a mad passion of conscious guilt, instils a fatal sweetness into stolen waters. But it is the sweetness of a deadly poison, the euthanasia of crime.

All these horrible charms of sin need to be guarded against. We must not trust to our own integrity; it is not proof against the fatal fascinations of temptation. To resist them we must be fortified with the love of higher joys, fed with the wholesome food of the banquet of wisdom (see vers. 1—5), attracted by the beauty of holiness, and above all, led to the pure and nourishing delights of the gospel feast by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—6.—*Wisdom's banquet; or, the call to salvation.* I. THE FIGURATIVE REPRESENTATION. Wisdom was termed, in ch. viii. 30, a "workmistress," in reference to the structure of the physical world. Here she whose delight is in men and human life is represented as the builder, *i.e.* the founder of moral and social order. The *seven pillars* denote grandeur, and, at the same time, *sacredness*. Her home is a temple. Religion is "the oldest and most sacred tradition of the race" (Herder); and it contains within it art, science, polity—all that makes human life stable, rich, and beautiful. Preparation has been made for a feast. The ox has been slain, the spiced wine has been mixed (Isa. v. 22; ch. xxiii. 30), the table set forth. Her servant has been sent forth, and her invitation has been freely made known on all the heights of the city. It is an invitation to the simple, the ignorant, the unintelligent, of every degree.

II. THE SPIRITUAL CONTENTS. These receive a richer unfolding in the gospel (Matt. xxii. 1—14; Luke xiv. 16—24). Instead of the practical personification of wisdom, we have the living presence of Christ, "the Wisdom of God." Instead of the *abstract*, the concrete; for an ideal conception, a real Example and a present Object of faith. Instead of the splendid palace-temple, on the other hand, we have the thought of the kingdom of God, or the Church, resting on its foundations of apostolic truth. To the provisions of the table correspond the rich spiritual nourishment derivable from Christ, his Word and work—the true Bread sent down from heaven. To the invitation of Wisdom, the call to salvation by Christ. 1. The New Testament echoes the Old, and the gospel is essentially the same in every way. 2. The gospel of Christ is the unfolding, expansion, enrichment, of the ancient spiritual lore. 3. The relation of the Divine to the human remains constant; it is that of supply to want, knowledge to ignorance, love and light to sorrow and darkness. 4. The invitation to the kingdom of heaven is free and general, conditioned by nothing except the need of its blessings.—J.

Vers. 7—9.—*Warnings against refusal.* So, in connection with the preceding section, we may take these words.

I. EVERY REFUSAL OF WISDOM IMPLIES THE PREFERENCE OF THE OPPOSITE. It implies that the associations of folly are more congenial than those of sound sense (ver. 6), which is a preference of death to life, in its effect.

II. THE SCOFFING HABIT IS AN INDICATION OF FOLLY. (Ver. 7.) Under the general head of fools come scoffers and wicked men of every degree. The cynic may prefer to speak of evil men and actions as *fools* and *folly*—"worse than a crime, a blunder"—and he utters more truth in this than he intends.

III. THE SCOFFER IS ABUSIVE, AND THIS IS SIGNIFICANT OF HIS TEMPER. (Vers. 7, 8; comp. Exod. v. 16; Ps. cxv. 7.) 1. He neither has nor desires to have self-knowledge, and therefore hates the teacher who holds the mirror up to nature, and makes him see himself as he is. 2. He is the foil to the wise man, who is thankful for corrections, because he is set upon improvement and progress; and therefore loves the corrector, holding him creditor of his thanks, and recognizing the loyalty of the hand which wounds. 3. The great distinction of the wise man from the fool is that the former has *indefinite capacity of progress*; the latter, *quâ* fool, none. 4. As there is an indissoluble connection between folly and wickedness, so are wisdom and rectitude at one (ver. 9).—J.

Vers. 10—12.—*Recurrence to first principles.* Life is made up of circles. We are ever coming back to whence we started. As history repeats itself, so must morality and religion. The shining points of wisdom appear and reappear with the regularity of the heavenly bodies. The vault of heaven has its analogue in the star-besprinkled vault of the moral relations. Iteration and repetition of first principles are constantly necessary, ever wholesome, peculiarly characteristic of Semitic thought. Wherever life is bounded to a small circle of interests, the same truths must be insisted on "over and over again."

I. RELIGION A FIRST PRINCIPLE. 1. Religion characterized. The *fear of Jehovah.* In other words, reverence for the Eternal One. We may unfold the definition, but can we substitute a better for it? It is a relation to the eternal and unseen, to a supersensual order, as opposed to that which is visible and transient. It is deep-seated in feeling. Reverence is the ground-tone in the scale of religious feeling; we descend from it to awe and terror, or rise to joy and ecstasy. It is a relation, not to ourselves, or a projection of ourselves in fancy, but to a personal and holy Being. 2. Its connection with intelligence firmly insisted on. It is the beginning, or root-principle, of wisdom, and "acquaintance with the Holy is true insight" (ver. 10). The question, often discussed, whether religion is a matter of feeling, knowledge, or will, arises from a fallacy. We may *distinguish* these functions in thought; but in act they are one, because the consciousness is a *unity*, not a bundle of things, a collocation of organs. In feeling we know, in knowledge we feel, and from this interaction arise will, acts, conduct. Hence so far as a man is soundly religious, he is likewise soundly intelligent. In the truest conception religion and wisdom are *identical.*

II. WISDOM A FIRST PRINCIPLE. (Ver. 11.) Here we come down from the region of *speculation* to that of *practical* truth. 1. The "will to live" is the very spring of our activity. 2. Only second to it in original power is the wish to be well, *i.e.* to have *fulness, energy* of life, consciousness. The *extensive* form of this wish is naturally the earlier, the more childlike—to enjoy many years, to live to a green old age, etc. The *intensive* form is later, and belongs to the more reflective stage of the mind. "Non vivere, sed valere, est vita" (Martial). 'Tis "*more life and fuller* that we want" (Tennyson). "One hour of glorious life is worth an age without a name." This view comes more home to the modern mind than to that of the monotonous East, where the like *fulness of interest* was not possible. We say, "Better twenty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay."

III. PERSONALITY A FIRST PRINCIPLE. (Ver. 12.) 1. We have a *distinct individual consciousness.* "I am I, and other than the things I touch." I know what *my acts* are as distinguished from my involuntary movements, *my thoughts* as distinct from the passive reflection of perceptions and phantasies unbegotten of my will. 2. Our wisdom or folly is *our own affair*, both in origin and consequences. We begot the habit, and must reap as we sow, bear the brunt of the conflict we may have provoked. 3. Neither our wisdom can enrich nor our folly impoverish God (Job xxii. 2, 3; xxxv. 6—9; Rom. xi. 35; Rev. xxii. 11, 12). (1) It is a solemn thought; the constitution of our being reveals the decree of God, and may be thus interpreted: "Let him alone!" We are not interfered with. We are suffered to develop in the air and sun. Woe to us if we pervert the kindly gifts of God, and turn his truth into a lie! (2) "Take heed to thyself." The effects of our acts may extend to others, but we cannot make others answer for them in the end.—J.

Vers. 13—18.—*The invitation of Folly.* The picture to be taken in contrast with that at the beginning of the chapter.

I. THE TEMPER OF FOLLY. 1. She is *excitable* and *passionate* (ver. 13), and may be fitly imaged as the harlot, the actress and mask of genuine feeling. 2. She is *irrational*, and knows not what is what. *True* love is *not* blind, either as to self or its objects. 3. She is like the harlot again in her *shamelessness* (ver. 14). Folly does not mind *exposure*, and rushes on publicity. 4. She is solicitous of company (ver. 15). Must have partners in guilt, and companions to keep her in countenance. Fools cannot be happy in solitude, cannot enjoy the sweet and silent charms of nature. Wisdom finds good both in the forest and the city, in the cloister or amidst the "busy hum of men." 5. Folly is gregarious. Wherever there is a crowd, there is something foolish going on (ver. 16). It may be safely said of habitual gatherings in taverns and such places, "mostly fools." The wise man goes apart to recover and strengthen his individuality; the fool plunges into the throng to forget himself. 6. Folly is sly and secretive (ver. 17). The *secret* feast is here the *illicit pleasure* (cf. ch. xxx. 20). The fact that people like what they ought not to like all the more *because they ought not*, is a complex phenomenon of the soul. The *sweetness of liberty recovered* is in it, and forms its good side. Liberty adds a perfume and spice to every pleasure, no matter what the pleasure may be. Augustine tells how he robbed an orchard as a boy,

admitting that he did not want the pears, and arguing that it must therefore have been his depravity that led him to find pleasure in taking them! In the same way one might prove the depravity of the jackdaw that steals a ring. Let us repudiate the affectation of depravity, a great "folly" in its way; and rather draw the wholesome lesson that the love of liberty, of fun—in short, of any healthy exercise of energy, needs direction. The instinct for privacy and liberty gives no less zest to legitimate than to illicit pleasures.

II. THE END OF FOLLY. (Ver. 18.) 1. It is represented under images of darkness and dread. Shadows, "children of death," dead men, departed ghosts, hover about the dwelling of Folly and the persons of her guests. And these, while even they sit at her table amidst feasting and mirth, are already, in the eyes of Wisdom the spectator, in the depths of hell. Thus the shadows of coming ill "darken the ruby of the cup, and dim the splendour of the scene." 2. The indefinable is more impressive in its effect than the definable. As *e.g.* Burke has felicitously shown in his treatise on 'The Sublime and Beautiful.' The *obscure realities* of the other world, the mysterious twilight, the *chiaro-oscuro* of the imagination: in this region is found all that fascinates the mind with hope or terror. If it be asked—*What* precisely will be the doom of the wicked, the bliss of the righteous? the answer is—*Definite* knowledge has not been imparted, is impossible, and would have less effect than the vague but positive forms in which the truth is hinted. 3. The indefinable is not the less *certain*. It is the definite which is contingent, uncertain. Our life is a constant *becoming* from moment to moment. This of its nature is as indefinable as the melting of darkness into day, or the reverse.—J.

Vers. 1—6.—*The Divine invitation.* Wisdom invites the sons of men to a feast. Christ, "the Wisdom of God," is inviting us all to partake of eternal life. A feast may well be regarded as the picture and type of life at its fullest. It combines so many of the best features of human life—bounty generously offered and graciously accepted, nourishment, enjoyment, social intercourse, intellectual and spiritual as well as bodily gratification. In the gospel of Christ there is offered to us life at its very fullest—Divine, eternal. We are invited by Eternal Wisdom to partake thereof, to "lay hold" thereupon. These verses suggest to us—

I. THE COMPLETENESS OF THE DIVINE PREPARATION. (Vers. 1, 2.) The house is built, the full number of pillars hewn, the beasts killed, the wine mingled, the table set out. Everything is arranged and executed; nothing is forgotten or omitted. Every guest will find that which he needs. How complete is the preparation which God has made for us in the gospel of grace and life! The whole of the Old Testament may be said to be a part of the history of his preparation. All his dealings with his ancient people, and his control of the heathen nations, were leading up to the one great issue—the redemption of mankind by a life-giving Saviour. The New Testament continues the same account; the birth, the ministry, the life, the sorrows, the death, the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, the evangelizing work and the interpretive letters of the apostles, form the last part of the Divine preparation. And now everything is complete. The house is built, the table is spread, the wine outpoured. There is nothing which a guilty, sorrowing, striving, seeking soul can hunger or thirst for which it will not find at this heavenly feast. Mercy, full reconciliation, unfailing friendship, comfort, strength, hope, joy in God, everlasting life,—everything is there.

II. THE GRACIOUSNESS OF THE INVITATION. (Vers. 3, 4.) Wisdom sends "her maidens" and "cries upon the highest places of the city." She charges those to speak who are likeliest to be listened to, and to utter her invitation where it is surest to be heard. Moreover, she does not restrict her call to those who may be said to be her own children (Matt. xi. 19); on the other hand, she addresses herself specially to those who are strange to her—to "the simple," to "him that wanteth understanding." In the gospel of the grace of God: 1. It is the gracious Lord himself who speaks to us, and in the most winning way. It is he himself who says, "Come unto me;" "If any man thirst," etc.; "I am the Bread of life," etc. 2. He has, in his providence and grace, caused the message of mercy to be sounded where all can hear it—"upon the highest places of the city." 3. He calls all men to his bountiful board, specially those who are in the greatest need (Luke xiv. 21—23; Matt. ix. 12, 13).

III. THE CHARACTER OF THE MESSAGE. (Vers. 5, 6.) Wisdom calls those who hear her messengers to forsake folly, to walk in righteousness, and thus to enter into life. The Wisdom of God himself calls those who hear his voice to: 1. Turn from their iniquity, turning away from the fellowship of the unholy as well as from the practice of sin. 2. Enter into closest fellowship with him himself; thus eating of the bread and drinking of the water of life; thus walking in the way of truth, holiness, love, wisdom; thus "going in the way of understanding." 3. Partake with him the life which is Divine and eternal—life for God, life in God, life with God for ever.—C.

Vers. 7—9.—*The penalty and promise of instruction.* It is not only the function of the minister of Christ to "reprove, rebuke, and exhort" (2 Tim. iv. 2); the "man of God" is to be so furnished from Scripture as to be able to administer "reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17). But instruction, especially when it takes the form of correction, has its penalty as well as its recompense.

I. THE PENALTY OF INSTRUCTION. (Vers. 7, 8.) It is in the heart of the wise to rebuke iniquity. Those who are upright and true, who hate evil even as God hates it, are stirred to a holy indignation when they behold the dark and shameful manifestations of sin, and remonstrance rises to their lips. It is as "fire in their bones" until they have "delivered their soul." 2. Rebuke is often decidedly advantageous. It not only relieves the mind of the godly speaker, but it shames those who should be made to blush for their deeds. Even when it fails to impress the principal defaulter, the arch-criminal, it may produce a wholesome influence on the minds of those who witness it. A burning flame of righteous wrath will sometimes consume much unrighteousness. 3. Nevertheless, it is true that the wise must count on the contrary being the result. It may be that remonstrance will be thrown away, that it will come to nothing but shame on the part of him that reproves—a "blot on the page," and nothing but provocation to him that is rebuked, inciting him to hatred (ver. 8). The likelihood must be reckoned, and the wise must act accordingly. If there is hope of doing good, some risk may well be run. All interposition is not here discountenanced. Good men must use their discretion. There is a time to speak, using the language of strong and even severe reproach. On the other hand—this is the truth of the text—there is a time to be silent, to leave abandoned and guilty men to be condemned of God. Reproach would be lost upon them; it would only come back with a severe rebound, and wound the speaker (see Matt. vii. 6).

II. THE PROMISE OF INSTRUCTION. (Vers. 8, 9.) 1. There are those in whom is the spirit of docility. They are ready to learn. Of these are the young. Our Lord commended the spirit of childhood partly for this reason, viz. that it is the spirit of docility. It has openness of mind, eagerness of heart to receive instruction. Of these, also, are those in whom the spirit of wisdom dwells, but who have fallen into error. 2. Instruction in these cases will be well repaid. If we rebuke a wise man, a man who is essentially good but accidentally wrong, we shall meet with appreciation: "he will love us." If we impart instruction to those already wise, we shall add to their excellency (ver. 9). So that intelligent, well-timed instruction will do two things. (1) It will restore the erring—a most valuable and admirable action, on which the best of men may truly congratulate themselves. (2) It will multiply the power of the good. It will add knowledge and wisdom to those who are already wise; it will make good men better, happier, worthier, in themselves; it will also make them more influential for good in the sphere in which they move. This, then, is the threefold lesson of the text: 1. Know when to be silent under provocation. 2. Speak the word of reproach in season. 3. Communicate knowledge to all who will welcome it.—C.

Vers. 10, 11.—*Digging deep, rising high, lasting long.* (See homilies on ch. i. 7 and iii. 1—4.) The fact that we meet with the opening sentence of the text in no less than three other places (Job xxvii. 28; Ps. cxi. 10; ch. i. 7), gives to it a peculiar significance. It indicates that the Divine Author of the Bible would impress deeply on our minds the truth—

I. THAT ON THE FEAR OF GOD, AS ON A SOLID ROCK, ALL HUMAN WISDOM RESTS. Nothing which a man can have in his outward circumstances or in his mind will

compensate for the absence of this principle from the soul. He may have every conceivable advantage in his surroundings; he may have all imaginable shrewdness, dexterity, cleverness, acuteness of intellect; but if everything be not based on the fear of the living God, his character must be fatally incomplete, and his life must be a deplorable mistake. Reverence of spirit, devotion of habit, the obedience of the life,—this is the solid ground on which all wisdom rests. Let a man be ever so learned or so astute, if this be absent Wisdom itself writes him down a fool.

II. THAT SACRED TRUTH IS THE LOFTIEST AND WORTHIEST SUBJECT OF HUMAN STUDY. It is well worth our while to give our careful and continuous thought to scientific, economical, historical, political truth. These will repay our study; they will enlarge our mind and heighten our understanding. But worthy as they are, they yield in importance to the truth which is sacred and, in an especial sense, Divine. To "understand and know God," who he is, what is his character, what are the conditions of his abiding love; to know man, who and what he is, what constitutes the real excellence and nobility of human character, what are the perils which threaten and what the habits which elevate it; to know the "path of life," the way back to God, to holiness, to heaven;—this is wisdom indeed. The knowledge of the holy is understanding. All other learning is slight in comparison with this supreme attainment.

III. THAT THE SERVICE OF GOD IS INSEPARABLY CONNECTED WITH THE LASTING WELL-BEING OF MAN. (Ver. 11.) 1. Obedience to Jehovah would have given a prolonged and enduring life to the Jewish nation in their own favoured land. Conformity to Divine Law, the practice of truth, purity, uprightness, simplicity of life and manners,—these will go far to ensure long life to any nation now. 2. Obedience to Divine Law, especially to one commandment (Exod. xx. 12), gave good hope of longevity to the children of the Law (ver. 11; ch. iii. 2, 16). Piety and virtue now have promise of life and health. The sober, the pure, the diligent, those mindful of God's will, are likely to have their days multiplied and the years of their life increased. 3. To the true servants of Christ, who are faithful unto death, there is assured a "crown of life" (Rev. ii. 10).—C.

Ver. 12.—*Wisdom and folly.* In this short verse we have some valuable thoughts suggested respecting both wisdom and folly.

I. THE DISINTERESTEDNESS OF WISDOM. If any one should urge against the claims of Wisdom that they are very high, urgent, oppressive, that God's commandment is "exceeding broad;" if it be asked by the young, "Why fling these shadows on our path? why weigh us down with these responsibilities?" it may well be replied by Wisdom, "Your services are not necessary to me. 'If I were hungry, I would not tell thee,' etc.; if I plead with you, it is for your sake. You have need of my voice and my control; apart from me you cannot be blessed, you cannot realize the end of your being. I can do well without your devotion, but you cannot do without my favour. If you are wise, you will be wise for yourself."

II. THE INALIENABLE CHARACTER OF WISDOM AS A POSSESSION. The wise man in the Book of Ecclesiastes laments that riches are things which a wise man may take much trouble to gather, but he does not know who may scatter them. A man may be laborious and frugal, but not for himself; all the good may go to others who come after him. Thus is it with various acquisitions. Men no sooner gain them than they leave them behind for others; *e.g.* the hero, his glory; the student, his learning; the conqueror or discoverer, the territory he has gained or found. But if a man is wise, he is wise *for himself* as well as for others; he has a prize of which no accident will rob him, and which death itself will not take from his hands. Once his, it is his for ever—it is an inalienable possession.

III. THE PROFOUND NATURE OF TRUE WISDOM. There is a very shallow philosophy which assumes the name of wisdom, which invites us to stake everything on securing a comfortable and prosperous career in this world, leaving out of account the supreme realities of our obligations to God, our duty to our own spiritual and immortal nature, our responsibilities to other souls. This superficial and false teaching overlooks the fundamental fact that a man is more than his means, that ourself is greater than our circumstances, that it is a poor profit to gain a world and lose a soul, that if we are wise we shall be wise *for ourselves.*

IV. THE STARTING-POINT OF TRUE WISDOM. Some are speaking with indignation, not insincere, against so much insistence on a man's seeking his own salvation. They say it is only a refined selfishness. It may be true that there are Christian teachers who enlarge on this aspect disproportionately; but it must ever remain a truth of great prominence that a man's first duty to God is the duty he owes to himself. First, because his own soul is his primary and chief charge; and, secondly, because he can do little or nothing for the world till his own heart is right. If a man, therefore, will be wise, he must first be wise for himself.

V. THE FATE OF FOLLY. "If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it." This does not mean that only the sinner bears the consequences of his guilt—that is deplorably untrue; sin is widespreading and far-reaching in its evil consequences—it *circulates* and it *descends*. The passage means that the foolish man will have to bear alone the condemnation of his folly; every man that lives and dies impenitent must "bear his own burden" of penalty. The remorse and self-reproach of the future none will be able to divide; it must be borne by the sinner himself. There is One that once bore our transgressions for us, and will bear them away unto the land of forgetfulness *now*.—C.

Vers. 13—18.—*The truth about sin.* Solomon, having told us of the excellency of Wisdom, and of the blessings she has to confer on her children, now bids us consider the consequences of listening to sin, when she, the foolish woman, utters her invitation. We learn—

I. THAT SIN IN ITS LATER DEVELOPMENTS IS A VERY ODIOUS THING. What a painful and repulsive picture we have here of the foolish woman, who, though utterly ignorant and unworthy (ver. 13), assumes a conspicuous position in the city, places herself "on a seat in the high places," speaks with a "clamorous" voice, and, herself unaddressed, calls aloud to those who are going on their way! When we present the scene to our imagination, we instinctively shrink from it as repelling and odious. All sin is hateful in the sight of God; to him it is "that abominable thing" (Jer. xliv. 4). And to all the pure in heart it is also, though not equally, repulsive. In its later stages and final developments it is simply and thoroughly detestable.

II. THAT TEMPTATION TO SIN BESETS THE UNWARY AS WELL AS THE EVIL-MINDED. Folly addresses herself to "passengers who go right on their ways" (ver. 15). There are those who go wilfully and wantonly in the way of temptation. They seek the company of the profane, the attentions of the immoral. These walk into the net, and are ensnared. Then there are others who have no thought of evil in their heart; they are not "purposing to transgress;" but as they pass right on their way, the temptress throws her net at if not over them, that she may entangle them. The path of human life is beset with spiritual perils; it is necessary to be prepared against all forms of evil. We must not only be upright in intention, but wary and well-armed also. "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary," etc. (1 Pet. v. 8).

III. THAT TO UNSANCTIFIED HUMAN NATURE SIN IS SOMETIMES A TERRIBLY SEDUCTIVE THING. "The foolish woman," though she is said to "know nothing," yet knows enough to say truly, "Stolen waters are sweet," etc. (ver. 17). It is useless, because it is false, to deny that vice has its pleasures. Lasciviousness, revelry, avarice, usurpation, have their delights; and there is a peculiar pleasure in snatching unlawful gratifications rather than in accepting those which are honourable. When our nature is unregenerated and unsanctified, when passion is at its height, when in the soul there is the ardour and energy of youth, vice has powerful attractions. The young may well provide themselves against the dark hour of temptation with "the whole armour of God," or they may not be able to stand victorious.

IV. THAT THOSE WHO HAVE ABANDONED THEMSELVES TO SIN ARE IN THE EMBRACE OF RUIN. "He knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell" (ver. 18). Not only is it true (1) that those who yield themselves to guilty passion are on the high-road to ultimate perdition; but it is also true (2) that they are already in the depth of ruin. They are "dead while they live" (1 Tim. v. 6); they are "in the depths of hell" (text). To be sacrificing manhood or womanhood on the altar of an unholy pleasure, or an immoral gain, or an enslaving fascination; to be sinning continually against God, and to be systematically degrading our own soul;

to be falling lower and lower in the estimation of the wise until we become the object of their pity or their scorn;—this *is* ruin. No need to wait for judgment and condemnation; the guests of sin *are in* the depths of hell. If near the door, if on its step, if in its hall, "escape for thy life" (see Wardlaw, *in loc.*).—C.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER X.

Ver. 1—ch. xxii. 16.—Part III. First Great Collection (375) of Solomonic Proverbs.

Ver. 1—ch. xii. 28.—First section. The sections are noted by their commencing usually with the words, "a wise son."

Ver. 1.—**The proverbs of Solomon.** This is the title of the new part of the book; it is omitted in the Septuagint. There is some kind of loose connection in the grouping of these proverbs, but it is difficult to follow. "Ordo frustra quæritur ubi nullus fuit observatus," says Mart. Geier. Wordsworth considers the present chapter to contain exemplifications of the principles and results of the two ways of life displayed in the preceding nine chapters. The antithetical character of the sentences is most marked and well-sustained. As the book is specially designed for the edification of youth, it begins with an appropriate saying. **A wise son maketh a glad father.** As wisdom comprises all moral excellence, and folly is vice and perversity, the opposite characters attributed to the son are obvious. The mother is introduced for the sake of parallelism; though some commentators suggest that, as the father would be naturally elated by his son's virtues, which would conduce to honour and high estate, so the mother would be grieved at vices which her training had not subdued, and her indulgence had fostered. If this seems somewhat far-fetched, we may consider that the father in the maxim includes the mother, and the mother the father, the two being separated for the purpose of contrast (see on ch. xxvi. 3). The word for **heaviness** occurs in ch. xiv. 13 and xvii. 21.

Ver. 2.—**Treasures of wickedness**; treasures acquired by wrong-doing (Micah vi. 10). **Profit nothing** "in the day of calamity" (Ecclus. v. 8; comp. ch. xi. 4). The LXX. renders, "Treasures will not profit the wicked;" so Aquila. "For what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?" (Matt. xvi. 26). **Righteousness** (ch. xiv. 34); not simply justice and moral goodness, but more especially liberality, benevolence. So in Matt. vi. 1 the Revised Version (in accordance with the best manuscripts) reads, "Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them," Christ proceeding to specify three outward acts as coming under this term, viz. almsgiving, prayer, and fasting. In some analogous passages the LXX. renders the word by ἐλεημοσύνη, *e.g.* Ps. cxi. 9; Dan. iv. 27; Tobit xii. 9 (comp. 2 Cor. ix. 10). **Delivereth from death**, shows that a man's heart is right towards God, and calls down special grace. Such a man lays up in store for himself a good foundation, that he may attain eternal life (1 Tim. vi. 19; see on ch. xvi. 6).

Ver. 3.—**The Lord will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish** (comp. ch. xix. 23). The soul is the life (comp. ch. xiii. 25). So the psalmist says (Ps. xxxvii. 25), "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread." Christ speaks of the providence that watches over the lower creatures, and draws thence a lesson of trust in his care of man, concluding, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. vi. 26, 33). **But he casteth away the substance of the wicked**; Septuagint, "He will overthrow the life of the wicked;" Vulgate, "He overturns the plots of sinners." The word rendered "substance" (*havvah*) is better understood as "desire." God frustrates the eager longing (for food or other good things) of the wicked; they are never satisfied, and get no real enjoyment out of what they crave (comp. ch. xiii. 25).

Ver. 4.—**That dealeth with a slack hand**; that is lazy and indolent (comp. ch. vi. 10, 11; see on ch. xix. 15). The Septuagint, with a different pointing, reads, "Poverty humbleth a man." **The hand of the diligent** (ch. xii. 24) **maketh rich.** The words for "hand" are different in the two clauses as Wordsworth remarks. The first word is *caph*, the open, ineffective, hand or palm: the second term is *yad*, the hand tense and braced for vigorous work. The LXX. introduces a clause here which seems to interfere with the connection: Υἱὸς πεπαιδευμένος σοφὸς ἔσται, τῷ δὲ ἄφρονι διακόνῳ χρήσεται, "A well-instructed son will be wise, and he will use a fool as his minister;" *i.e.* he is able to make even the foolish subserve his ends. The sentence is quoted by St. Augustine, 'De Civit. Dei,' xvi. 2. The Vulgate inserts another paragraph, which is also found in some manuscripts of the Septuagint at ch. ix. 12: *Qui nititur*

*mendaciis, hic pascit ventos; idem autem ipse sequitur aves volantes.* "He who relieth on lies feedeth on the winds, and pursueth flying birds."

Ver. 5.—**He that gathereth** the harvest into the barn at the right season. The idea of husbandry is continued from the preceding verse. **Son** is here equivalent to "man," the maxim being addressed to the young. **That sleepeth**; literally, *that snoreth;* Vulgate, *qui stertit* (Judg. iv. 21). **A son that causeth shame.** The phrase is found in ch. xvii. 2; xix. 26; xxix. 15. The Septuagint has, "The son of understanding is saved from the heat; but the sinful son is blasted by the wind in harvest."

Ver. 6.—**Violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.** So ver. 11. This is usually explained to mean either that the consciousness of his own iniquity silences the sinner when he would speak against the righteous, or his violence and injustice, returning on his own head, are like a bandage over his mouth (Lev. xiii. 45; Micah iii. 7), reducing him to shame and silence. Others, again, consider the signification to be—in default of the good, honest words which should proceed from a man's mouth, the sinner pours forth injustice and wickedness. But it is best (as in ver. 14) to take "mouth" as the subject: "The mouth of the wicked concealeth violence," that he may wait for the opportunity of practising it. The contrast is between the manifest blessedness of the righteous and the secret sinister proceedings of the evil. The Vulgate and Septuagint give, "the blessing of the Lord." For "violence" the Septuagint has *πένθος ἄωρον*, "untimely grief;" the Hebrew word *chamas* bearing also the sense of "misery."

Ver. 7.—**The memory.** The lasting, fragrant perfume of a holy life is contrasted with the noisomeness and quick decay of an evil name (comp. Ps. lxxii. 17). As a commentator asks, "Who ever thinks of calling a child Judas or Nero?"

Ver. 8.—**Will receive commandments.** The wise in heart is not proud or conceited; he accepts the Divine Law with all its directions (observe the plural "commandments"), and is not above learning from others; at the same time, he makes no display of his wisdom. **The fool of lips** (ver. 10); one who is always exposing his folly. The literal antithesis is better shown by rendering "the solid in heart," and "the loose in lips." So Wordsworth. The Vulgate translates, "The fool is chastised by his lips;" *i.e.* the folly which he has uttered falls back upon him, and causes him to suffer punishment. The LXX. renders the last clause, "He who is given to prating (*δστεγος χείλεσι*), walking tortuously, shall be tripped up."

Ver. 9.—**He that walketh uprightly** (ch. ii. 7); Vulgate and Septuagint, "in simplicity," having nothing to conceal or to fear. So Christ enjoins his followers to be guileless as children, and harmless as doves (Matt. x. 16; Mark x. 15). **Surely**; equivalent to "securely;" *ἀμερίμνως*, Aquila, having no fear of inopportune exposure, because he has no secret sin. **He that perverteth his ways**; deals in crooked practices. **Shall be known** (ch. xii. 16). He shall be exposed and punished, and put to open shame. Having this apprehension always present, he cannot walk with confidence as the innocent does. Hence the antithesis in the text.

Ver. 10.—**He that winketh with the eye** (ch. vi. 13). This is a sign of craft, malice, and complicity with other wicked comrades. Ecclus. xxvii. 22, "He that winketh with the eyes worketh evil." **Causeth sorrow** (ch. xv. 13). He causes trouble and vexation by his cunning and secrecy. **A prating fool** (as ver. 8). The two clauses are intended to teach that the garrulous fool is even more certain to bring ruin on himself and others than the crafty plotter. The Septuagint and Syriac have changed the latter clause into a sentence supposed to be more forcibly antithetical, "He who reproveth with boldness maketh peace." But there are sentences not strictly antithetical in this chapter, *e.g.* vers. 18, 22 (comp. ch. xi. 10).

Ver. 11.—**A well of life** (ch. xiii. 14; xviii. 4). The good man utters words of wisdom, comfort, and edification. God himself is said to have "the well of life" (Ps. xxxvi. 9), and to be "the Fountain of living waters" (Jer. ii. 13); and the holy man, drawing from this supply, sheds life and health around. The second clause should be taken as in ver. 6, **but the mouth of the wicked concealeth violence**, the contrast being between the open usefulness of the good man's words and the harmful reticence of the malicious sinner. The Septuagint has, "A fountain of life is in the hand of the righteous; but destruction shall cover the mouth of the wicked." This is explained to mean that a good man's words and actions tend to spiritual health; a bad man's words bring down sorrow and punishment.

Ver. 12.—**Hatred stirreth up strife** (ch. vi. 14). **Love covereth all sins** (ch. xvii. 9). The reference is primarily to the blood-feud, the existence of which led to the establishment of the cities of refuge. Hatred keeps alive the old feeling of revenge, and seeks opportunities of satisfying it; but love puts aside, forgets and forgives all offences against itself. This sentiment comes very near the great Christian principle, "Love covereth a multitude of sins" (1 Pet. iv. 8; comp. 1 Cor. xiii. 4; Jas. v. 20). The Tal-

mud pronounces, "To love a thing makes the eye blind, the ear deaf;" and the Arab says, "Love is the companion of blindness." Septuagint, "Love (φιλία) covereth all those who love not strife."

Ver. 13.—**Wisdom is found** (comp. Ps. xxxvii. 30). The man of understanding is discreet in speech, and does not cause trouble by rash or foolish words. **A rod** (ch. xix. 29; xxvi. 3). A fool brings upon himself punishment by his insensate talk. **Void of understanding**; Hebrew, "wanting in heart;" Vulgate, *qui indiget corde*. The LXX. combines the two members into one proposition, "He who putteth forth wisdom with his lips is a rod to chastise the man without heart." In the Hebrew conception the "heart" is the seat, not only of the passions and affections, but also of the intellectual faculties.

Ver. 14.—**Lay up knowledge**; like a treasure, for use on proper occasions (ch. xii. 23; xiv. 33; comp. Matt. vii. 6; xiii. 52). **Is near destruction.** "Near" may be an adjective, equivalent to "imminent," "ever-threatening." The versions are *proximum est* and ἐγγίζει. The foolish are always uttering carelessly what may bring trouble on themselves and others.

Ver. 15.—**His strong city** (ch. xviii. 11). Wealth is a help in many ways, securing from dangers, giving time and opportunity for acquiring wisdom, making one independent and free in action (Eccles. vii. 12; Ecclus. xl. 25, etc.). **The destruction of the poor is their poverty.** The poor are crushed, exposed to all kinds of evil, moral and material, by their want of means. The word for "poor" is here *dal*, which implies weakness and inability to help one's self; the other word commonly used for "poor" is *rash*, which signifies rather "impecuniosity," opposed to "wealthy." So in the present passage the LXX. renders ἀσθενῶν, "the feeble." The poor were but lightly regarded till Christ pronounced the benediction, "Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God" (Luke vi. 20). The view of Theognis ('Parœn.,' 177) will speak the experience of many—

Καὶ γὰρ ἀνὴρ πενίῃ δεδμημένος οὔ τέ τι εἰπεῖν
Οὔθ' ἕρξαι δύναται· γλῶσσα δὲ οἱ δέδεται.

"A man, by crushing poverty subdued,
Can freely nothing either say or do—
His very tongue is tied."

Ver. 16.—**Tendeth to life** (ch. xi. 19). Honest labour brings its own reward in the blessing of God and a long and peaceful life. **The fruit of the wicked.** All the profit that the wicked make they use in the service of sin, which tends only to death (Rom. vi. 21). The due reward of honourable industry is contrasted with the gains obtained by any means, discreditable or not.

Ver. 17.—**He is in the way of life** (ch. v. 6). It is a way of life when a man keepeth instruction, taketh to heart what is taught by daily providences and the wisdom of experience. Such teachableness leads to happiness here and hereafter. **Erreth** (Jer. xlii. 20); not "causeth to err," as in the margin, which weakens the antithesis. Septuagint, "Instruction (παιδεία) guardeth the ways of life, but he who is unaffected by instruction goeth astray" (comp. Heb. xii. 7, etc.).

Ver. 18.—This verse ought to be translated, **He that hideth hatred is** [a man] **of lying lips, and he that uttereth slander is a fool.** He who cherishes hatred in the heart must be a liar and a hypocrite, speaking and acting in a way contrary to his real sentiments; if he divulges his slander, he is a stupid fool, injuring his neighbour, and procuring ill will for himself. The LXX. reads, "Just (δίκαια) lips conceal hatred;" but probably δίκαια is an error for ἄδικα or δόλια, though Ewald defends it, and would alter the Hebrew to suit it.

Ver. 19.—**There wanteth not sin**; LXX., "Thou wilt not avoid sin." Loquacity leads to exaggeration and untruthfulness, slander and uncharitableness (comp. Eccles. v. 1—3; and Christ's and James's solemn warnings, Matt. xii. 36; Jas. i. 26; iii. 2, etc.). "Speak little," says Pinart ('Meditations,' ch. vi.), "because for one sin which we may commit by keeping silence where it would be well to speak, we commit a hundred by speaking upon all occasions" (see on ch. xvii. 27). Another rendering of the passage gives "By multitude of words sin does not vanish away;" *i.e.* you cannot mend a fault by much talking. But this weakens the contrast, and the Authorized Version is correct. **Is wise.** St. James calls the reticent "a perfect man" (comp. ch. xiii. 3). "This sentence of Scripture," says St. Augustine, in his 'Retractations,' "I greatly fear, because my numerous treatises, I know well, contain many things, if not false, at any rate idle and unnecessary."

Ver. 20.—**Choice** (ch. viii. 10, 19); tested, purified by fire; πεπυρωμένος, Septuagint. **Is little worth**; mere dross, in contradistinction to choice silver. So the tongue is contrasted with the heart, out of whose abundance it speaketh (Ecclus. xxi. 26, "The heart of fools is in their mouth; but the mouth of the wise is in their heart"). Septuagint, "The heart of the godless shall fail (ἐκλείψει)."

Ver. 21.—**Feed many.** The righteous by wise counsel teach, support, and guide others (Eccles. xii. 11; Jer. iii. 15). So the clergy are the shepherds of their flocks

(John xxi. 15; Acts xx. 28; 1 Pet. v. 2). The LXX. has a different reading, "know high things." **Fools die for want of wisdom.** Far from "feeding" others, they bring ruin on themselves (ch. v. 23). Others translate, "die through one who wanteth understanding;" but if the Hebrew will bear this rendering, it is obvious that fools need no guide to their fall; their fate is a natural result. In this case the meaning must be that the foolish man involves others in destruction. But it is best to translate as the Authorized Version.

Ver. 22.—**The blessing of the Lord.** The Septuagint adds, "upon the head of the righteous," as in ver. 6. Not chance and luck, not even industry and labour, but God giveth the increase (Eccles. v. 18, 19). **He addeth no sorrow with it**; *i.e.* with the blessing. In acquiring and in using wealth thus blessed, the good man is contented and happy, while unsanctified riches bring only trouble and vexation. But this seems rather feeble, and it is better to render, "And a man's own labour addeth nothing thereto." A man's own work must not be regarded as an equal cause of prosperity with the favour of God. This sentiment is in accordance with Ps. cxxvii. 1, 2, "Except the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that build it. . . . So he giveth unto his beloved in sleep"—what others vainly labour for God giveth to the righteous without toil. The rendering of the clause, "Trouble is of no avail without it," is scarcely warranted by the wording of the text.

Ver. 23.—**As a sport.** The wicked make their pastime and amusement in doing evil. **A man of understanding hath wisdom.** As thus put, the sentence is jejune. The Revised Version expresses the meaning better: "And so is wisdom to a man of understanding;" *i.e.* the wise man finds his refreshment in living a wise and prudent life, which is as easy and as pleasant to him as mischief is to the vicious. The wisdom intended is practical religion, the fear of God directing and showing itself in daily action. Septuagint, "A fool doeth mischief in sport (ἐν γέλωτι), but wisdom produceth prudence for a man."

Ver. 24.—This verse is connected in thought with the preceding. The wicked, though he lightly carries on his evil practices, is troubled with the thought of the retribution which awaits him, and **that which he fears shall come upon him** (ch. i. 26; Job iii. 25; Isa. lxvi. 4); Septuagint, "The wicked is involved in destruction." **The desire of the righteous.** The righteous will desire only that which is in agreement with God's will, and this God grants, if not in this world, certainly in the life to come. The LXX. has, "The desire of the just is acceptable."

Ver. 25.—**As the whirlwind passeth.** According to this rendering (which has the support of the Vulgate) the idea is the speed with which, under God's vengeance, the sinner is consumed, as Isa. xvii. 13; Job xxi. 18. But it is better to translate, as the LXX., "when the whirlwind is passing," *i.e.* when the storm of judgment falls, as Christ represents the tempest beating on the ill-founded house and destroying it, while that which was built on the rock remains uninjured (comp. ch. xii. 3; Matt. vii. 24, etc.; comp. Wisd. v. 14, etc.). **Everlasting foundation** (ver. 30; Ps. xci.; cxxv. 1); like the Cyclopean stones on which Solomon's temple was built. It is natural to see here an adumbration of that Just One, the Messiah, the chief Cornerstone. The LXX. gives, "But the righteous turning aside is saved for ever."

Ver. 26.—**Vinegar** (Ruth ii. 14; Ps. lxix. 21). As sour wine sets the teeth on edge. Septuagint, "as the unripe grape is harmful to the teeth" (Ezek. xviii. 2). **Smoke.** In a country where chimneys were unknown, and the fuel was wood or some substance more unsavoury, the eyes must have often been painfully affected by the household fire. Thus *lacrimosus*, "tear-producing," is a classical epithet of smoke (see Ovid, 'Metam.,' x. 6; Hor., 'Sat.,' i. 5. 80). To these two annoyances is compared the messenger who loiters on his errand. The last clause is rendered by the LXX., "So is iniquity to those who practise it"—it brings only pain and vexation.

Ver. 27.—**The fear of the Lord prolongeth days.** The promise of long life as the reward of a religious conversation is often found in our book, where temporal retribution is set forth (see ch. iii. 2; ix. 11; xiv. 27). **Shall be shortened,** as Ps. lv. 23; Eccles. vii. 17.

Ver. 28.—**The hope of the righteous** shall be **gladness.** The patient expectation of the righteous is joyful, because it has good hope of being, and is, fulfilled. So the apostle (Rom. xii. 12) speaks, "Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation." Septuagint, "Gladness delayeth for the just." **The expectation of the wicked;** that which the wicked eagerly hope for shall come to naught (ch. xi. 7; Job viii. 13; Ps. cxii. 10).

Ver. 29.—**The way of the Lord**; *i.e.* the way in which he has commanded men to walk—the way of his commandments (Ps. xxv. 12; cxix. 27), that which the Pharisees confessed that Christ taught (Matt. xxii. 16). The Septuagint renders, "the fear of the Lord," which practically gives the meaning. Or "the Lord's way" may be his moral government of the world. **Strength;** better

*a fortress* (ver. 15). Doing his simple duty, a good man is safe; for, as St. Peter says, "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be zealous of that which is good?" (1 Pet. iii. 13). **But destruction** shall be; better, *but it* (the way of Jehovah) *is destruction*. The two effects of the Law of God are contrasted, according as it is obeyed or neglected. While it is protection to the righteous, it is condemnation and ruin to sinners (see on ch. xxi. 15). So Christ at one time calls himself "the Way" (John xiv. 6); at another says, "For judgment I am come into this world" (John ix. 39); and Simeon declares of him (Luke ii. 34), "This Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel" (comp. 2 Cor. ii. 15, etc.).

Ver. 30.—**The righteous shall never be removed** (ch. ii. 21; xii. 3, 21; Ps. x. 6; xxxvii. 29). This is in agreement with the temporal promise made to the patriarchs and often renewed, as in the fifth commandment. St. Paul says (1 Tim. iv. 8), "Godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come." **The wicked shall not inhabit** (or, *abide not in*) **the land**. The punishment of exile was threatened upon the Jews for their disobedience, and they are still suffering this retribution (Lev. xxvi. 33; Deut. iv. 27; Isa. xxii. 17). Christ gives the other aspect of God's moral government when he says (Matt. v. 5), "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

Ver. 31.—**Bringeth forth**; as a tree produces fruit, and the fields yield their increase. The metaphor is common. Thus Isaiah (lvii. 19) speaks of "the fruit of the lips" (comp. Heb. xiii. 15 and Ps. xxxvii. 30, which latter passage occurs in the same connection as the present). The Septuagint renders, "distilleth wisdom." So Cant. v. 13, "His lips are like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh." **The froward tongue** (ch. ii. 12, 14; viii. 13, which speaks only what is perverse and evil). **Shall be cut out**; like a corrupt tree that cumbers the ground (Matt. iii. 10; Luke xiii. 7). The abuse of God's great gift of speech shall be severely punished. "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. xii. 36, 37).

Ver. 32.—**Know**. A good man's lips are conversant with **what is acceptable** to God and man. Such a person considers what will please God and edify his neighbour, and speaks in conformity therewith. The LXX. has, "The lips of the righteous distil graces;" ἀποστάζει χάριτας, but probably the right verb is ἐπίσταται, which is found in some manuscripts. Speaketh **frowardness**; rather, *knoweth*, or is *perverseness* (comp. Eph. iv. 29); Septuagint, ἀποστρέφεται, or, according to the Sinaitic corrector and some other scribes, καταστρέφεται, "is turned aside," or "is overthrown." Delitzsch translates, "is mere falsehood."

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*The influence of a son over his parents' happiness.* It is impossible to estimate the tremendous influence which children have on the happiness of their parents. The unfortunate thing about it is that the children are the last to realize it. It may be that a misplaced modesty inclines them to imagine that their course in life cannot be of much consequence to any one. In many cases, unhappily, gross selfishness engenders sheer indifference to the feelings of those who have most claim upon them, so that they never give a thought to the pain they are inflicting. But behind these special points there is the universal fact that no one can understand the depth and overpowering intensity of a parent's love until he becomes a parent himself. Then, in the yearning anxiety he experiences for his own children, a man may have a revelation of the love which he had received all the days of his life without ever dreaming of its wonderful power. But surely, up to their capacity for understanding it, children should realize the great trust that is given to them. They are entrusted with the happiness of their parents. After receiving from them life, food, shelter, innumerable good things and a watchful, tender love throughout, they have it in their power to make bright the evening of their father's and mother's life, or to cloud it with a deep, dark gloom of hopeless misery.

I. THE SECRET OF THIS INFLUENCE IS IN THE MORAL CONDUCT OF THE SON OR DAUGHTER. "The wise son"—"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;" "the foolish son"—the fool in the Bible is more morally than intellectually defective. In the infancy of their children fond parents often dream of the earthly prosperity they would wish for them—a brilliant career, success in business, wealth, renown, happiness. But as life opens out more fully they come to see that these are of secondary importance. The mother whose brooding fancy prophesied a young Milton in her

wonderful boy is perhaps just a little disappointed as by slow degrees she undergoes disillusion, and sees him develop into an ordinary city clerk; but she will not confess her disappointment to herself, and it is soon swallowed up in just pride and delight if he is upright and kind and good. But if she is not mistaken about the genius of her child, but only under an error as to the moral direction that genius will take; if her Milton becomes a Byron, then, though the world rings with his fame, she—supposing her to be a true, wise mother—will be broken-hearted with grief. It is not the dulness, nor the failures, nor the troubles, nor the early death of children that bring a father's "grey hairs with sorrow to the grave." It is their sins. If these sins show direct unkindness, the grief reaches its saddest height. Then the father may well say, with poor Lear—

"How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
To have a thankless child!"

It is heart-rending for the mother to part with her infant if he dies an early death. But the grief she feels when she looks at the little grave, and thinks of her child quietly sleeping, safe with the God who called the children to himself—this grief is calm and endurable compared with the awful, crushing agony she would have experienced if the child had lived and had fallen into sin and brought shame upon his head. Parents are foolish as well as unsubmissive when they pray too positively for their children's lives. Our one great Father knows what is best. Perhaps it is safest for all that the child should be taken from the evil to come. But, of course, if he can be spared to live a life of usefulness and honour, this is most to be desired, and the parents' prayers should chiefly go out for the safe preservation of their children's *better* life.

II. THE POSSESSION OF THIS INFLUENCE SHOULD BE A STRONG INDUCEMENT TO WORTHY LIVING. It furnishes a new element in the obligations of right. The son has it in his power to make his parents happy or miserable. So great a trust involves a serious responsibility. "No man liveth unto himself." Besides his higher obligations, the son has a life in regard to his father and mother. He is not at liberty to run riot as he chooses, because he thinks his own future only is at stake. By all the terrible pain he inflicts, by the deep gladness he might have conferred, the guilt of his sin is aggravated. Should not such considerations urge strongly against yielding to temptation? If the mad young man cares little for abstract righteousness, if he has lost the fear of God, still is it nothing that every new folly is a stab in the heart of those who have done most for him and who would even now give their lives to save him? It is not unmanly to say to one's self, "For my mother's sake I will not do this vile thing." It is devilish not to be capable of such a thought. Similar considerations may help us in our highest relations. God is our Father. We may "grieve" his Spirit by sin. When the prodigal returns God rejoices in the presence of his angels. Shall we not hate the sins that made Christ mourn, and seek to do better for the sake of the love of God?

Ver. 4.—*Diligence.* Of late it has become fashionable to claim a cheap reputation for loftiness of moral aims by sneering at what are called the "smug virtues." There is a great deal about these despised virtues in the Book of Proverbs, and consequently a very low estimate is formed of that portion of Scripture. But is there not something hollow about this assumption of ethical elevation? It cannot be denied that the "smug virtues" have a real obligation. No one would venture to say that they can be dispensed with. They are simply of a comparatively inferior value. But till they are complied with it is often difficult to rise to more ethereal heights of goodness. Meanwhile that man is little short of a hypocrite who neglects the plain duties that lie at his door for the pursuit of some other more recondite graces. Diligence is one of the first of these duties, and it is requisite for various reasons. Note some of them.

I. WEALTH DEPENDS ON WORK. This is a primary law of providence. God might have fed us as he fed the ravens. But instead of putting food ready for our mouths, he gives us hands with which to work for it. Social arrangements only disguise this law. The son inherits the fruits of his father's industry. The idle man sucks the honey of other men's toil. But it remains truth that work makes wealth. Every man's wealth depends largely on the work of some one—his own or somebody else's. It

is the duty of everybody to see that he is not dependent upon other people's labours if he can help himself. The man who squanders his money in prosperous times, and throws himself on public charity directly he is ill or out of work, is guilty of gross selfishness amounting to dishonesty. It is plainly every man's duty not only to keep himself and his family, but, where it is possible, to make fit provision for the future, or he will be robbing others of their maintenance. Hence one obligation to be industrious and thrifty.

II. WORK IS FOR OUR OWN GOOD. People talk of the curse of toil, little knowing that it is one of the greatest blessings we have. Better talk of the curse of idleness. It is a happy thing that man has to earn his bread with the sweat of his brow. Work develops strength—strength of mind as well as strength of limb. The self-made man is not invariably a model of grace; but he is usually a specimen of sturdy vigour of character, as different from the limp conventionality of indolence as granite rock from drifting sea-weed.

III. WE ARE ALL STEWARDS. The servant is required to be industrious for his master's sake. His time is not his own. He is not at liberty, therefore, to lounge about in dreamy idleness. We are stewards of the things lent us by God. He has sent us to work in his vineyard. In due time he will call us to account. "To be blameless as a steward of God" a man must be faithful, honest, industrious.

IV. CHRISTIANITY INCULCATES DILIGENCE. No greater mistake can be made than to suppose that the New Testament favours indolence. The ideal of Oriental monasticism is derived from other sources. Even the monks in the West knew better. In its palmy days European monasticism was the centre of honest toil. The monks cleared forests, reclaimed bogs, built cathedrals, cultivated farms, studied, laboriously copied and preserved for us the invaluable treasures of the literature of antiquity. Amongst other fruits of grace in the Christian's heart will be increased diligence in business. Christian principle, however, is necessary to consecrate industry. Without it wealth will be a god, business an absorbing worldly influence, and success a source of low selfish pleasure. But he who is diligent on Christian principle will make his business holy by working in it as the servant of Christ, and his wealth holy by dedicating it to the use of God.

Ver. 5.—*Sleep in harvest.* I. SLEEP IN HARVEST IS FOOLISH, BECAUSE THIS IS THE TIME FOR THE HARVEST-WORK. We may afford to be slack in the winter. Through the long frosts when the ground is like iron, during heavy rains when to poach on the fields is only injurious to the crops, much work is necessarily suspended. But harvest claims all time and all energy. Every man must be at work, fresh hands taken on, and longer hours spent in the field. How preposterous to be sleeping then! There are harvest-times in life—times when we are called to awake to more than ordinary energy. Youth, though in many respects a seed-time, also has some of the characteristics of harvest. It is the summer-time when work is pleasant, and when there is little to hinder it. If a man will not work in these bright days, how can he expect to be able to labour when the cramps and agues of wintry old age seize upon him? It is also the time of a great ingathering, when knowledge must be accumulated for future use. If this harvest season is passed in idleness, it will be impossible to fill the granary of the mind with stores of knowledge in after-years. But there are other special opportunities for work. We seem to have come upon the great season of the world's harvest. "The fields are now white." India is open, China and Africa are opening up; and the call is loud for labourers to go forth and gather the precious sheaves into the garner of the Lord. If there may have been some excuse for indolence in the dark ages of tyranny and ignorance, there is none now, when communication is made easy and vast opportunities for service are afforded us.

II. SLEEP IN HARVEST IS FOOLISH, BECAUSE IT WILL RESULT IN THE LOSS OF ALL PREVIOUS LABOUR. The monotonous toil of the ploughman, the careful work of the sower, the tiresome weeding, all the labour of spring and summer, will be wasted if the harvest is to be left to rot in the fields. All this was only intended to prepare the way for the harvest. So there are times when we are called to make use of the long preparatory labours of after-years. The barrister begins to plead, the surgeon to practise, the minister to preach. If they are remiss now, their university honours will

add to the discredit of failure in real life. The training is all wasted if we neglect to put it to its final use. So the Christian labourer, the missionary, the preacher, the Sunday school teacher, should feel that all their work is to tend to the gathering in of souls for Christ. If they miss that result, the rest is of little good. Care, diligence, prayer, are most called for that the previous labour may not be "in vain in the Lord." Hence the responsibility of the teachers of elder scholars in a Sunday school. The harvest-time of the school-work falls upon them. If they are unfaithful, all the previous toil of preparing the soil in the infant school and sowing the seed in the lower classes may be thrown away.

III. SLEEP IN HARVEST IS FOOLISH, BECAUSE IT WILL BRING FAMINE IN THE WINTER. The harvest is a brief, swift period. It is soon to give place to the chill autumn, and that to the dreary winter. If the fruit is not gathered then it can never be gathered in later days. Yet it will be sadly wanted. The old year's corn will run out, and a great cry for bread will go up from a famished people. Then the folly of ultimate indolence will be felt in slow agony and death. We need all to remember that there is a winter coming. Let the strong man labour in harvest for the winter of growing infirmities in old age; let the prosperous labour in seasons of plenty, that they may have by them fat kine to be devoured in years of scarcity; let the happy make use of their opportunities, that they may be ready for the sorrows of the future. Apply the lesson to national affairs. In times of peace and plenty see that debts are paid off, grievances reformed, and all things made right and strong in preparation for possible national calamities. Apply it to commercial affairs, so that times of good trade may not lead to extravagance and luxury, but to more thrift. Apply it to spiritual things—to the church generally, that in peace and liberty sound principles may be instilled and strong Christian characters built up fit to stand the shock of persecution; to the individual, and see that we gather the bread of life now which shall make us able to withstand the barrenness of the winter of death. If we sleep in this our harvest-time, what dread awaking must we look forward to?

Ver. 7.—"*The memory of the just.*" I. THE WORLD CONCERNS ITSELF WITH THE REPUTATION OF THE DEAD. The words of our text describe a fact to which all history bears witness. No study is more absorbing than history—including biography; and the most interesting part of history is that which deals with individuals and discusses character. In spite of the protests of the philosophers, we are all more attracted by Shakespeare and Scott than by Hallam and Buckle. Statistics, generalizations, great laws and principles of national growth, all have their claims on our attention; but the characters of individual men appeal to us with a quite different human interest. Even the most commonplace gossip of the street-corner has some justification in the element of sympathy with things human that it presupposes.

II. THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN POSTHUMOUS REPUTATION IS CHARACTER. Who cares for Crœsus? But the slave Epictetus takes a high place in the world's thoughts. The reputation for wealth that brings fawning flatterers in a man's lifetime is the first to fade after death. So is that of empty titles. The present duke—say the seventh—is treated with the deference considered due to rank, but no one cares to ask in what the third duke differed from the fourth duke. Even the dazzling conqueror's renown soon tarnishes if it is not preserved by higher qualities. Few men now envy the reputation of Napoleon. Genius, perhaps, carries off amongst men the palm of fame; the first place, which is due to character, is reserved for the next world. Still, moral character counts for more in common human reputation than the cynical are ready to admit. At all events, in that inner circle where a man would most care for his reputation this takes its right place. If it is better to be loved at home than to be admired abroad, it is better to leave a fragrant memory for goodness in one's own circle than to leave sorrow in the home and to reap grand funeral honours in the outside world. It is remarkable to observe how fair is the verdict of history. A hypocrite may deceive his contemporaries. He can rarely deceive future generations.

III. IT IS OUR DUTY TO CHERISH THE MEMORY OF THE JUST. This is a duty we owe to them, to righteousness, and to succeeding ages. The honest canonization that comes from no papal authority, but from the honest conviction of admiring multitudes, is a worthy tribute to goodness. Still, let us beware of the mockery of substituting this for

our duty to the living—building splendid tombs to the prophets whom we have slain. How often have great men been slighted, misunderstood, cruelly wronged, during their lifetime; and then honoured by a chorus of repentant praise as soon as death has taken them beyond the reach of it! On the other hand, beware of indiscriminate adulation of the dead. There is wholesome truth in the words, "The name of the wicked shall rot." Nothing is more false than the common style of epitaphs. A visit to a graveyard would suggest that the world was a paradise of immaculate saints. Where you cannot justly praise, at least be decently silent. Left to itself, the name of the wicked will melt away and vanish—as all rotten things do.

IV. IT IS PROFITABLE TO CONSIDER THE LESSONS LEFT BY THE LIVES OF THE DEPARTED. We need not go the length of the early Christians, who, beginning by meeting in the catacombs where the martyrs were buried, soon came to worship the martyrs as demi-gods. But we may gain great good by contemplating the beauty of good lives. If we cherish the memory of those who have gone "to join the choir invisible," we may be helped to emulate their noble qualities.

Ver. 12.—*The cloak of charity.* One of the devices of the parallelism or rhythm of ideas, which is the general characteristic of Hebrew poetry, is the alternative treatment of the same thought from two opposite points of view—from positive and negative poles. The value of some good thing is emphasized by contrasting it with the repulsive nature of its contrary, as Venetian ladies tried to appear the more fair by having negro pages to attend them. Thus the beautiful work of love, in covering all sins, is here made most attractive by being brought out on the dark background of the ugly doings of hatred. It may be profitable, therefore, for us to glance at the more painful subject first.

I. THE DARK BACKGROUND. "Hatred stirreth up strifes." 1. *Where there is hatred strifes will be stirred up.* This hideous passion is active, powerful, and contagious. It is not content to consume itself in hidden fires; it will blaze out and spread its mischief abroad. (1) "Hatred stirreth up strifes" because it starts new quarrels; it is irritating, provoking. An incendiary will always find plenty of fuel. When the spark is struck the tinder is ready to receive it. It is not in human nature to submit tamely to insult. Though it takes two to make a quarrel, when one man shows himself offensively quarrelsome he will not be long in finding an antagonist. (2) Then "hatred stirreth up strifes" because it aggravates old quarrels. It pokes the fire. It freshens the smouldering embers and shakes them up so that they break out into a blaze again. It is the great mischief-maker, and where it finds a little rift it sets diligently to work to widen this into a great chasm. 2. *Where strifes are stirred up hatred is behind them.* The strifes are a sign of the presence of hatred. True, a benevolent man may be dragged into a quarrel; but he will not provoke it himself, and he will not maintain it a moment longer than righteousness requires. A quarrelsome disposition is at bottom grounded on hatred. For if we loved one another, how could we desire to be at variance? Tale-bearing, reporting words that one knows will only rouse ill feeling between two people, presenting things in their worst light so as to suggest offensive thoughts, exaggerating the unkindness of a person by imputing bad motives,—all such conduct is inconsistent with Christian charity; it is just the behaviour of the old serpent, who brought discord into Eden, and was "a murderer from the beginning."

II. THE BRIGHT PICTURE. "But love covereth all sins." This does not refer to one's own sins—to the fact that one who loves much is forgiven much (Luke vii. 47). It is the sins of others that love covers. 1. *Love covereth all sins against one's self.* "Love suffereth long, and is kind" (1 Cor. xiii. 4). The Christian must forgive his enemies because he is taught to love them. All forgiveness springs from love. God pardons us for nothing that we do, but for the sake of his love in Jesus Christ. But our Lord has told us plainly that unless we forgive men their trespasses against us neither will our heavenly Father forgive us our trespasses. This is therefore no question of counsels of perfection, but one of the first elements of the Christian life. If we cherish a vindictive spirit against any one, we are ourselves still unforgiven by God, still dead in trespasses and sins. If we do not prove our love by forgiving men, we do not possess it, and without love to our brethren we can have no love to God. Therefore so long as we obstinately refuse forgiveness to any one who has wronged us,

our Christianity is nothing but hypocrisy; it is a lie. 2. *Love covereth all sins in others generally*, i.e. it leads us not to note them, not to report them, not to aggravate the guilt of them, not to make mischief by tale-bearing. Further, it is not content to be negatively oblivious of sin. It must be active in throwing the cloak of charity upon it. Of course, we must be just and truthful. But these obligations leave us free in most cases to labour to prevent mischief by a charitable behaviour in our social influence. The Christian is not called to be an informer. At least Christian love will make a man a peacemaker. If he cannot hide the sin without unfaithfulness to some trust, he can endeavour to prevent the rising of evil passions. This is the grand Christian method of conquering wickedness. The law chastises by punishment; the gospel reforms by forgiveness. So Christ, the incarnation of God's love, covers all our sins, and renews our hearts through the grace of forgiveness.

Ver. 19.—*Golden silence.* I. THE SINFUL CHARACTER OF MUCH ORDINARY CONVERSATION SHOULD INDUCE GREAT CAUTION IN SPEECH. It is a grave charge to bring against the tone of general society to say that "in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin." But is it not as true now as it was in the days of Solomon? "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;" but "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," and therefore, so long as human nature is corrupt, conversation will be corrupt also. If the well is poisoned, the less water we draw from it the better. In particular two or three bad features of common conversation may be observed, viz.: 1. *Untruthfulness.* There is probably a little more conscious lying even in society that professes to follow the code of honour than its members would care to admit. But untruthfulness may appear in a more disguised form. There is the equivocation that some people practise so skilfully—blinding their own conscience while throwing dust into the eyes of other people. The tendency to exaggeration for the sake of dramatic effect is very common. The falsification by means of caricature, which is dishonest because it is not confessedly caricature, is another source of deceit. But hasty speech may fall into unconscious errors; and then, though the sin of lying is not committed, harm is done by the spread of reports that are not true. 2. *Unkindness.* How much of the gossip of the parlour is made up of the criticism of one's neighbours—at least in some circles of society! No ill feeling may be felt, but cruel injustice is done when a man's actions are discussed and his motives dissected on very insufficient evidence, in the absence of the accused, by a small coterie of persons whom he trusts as friends. But if "love covereth all sins," it is uncharitable to make even the proved offences of our neighbours the topic of idle conversation. 3. *Unholiness.* When no impure words are spoken, conversation may be more dangerously defiled by innuendo. The obscene word is disgusting in its coarseness, but the skilful *equivoque*, supposed to be more fit for ears polite, carries its poison to an unsuspecting imagination. When nothing directly immoral is suggested, how much conversation would come under the category of what our Lord calls "idle words"? Such words are very different from genuine criticisms, or even from light banter, which may not be idle, but useful as mental refreshment.

II. THE DANGEROUS INFLUENCE OF SPEECH CONFIRMS THE WISDOM OF SILENCE. 1. *Speech is remembered.* The word once out cannot be recalled. It remains to rankle in the wounded breast or to stain permanently the imagination of the hearer. What is said in the heat of passion will be remembered against us in the coolness of vindictive spite. The unseemly joke of a frivolous moment may perpetually haunt the sacred subject it tampers with. 2. *Speech is suggestive.* The utterance may be little in itself, but it starts a long train of associations. One unkindly word will suggest a whole realm of ungenerous thoughts. A single unholy phrase may bring to view a whole theatre of unclean images. The word is but a spark; yet it may kindle a great fire (Jas. iii. 5). The most hasty speech may cut deepest, like the swiftest sword-thrust.

III. IN MANY SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES SILENCE IS PECULIARLY DESIRABLE. 1. *In quarrelsome society.* When we know that our words will only fall like firebrands in a powder-magazine, the less said the better. If we cannot persuade a person to maintain friendly intercourse with us, we had better have no intercourse with him. 2. *In unsympathetic society.* It is foolish to cast pearls before swine. We must beware of the pharisaical use that pride will make of this maxim, leading us to preserve a

silence of contempt. But in all humility and charity we may refrain from speaking where we shall only be misunderstood. If our hearer cannot receive the ideas of our speech, we only waste time in giving him the words—probably we do worse, and lead him into delusions through the wrong construction that he will put on our language. 3. *In degraded society.* When to enter into conversation will only stir up the mud that lies at the bottom of the now stagnant pool, we had better be quiet. In general a few well-weighed words have more force than many hasty, thoughtless utterances. We do not all possess the gift of laconic terseness. But we can at least set a guard on our speech, and when called to speak seek Divine grace that our words may be "seasoned with salt."

Ver. 28.—*The hope of the righteous.* I. WE ALL LIVE BY HOPE. The righteous has his "hope," the wicked his "expectation;" both live in the future. The present takes its colours chiefly from our anticipations of the future. It is dark or bright according as shadows or light fall on it from that visionary world. The man who has no hope here or hereafter is practically dead. Despair is suicide. Hence the importance of seeing to our hopes. If they are ill-grounded, all life is a mistake.

II. THE LOTS OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED DIFFER LESS IN THEIR PRESENT CONDITION THAN IN THE FUTURE OF THEIR HOPES. Old Testament saints were often distressed at the sufferings of the good and the prosperity of the bad. It is when we see "their end" that we discover the just allotment. The house on the sand stands as fairly as the house on the rock—till the storm comes. "When the whirlwind passeth, the wicked is no more; but the righteous is an everlasting portion" (ver. 25). Men of very different deserts may have equally bright hopes; for hope is not founded on the verdict of justice, but on a man's own ideas, or even his idle fancies. The vigour of the hope is no guarantee of the certainty of its fulfilment.

III. THE PROVIDENTIAL JUSTICE OF GOD WILL OVERRULE THE ISSUE OF ALL HOPES. Our views of the future can only be safely depended on when they are determined by what we know of God. The future is in his hands. So, of course, is the present. But it is only in the course of a long time that the modifying influence of temporary accidents is removed and great general laws exert their full force. What will then happen we cannot tell by only investigating present phenomena, because of the confusion of transient influences. We must study the character of God. Then we shall be constrained to exclaim, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Because God is just, justice must be the ultimate outcome of all things. Through all time God is surely working on to this end. We are deceived by the tardiness of the process, yet this very tardiness is effecting the more complete final result.

"The mills of God grind slowly,
But they grind exceeding small."

IV. THE DIFFERENT NATURE OF THE HOPES OF MEN OF DIFFERENT CHARACTER LARGELY DETERMINES THE QUESTION OF THEIR FUTURE FULFILMENT. God works through means and laws. Some hopes are naturally doomed to failure, others contain seeds of immortal fruition. Now, the nature of our hopes is dependent on our character. Better than professions, words, or even deeds, as a test of character, are a man's *hopes.* Tell us what he hopes, and we can say what he is. The hope is an emanation of the very essence of the soul. Therefore bad men have bad hopes, and good men good hopes. If both seem to hope for the same thing, the hopes are still wide apart as the poles; for the same thing objectively is quite different to us according to the thoughts with which we view it. The heaven for which a wicked man hopes is very unlike the Christian's heaven. Good men hope for what is good; *i.e.* for what agrees with God's will. Thus their hope will not be disappointed. Christians have faith in "Christ in us the Hope of glory." Such an expectation presages its own satisfaction.

Ver. 31.—*Righteousness and wisdom.* These two attributes appear to belong to different spheres—the one to the moral and the other to the intellectual. Yet they are here associated as parent and child, and righteousness is seen to sprout into wisdom. Righteous men are represented as speaking wisely. Now, we know that good people have not a monopoly of intellect. Aristides the virtuous was not as clever as The-

mistocles. There are small-minded saints, and there are sinners of giant intellect. Where, then, is the connection between righteousness and wisdom?

I. RIGHTEOUSNESS STRENGTHENS THE WHOLE SOUL. It will not convert a peasant into a philosopher, but it will brighten the faculties of the peasant. While sin deadens the soul, dissipates its faculties, and lowers its powers, the calm and temperate life of a good man helps him to attain to such vigour of thought as is within the reach of his powers.

II. RIGHTEOUSNESS REMOVES THE HINDRANCE OF PREJUDICE. No doubt many good people have their prejudices. But that is in spite of their goodness, and the goodness is an antidote of more or less efficacy. The root of prejudice is self-will, and this is also the root of sin. Just in proportion as we learn the self-distrust of humility we shall be freed from the blindness of prejudice.

III. RIGHTEOUSNESS INSTILS THE LOVE OF TRUTH. The good man wishes to know truth; he acknowledges the duty of seeking light; he will not let indolence keep him in ignorance. Now, an earnest pursuit of truth is not likely to be rewarded with failure. They who seek Wisdom earnestly will find her (ch. viii. 17). Thus the rousing of a motive to strive after wisdom helps us to reach it, and this is the fruit of righteousness.

IV. RIGHTEOUSNESS OPENS THE EYES OF THE SOUL. It has a direct influence in purging the inward vision. There are truths which can only be revealed through channels of sympathy. The way of holiness lies hidden from the gaze of the corrupt. To be good is to see the best truth.

V. RIGHTEOUSNESS LEADS TO THE PRACTICAL USE OF TRUTH. Wisdom is not a merely intellectual attainment. While intimately connected with the thoughts of the mind, it also has vital relations with the resolves of the will. The wise man is not only one who knows the right way; he practises his knowledge by walking therein.

VI. RIGHTEOUSNESS IS TRUTHFUL. When a good man speaks he will not knowingly deceive. His earnest desire will be to utter just what he believes to be true. But such a desire will help him to put forth words of wisdom.

A practical result of this association of wisdom with righteousness is that we should look well to the character of our teachers. The merely popular preacher, or the merely clever thinker, will not be so useful a guide in the higher reaches of the spiritual life as the good man of less brilliant natural gifts and intellectual attainments. Thus true wisdom may be discovered where the world only expects foolishness (1 Cor. i. 20, 21).

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—We enter upon a mosaic-work of proverbs, which perhaps hardly admit of any one principle of arrangement except that of moral comparison and contrast. This governs the whole. Life is viewed as containing endless oppositions, to which light and darkness correspond in the world of sensuous perception.

*Early appearance of moral contrast.* I. THE FAMILY LIFE ELICITS CHARACTER. It is a little world, and from the first provides a sphere of *probation* and of judgment which is the miniature of the great world.

II. THE TRAINING OF THE PARENTS IS REFLECTED IN THE CHILDREN'S CONDUCT. And the conduct of the children is reflected in the parents' joy or grief. Hence the duty of wise training on the one side, loving obedience on the other; that the happy effects may be secured, the unhappy averted, in each case.

III. TO LIVE TO MAKE ONE'S PARENTS (AND OTHERS) HAPPY IS ONE OF THE BEST OF MOTIVES. To see our actions mirrored in their mirth and others' joy, what pleasure can be purer, what ambition nobler?—J.

Vers. 2—7.—*Moral contrast in earthly lot and destiny.* I. ILL-GOTTEN WEALTH AND RECTITUDE. (Ver. 2.) The former cannot avert sudden death or shame (vers. 25, 27); the latter is *vital*, and stands the man in good stead in every hour of human trial and of Divine judgment.

II. HONEST POVERTY AND PROFLIGATE GREED. (Ver. 3.) The former does not *hunger*, is contented with little, has true *satisfaction*. The latter is never satisfied,

expands with every indulgence, is like the "dire dropsy." It is an unappeasable thirst. God repudiates it by fixing it in perpetual impotency, while the temperate and chastened desires are rewarded by fulfilment.

III. THE LAX AND THE INDUSTRIOUS HAND. (Ver. 4; comp. ch. xii. 24.) The one leading to poverty, the other to riches. Languor and energy have their physical conditions; but how much lies in the will? We live in a day when it is the fashion to talk of "determinism," and to extend the doctrine of "causes over which we have no control" beyond all reasonable limits. We need to fall back on the healthy common sense of mankind, and on the doctrine of these proverbs. There *is* a moral question involved. Laziness is immoral, and receives the condemnation of immorality; industry is a virtue, and brings its own reward in every sphere. The opposition is amplified in ver. 5; *active forethought* being contrasted with *supine indifference*. The hard field labour referred to belongs particularly to young men; and to young men idleness is peculiarly corrupting.

IV. ASSOCIATIONS OF BLESSING AND THOSE OF VIOLENCE. (Ver. 6.) However the verse may be rendered and interpreted, this is the opposition. *Blessing* leads the mind through such a series of associated ideas as peace, tranquillity, order, security; *violence* through a contrasted series—trouble, disquiet, disorder, and all that implies a curse.

V. BRIGHT AND DARK RECOLLECTIONS. (Ver. 7.) The good man lives in thankful memories; the bad man's name is like an *ill odour*, according to the literal meaning of the Hebrew word. When the saying is quoted, "The ill men do lives after them, the good is oft interred with their bones," we should recall by *whom* this was said, or feigned to be said, and for what purpose. In the memory of Cæsar's ambition Antony is afraid the Romans will *forget* his services. *Momentarily* good may be forgotten, but *ultimately* must come to recognition and honour. The course of time illustrates the worth of the good, and enhances the odium of evil memories.—J.

Vers. 8—10.—*Folly and wisdom in manifold contrast.* I. THE WISE MAN IS MORE READY TO RECEIVE THAN TO GIVE COUNSEL; THE FOOL, THE OPPOSITE.

II. THE WISE MAN KNOWS THE VALUE OF RESERVE; THE FOOL WILL "STILL BE TALKING."

III. THE WISE MAN IS THRIFTY, ECONOMICAL OF WORDS, A CAPITALIST OF THOUGHT; THE FOOL, A SPENDTHRIFT OF WORDS, A BANKRUPT OF THOUGHT.

IV. THE WISE MAN RISES IN REPUTATION, IN POSITION; THE FOOL COMES SOONER OR LATER TO A "FALL."

V. GUILELESSNESS IS SAFE, WHILE CRAFT AND CROOKED POLICY ARE CERTAIN, SOONER OR LATER, OF EXPOSURE. (Ver. 9.) In that widest sense in which alone the saying is noble and true, "Honesty is the best policy." Cunning overreaches itself and gets into trouble; and the *mere talker* never ends well. Speech should only be *prophetic* of deed; otherwise, "Many will *say* to me in that day," etc.—J.

Vers. 11—14.—*A fourfold opposition.* I. SPEECH THAT QUICKENS AND SPEECH THAT KILLS. (Ver. 11.) 1. The speech of the wise and good is sound, "seasoned with salt;" that of the wicked is hollow or else poisonous. 2. The former *edifies*, builds up and strengthens the good principle in the minds of those who converse with him; the latter destroys the good, and sows evil in its stead.

II. QUARRELSOMENESS AND AMIABILITY. (Ver. 12; see on ch. vi. 14.) The former *begets* evil, *increases* that already existing, *inflames* wounds, lets nothing pass that may serve as fuel to its fire. The latter *puts an end* to much evil, *prevents the rise* of more, soothes every wound, and mitigates every mischief. The former is ever dividing, the latter reconciling. They undo one another's work; but love in the end prevails (ch. xvii. 9; 1 Cor. xiii. 4; Jas. v. 20; 1 Pet. iv. 8).

III. THE GRACE OF WISDOM AND THE DISGRACE OF FOLLY. (Ver. 13.) The pure eloquence of the good man attracts admiration and wins confidence; while the fallacies of the pretender, the spurious rhetoric of the insincere, are certain to be exposed and castigated. The life of the House of Commons, or of any great assembly, furnishes constant illustrations.

IV. PRUDENT RESERVE AND PERNICIOUS LOQUACITY. (Ver. 14.) There is a time and place for silence, the wise man knows—both for the recovery of his own thoughts,

and for the opportunity of watching others. By a bold figure of speech, it may often be that silence is the greatest eloquence. In many instances we think we have produced no effect, have not committed ourselves to the expression of opinion; on the contrary, our reserve has spoken. In all this lies a science and art of living. The fool does not see this; he is too self-absorbed to see anything that passes in others' minds, or too unsympathetic to feel; and hence blurts out things that had better have been left unsaid, hurts sensibilities, blackens reputations, causes false positions for himself and others.

1. The heart must be watched. There is no other source of pleasing, gentle manners, nor of sound behaviour in society. Reserve and unreserve of the right kind are simply the government of the tongue by charity. 2. The tongue must be watched. And regulated by good models of conversation. Never must it be forgotten how much we learn by *imitation*.—J.

Vers. 15—21.—*A sevenfold strain of experience.* For the most part these sayings relate to earthly goods—their value, and the means for their acquisition. Godliness has the promise of both lives. Equally incredible would a religion which ignored the future be with one which ignored the present. Equally one-sided is the expectation only of earthly good from wisdom, and the expectation *only* of heavenly good. We must beware of a false materializing and of a false spiritualizing of religion.

I. THE POWER OF WEALTH AND THE WEAKNESS OF POVERTY. The former like a strong city or fortress; the latter like a ruinous dwelling, which threatens at any moment to tumble about the dweller's head. The teacher is thinking, as the following verse shows, on the one hand, of wealth wisely and honourably won, which becomes a means to other wise ends; on the other hand, of blameworthy poverty, which leads in time to further vice and misery. To desire competent means for the sake of worthy objects, and to fear poverty because of its temptations, is a right and true attitude of mind.

II. THE TENDENCY OF WEALTH DEPENDS ON THE MIND OF THE POSSESSOR. (Ver. 16.) The "tendency of riches" is in itself an incomplete thought. Silver and gold have no tendency, except by a figure of speech. In the heart of man the directing force is found. Used *justly*, riches are a good; they are simply, like bodily strength, knowledge, skill, a *mass of available means*. Used wickedly, so that they simply feed our senses and our pride, or become corrupters of others' integrity, they simply increase the possessor's power and range of mischief. When we poetically speak of accursed gold, or base dross, we should be aware that these are figures, and that the curse can never rest on anything in God's creation except the will which perverts what is a means to good into a means to evil.

III. THE CAUSES OF DIRECTION AND MISDIRECTION IN LIFE. (Ver. 17.) Why do some men succeed, and others fail, in perpetual blundering and error? The particular cases may be complex; but as to the general rule there can be no question. In the one case there is *admission of faults* and *attention to the correction of them*. In the other, *blindness to faults, inattention to warnings, obstinate persistence in error*. Be not above taking a hint, especially from a foe. "Temper" is the bane of many. Any opportunity is sacrificed rather than the whim, the humour which seems to the man so thoroughly a part of himself that he cannot give it up. The habit of calm revision of one's progress and failures in the hour of prayer seems needful both to preserve from over self-confidence and from over-reliance on the advice of others.

IV. CONCEALED HATRED AND OPEN MALICE EQUALLY ODIOUS. (Ver. 18.) Resentment that one dares not, or thinks it polite not to, express makes the lips turn traitor; and the victim is both "contemned and flattered." God has placed a natural hatred of duplicity in our hearts. It was levelled as a reproach against Euripides that he had put into the mouth of one of his characters the sentiment, "My tongue did swear, my heart remain'd unsworn." Not so dangerous in many cases, but morally worse, is the deliberate slanderer, who goes about to despoil his neighbours of that which leaves them much poorer, makes him none the richer. He is a fool, because his arts recoil upon himself.

V. THE PERIL OF THE BABBLING TONGUE; THE PRUDENCE OF RESERVE. (Ver. 19.) The man may be confronted with his words. The "written letter remains," and "many

witnesses" may serve equally well to convict of the authorship of a malicious speech. It is far more easy for men to forgive abusive things said to their faces than things reported to have been said behind their backs. And even injurious acts can be got over more readily than stinging words of sarcasm. Words have a more definite shape in thought than deeds; they reveal a certain view of you which has some truth in it. You cannot forget it, which means with most you cannot forgive it. A clean-cut sarcasm, a slander which has just that *vraisemblance* about it which gives currency to gossip, stamps a certain image of the victim in the public mind. The gentler motive to prudence is the hurt we may do others; the motive consistently here is the treatment we may experience ourselves. If a person, on grounds like these, were to take a pledge of total abstinence from "personal talk" of the critical kind, his prudence must be respected. An approach to this is found in well-bred society. And how lamentable the condition of some so-called religious circles, when there is so little culture that conversation gravitates as if by necessity to the discussion of the character and doings of popular preachers, etc.!

VI. THE TONGUE AND THE HEART ARE IN IMMEDIATE CONNECTION. (Ver. 20.) Just as Napoleon said his brain and hand were in immediate connection. The analogy will serve. The "silver tongue" (no accents are silvery but those of truth) bespeaks the fine disposition, the noble heart. And what can the produce of the "worthless" heart be but "rot" upon the tongue?

VII. GOOD BREEDS GOOD, WHILE EVIL CANNOT KEEP ITSELF ALIVE. (Ver. 21.) The lips of the just *pasture* many. Good words, good preachers, good books,—these are the food of the world, and there cannot be an over-supply. Bad books and teachers may be let alone. As Dr. Johnson said of a poem, it had not enough life in it to keep it sweet (or, "not enough vitality to preserve it from corruption").—J.

Vers. 22—25.—*Life-secrets.* Lessing says of the Old Testament, as an elementary book of childlike wisdom, that "its style is now plain and simple, now poetic, full of *tautologies*, but such as exercise the penetration of the mind, while they seem now to say something fresh, yet say the same; now seem to say the same, and at bottom signify, or may signify, something different." The Proverbs are the constant illustration of the Law.

I. THE BLESSING OF JEHOVAH INDISPENSABLE; ALL TROUBLE VAIN WITHOUT IT. (Ver. 22.) We adopt the rendering, "Trouble is of no avail without it." His blessing is all in all. The thought thus yielded is a beautiful one, identical with that in Ps. cxxvii. Jehovah gives bread to his beloved while they sleep and take no "anxious thought" about it. The thought was familiar to the ancient mind, and has been wrought up in parable and fable. The counterpart is that the blessing of God is not given to the idle; that "God loves to be helped;" that "Heaven helps those who help themselves." The opposite faults are indolence and over-anxiety.

II. THE TRUE AND THE FALSE SOURCE OF CHEERFULNESS. (Ver. 23.) The fool makes mirth out of mischief. He takes delight in seeing the image of his restless and mischievous activity everywhere. The man of principle, on the contrary, draws his serene cheerfulness from faith in the Divine law of things—the sense that he is reconciled to it, and that good must ever flow from it.

III. THE FEARFUL AND THE HOPEFUL TEMPERS TRACED TO THEIR SIGNIFICANCE. (Ver. 24.) There is a timidity bred of an evil conscience—a buoyant expectation of the future bred of a good conscience. Both are *creative* in their effect on the imagination, and thus men dwell with shapes of gloom or radiant forms of fancy. Both are *prophetic*, and tend to realize themselves. This is a profound truth. For imagination in turn influences the will, and we reap the guilty fears or the pure hopes our habits sowed.

IV. THE RESULTS OF TRIAL AND TROUBLE. (Ver. 25.) The storm sweeps by and overturns the hollow and untrue; while they who are based on the righteousness of God remain unmoved (comp. Matt. vii. 24, *seqq.*). We do not know a man's principles, nor whether he has any, until the time of suffering. Theory is one thing, fact another; it is not the statement of the engineer, but the trial of winter's floods that must prove the soundness of the bridge. We have to learn the truth of life in theory first; but we do not make it our own until it is put to the test of experience. Experience throws

us back upon the truth of the theory, enriches our conception of it, and should enable us to teach it with the greater confidence to others.—J.

Ver. 26.—*The lazy man a nuisance.* I. HE IRRITATES HIS EMPLOYERS. The images of the teeth set on edge, the blinded, smarting eyes, give the thought with great force and great *naïveté*.

II. HE IS WORSE THAN USELESS. The Bible shows a great aversion from idleness, sluggishness (ch. vi. 6, *seqq.*; xii. 27; xix. 24; xxii. 13). 1. Laziness is a vice and the parent of worse. 2. The swift discharge of duty is acceptable to God and man.—J.

Vers. 27—32.—*Impression by tautology.* These verses contain mostly iterations of maxims already delivered (on ver. 27, see on ch. iii. 2; ix. 11; on ver. 28, see on ver. 24; ch. xi. 7). That religion is a protector to the man of good conscience, while overthrow awaits the ungodly, again brings out an often-expressed thought with emphasis (ver. 30; see on ver. 25; ch. iii. 21). Vers. 31, 32 again contrast the speech of the good and the wicked; the former like a sappy and fruitful tree, the latter destined to oblivion; the former appealing to the sense of beauty and grace, the latter shocking by its deformity.

I. THERE IS A SAMENESS IN GOD. He does not and cannot change. He is invariable substance, unalterable will and law.

II. THERE IS A SAMENESS IN NATURE. The heavens above us, with all their worlds, the great mountains and features of the landscape, the daily sights of sunrise and evening, form and colour. Abraham and Solomon looked upon *essentially* the same world with ourselves.

III. THERE IS A SAMENESS IN HUMAN NATURE—its passions, strength, and weakness. The same types of character appear and reappear in every age in *relatively* new forms. And it is proverbial that history repeats itself.

IV. THE ESSENTIAL RELATIONS OF MAN TO GOD MUST BE THE SAME IN EVERY AGE. Hence the teacher's deliverances must constantly recur to the same great points.

V. THAT WHICH VARIES IS THE TRIVIAL OR TRANSIENT ELEMENT; THAT WHICH DOES NOT VARY IS THE SUBLIME AND THE ETERNAL.

VI. EVERY TRUE TEACHER MAY THUS VARY THE FORM OF HIS INSTRUCTION AS MUCH AS HE WILL. Let him see to it that he works in unison with God and nature, experience, the conscience, and leaves a few great impressions firmly fixed in the mind. "Line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little."—J.

Ver. 1.—*Our joy in our children: a sermon to parents.* We may take it for granted, as commonly understood—

I. THAT THE FOUNDATION DUTY AND INTEREST, with us all, is to be in a right relation, personally, with God. Until we are right with God we must be wrong altogether. Then we must contend—

II. THAT THE QUESTION OF NEXT VITAL CONSIDERATION is the character of our children. It is conceivable that God might have placed the human world on an entirely different basis than that of the family. But he has rested it on the human home. This is that decision of our Creator which makes the greatest difference to us and to our life. How much it is to those who are parents that they *are such!* How would their life have been another and a smaller thing without that pure and sacred bond! What deep chasms of experience has it opened! what fountains of feeling has it unsealed! what secrets of life has it unlocked! What heights of joy, what depths of sorrow, has it made possible to the heart!

III. THAT THERE IS A SONSHIP WHICH GLADDENS, as there is one that grieves, the parental heart. Who is the wise son (of the text)? Not necessarily the *learned*, or the *clever*, or the *prosperous* son. A child may be any or all of these, and yet may be a grief and not a joy, a shame and not an honour, to his parents. It is he who *has learnt wisdom of God*, who has sat diligently and effectually at the feet of that great Teacher who came to be the Wisdom of God. It is he (1) who has found his home and his heritage in a Divine Father; (2) who has secured an unfailing Friend in a Divine Redeemer; (3) who has stored his mind with eternal truth and filled his soul with everlasting principles; (4) who is building up his character by the teaching, and regu-

lating his life by the will, of Jesus Christ. This is the son of whom the father will never be ashamed, who will not use the language which it would pain him to hear, nor choose the friends he would be unwilling to acknowledge, nor be guilty of the conduct it would wound him to witness. This is the son on whose character and on whose life, in all its phases and developments, he looks with profoundest gratitude and unspeakable delight.

IV. THAT THE CHARACTER OF OUR CHILDREN depends mainly on ourselves. They will: 1. Believe what we teach them. 2. Follow the example we set them. 3. Catch the spirit we manifest in their presence.—C.

Vers. 2—6.—*Four conditions of well-being.* That we may enjoy a prosperity which is truly human, we must do well and be well in three directions—in our circumstances, in our mind (our intellectual powers), and in our character. And that which tends to build up on the one hand, or to destroy on the other hand, will be found to affect us in these three spheres. The conditions of well-being as suggested by the passage are—

I. RECTITUDE. (Vers. 2, 3.) Righteousness before God is essential to all prosperity: 1. Because, if we deliberately choose the path of iniquity, we shall have to work against the arm of Omnipotence. "He casteth away the substance of the wicked" (ver. 3). 2. Because, on the contrary, if we walk in moral and spiritual integrity, we may count on the direction and even the interposition of the Divine hand. "The Lord will not suffer," etc. (ver. 3). 3. Because righteousness means virtue and prudence; it means those qualities which work for health and for security, which "relieve from death" (ver. 2). 4. Because the gains of ungodliness are never satisfactory; they profit nothing." (1) They are unattended by the joy of gratitude, and they are (often) accompanied by the miseries of self-reproach; (2) they are spoilt by the condemnation of the good and the holy; (3) they are apt to be dispersed far more freely than they are acquired; (4) they cannot and they do not satisfy the soul, though they may continue to fill the treasury,—they leave the heart empty, aching and hungering for a good which is beyond, for a blessing which is from above.

II. DILIGENCE. (Ver. 4.) 1. The inattentive and sluggish worker is constantly descending; he is on an incline, and is going downwards. All things connected with his *vocation*, or with his own *mind*, or with his moral and *spiritual condition*, are gradually but seriously suffering; decline, decay, disease, have set in and will spread from day to day, from year to year. 2. The earnest and energetic worker is continually ascending; he is moving upwards; his hand is "making rich"—it may be in material wealth, or (what is better) in useful and elevating knowledge, or (what is best) in the acquisitions of spiritual culture, in the virtues and graces of Christian character.

III. WAKEFULNESS. (Ver. 5.) This is a very important qualification; we must be ready to avail ourselves of the hour of opportunity. To gather when the corn is ripe is necessary if the toil of the husbandman is to bear its fruit; to let the crop alone when it is ready for the sickle is to waste the labour of many weeks. Readiness to reap is of as much consequence as willingness to work. The wakeful eye must be on every field of human activity, or energy and patience will be thrown away. We must covet and must cultivate mental alertness, spiritual promptitude, readiness to strike when the hour has come, or we shall miss much of "the fruit of our labour." It is the general who knows when to give the word to "charge" that wins the battle.

IV. PEACEABLENESS. (Ver. 6.) The consequences of violence shut the mouth of the wicked. He that "seeks peace and ensues it" will "see good days" (1 Pet. iii. 10, 11).—C.

Ver. 7.—"*The memory of the just.*" It is a fact that the name of the good man is fragrant, and that long after his departure there lingers in the memories and hearts of men a sense of loss, a feeling

> "Which is but akin to pain,
> And resembles sorrow only
> As the mist resembles the rain;"

a feeling of tender regret not unmingled with sacred joy and reverent gratitude. This fact is—

I. A STRENGTH TO THE JUST MAN WHILE HE LIVES. "What has posterity done for us?" asks the cynic. "The idea of posterity has done great things for us," replies the moralist. That idea and the hope to which it gives birth have done much to fortify virtue, to establish character, to enlarge and ennoble the good man's life. That thought has been fruitful of earnest work, and has helped men to gird themselves for heroic suffering. Good men have been better, noble lives have been nobler, because we care to be tenderly remembered and kindly spoken of when we are no longer among the living.

II. A COMFORT TO THOSE WHO MOURN HIM. 1. It is true that the more admirable and loving a man is, the greater is our loss when he is taken from us. 2. But it is also true that they are blessed who lose the worthiest and the best. 3. For the sorrow we feel at such loss is a very sacred thing; it comes from God himself; it can be borne with simple and pure resignation; it is unembittered with the most painful regrets; it works for the renewal and purification of our spirit and character. 4. And it is attended with a very precious mitigation; we have a pure and holy joy in the recollection of what the departed one was, what he did, how he laboured and triumphed, how many hearts he comforted, how many lives he brightened, what he was to ourselves. And these remembrances bring sunshine over the shadowed fields; they sweeten the bitter cup; they give "the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

III. AN INSPIRATION TO ALL WHO KNEW HIM. For the completion of a true and godly life *is* an inspiration. 1. It is another proof that goodness can triumph over every obstacle and persevere to the end. 2. It is an unspoken, but not inaudible summons, saying, "Follow me." 3. It is a thing of beauty as well as worth; and it attracts all who have an eye to see as well as a heart to feel. (1) Resolve that, whatever else you leave (or fail to leave) behind, you will bequeath the memory of a just man; that is the *best* legacy to leave. (2) Be drawn, as by a powerful fascination, toward the character and the destiny of the good and wise who have gone before you.—C.

Vers. 8, 10, 11, 14, 18—21, 31, 32.—*The service of speech, etc.* "Man is a talking animal," we say. But if we are distinguished from the brute creation by the mere fact of speech, how truly are we divided from one another by the use we make of that human faculty! To what height of worthiness one man may rise, and what inestimable service he may render, but to what depth of wrong another man may fall, and what mischief he may work, by the use of his tongue!

I. THE SERVICE OF SPEECH. "By our words" we may do great things, as our Master has told us, and as his apostle reminds us (see Matt. xii. 37; Jas. iii. 9). 1. We may *give deep and pure gratification* (ver. 32; and see Eccles. xii. 10). We may speak (or read) words which shall be (1) charming, soothing, comforting, encouraging, even inspiring, in the ear of man; and also (2) pleasing and satisfying to our Divine Master. 2. We may *follow in the footsteps of the Divine.* For "the mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom" (ver. 31). We may utter in the ears, and may thus convey to the minds and hearts of men, the truths which are nothing less than the wisdom of God. Thus we may be speaking to others the very thoughts and making known the will of God. We ourselves may be, on our scale and in our sphere, like the Lord whom we serve and follow, "the Wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i. 24, 30). 3. We may *enrich the life* of our fellow-men. "The tongue of the just is as choice silver" (ver. 20). And surely fine thoughts, brilliant images, sound principles, sustaining truths, elevating conceptions of God, charitable ideas of men,—these are more enlarging and enriching than many pounds of silver or many piles of gold. 4. We may *nourish the soul.* "The lips of the righteous *feed* many" (ver. 21). Their words are spiritual bread which "strengtheneth man's heart," and makes him able to watch, to work, to battle, to endure. They are the wine which gives new life when he is ready to perish (ch. xxxi. 6), which restores him in the languor of doubt and difficulty, and fills his soul with hopefulness and energy. 5. We may thus *contribute to the true and real life* of men. Our mouth will be "a fountain of life" (ver. 11, Revised Version). Whithersoever the river of Divine wisdom, of Christian truth, runneth, there will be that spiritual upspringing which is the true life of man.

II. THE MISCHIEF OF ITS ABUSE. The abuse of the power of speech, the talking which is idle and vain, is a great and sore evil. 1. It brings the speaker into contempt;

he is thought and spoken of as "a prating fool" (vers. 8, 10), and he comes under the contempt of the wise. 2. It involves men in sin. "In the multitude of words," etc. (ver. 19). The man that is ever speaking with little forethought is sure to violate truth and righteousness before many hours have passed. 3. It works mischief of many kinds (vers. 14 and 18). It is sure to end in slander, in the robbery of reputation. The mouth of the foolish is "a present destruction" (Revised Version). The habit of bad speech, especially if it be that of falsehood, or lewdness, or profanity, is a "present destruction," (1) in that it *constitutes* a real calamity; for in the sight of God there can be few things worse than such a pitiful abuse of the powers he has entrusted to us. It is also a "present destruction," (2) in that it leads with a fatal swiftness to the deterioration and corruption of those in whose hearing it is uttered.—C.

Ver. 9.—(See homily on ch. xi. 3.)—C.

Ver. 12.—*The conquest of love.* "Love covereth all sins." It does this in that—

I. IT CARRIES THE WEIGHT OF MANY SHORTCOMINGS. 1. On the one hand, many proprieties will not atone for the absence of love. We are wholly unsatisfied if one who sustains to us a very near relationship (husband, wife, son, daughter, etc.) is scrupulously correct in behaviour if love be wanting from the heart. Nothing can compensate for that. The kindness that is not prompted by affection is of a very poor order, and it does not satisfy the soul. 2. On the other hand, the presence of pure and strong affection makes many things tolerable which in themselves are hard to bear. Not that any one has a right to excuse himself for transgressions of law, of whatever kind they may be, on the ground of his tenderness of heart. It is a complete and dangerous misreading of our Lord's word (Luke vii. 47) to suppose that he meant that sins are forgiven because of the presence of much love; it is the presence of much love that is the *proof*, not the *ground*, of forgiveness (see homily *in loc.*). But it is a patent and common fact of human life that we can not only bear with one another, but can love and honour one another when love dwells in the heart and shines in the countenance and breathes and burns in the words and actions, even though there may be much faultiness and many infirmities that have to be forgiven.

II. IT IS PREPARED WITH GENEROUS INTERPRETATIONS of much misbehaviour. Where a hard, cast-iron severity sees nothing but transgression, love sees much extenuation or even complete excuse; or it goes beyond that, and sees, or believes that it sees, a worthy and not an unworthy motive. It magnifies or invents a reason which puts conduct in another light, and makes it appear pardonable, if not creditable. It has quite a different account to give of the transaction; it is that which only generous love *could* see and could supply.

III. IT HAS A LARGE FORGIVENESS FOR EVEN GREAT OFFENCES. The Divine love "abundantly pardons." It blots out the worst misdeeds and pardons the negligence and impiety of whole periods of a sinful life. The human love that is likest to the Divine can overlook very dark misdoings, and take back to its embrace those who have gone away and astray into a very "far country" of sin.

IV. IT REDEEMS AND RESTORES. When law does not avail, love will succeed in winning the erring to wiser and better ways. It can lay its hand upon the sinner with a touch that will tell and will triumph. It has a power to break the obduracy of guilt for which violence is utterly inadequate. It alone can lead the rebellious spirit into the gate of penitence and faith, and make its future life a life of obedience and wisdom. Thus in the best way, winning the noblest of all victories, it "covers sin" by conquering it, by leading the heart to the love of righteousness and the practice of purity. Where the rough winds of penalty will fail, the soft, sweet sunshine of love will succeed most excellently.—C.

Ver. 19.—(See homily on ch. xxix. 11.)—C.

Ver. 22.—*Divine enrichment.* There is no inconsistency in the teaching of the text with that of ver. 4. For God blesses us by means of our own efforts and energy; indeed, we are more truly and fully enriched of God when his blessing comes to us as the consequence of our faith and labour.

I. THE OBJECTS AT WHICH WE AIM. Those without which we are apt to consider ourselves poor. They are these: 1. *Material substance*, or (as we commonly put it to ourselves) money. 2. *Honour*. A good measure of regard, duly and clearly paid by our fellows. 3. *Power*. The holding of a position in which we are able to decide and to direct. 4. *Learning*, or unusual sagacity; that intellectual superiority which enables us to lead or to command.

II. THE CONDITION UNDER WHICH THESE MAY BE REGARDED AS THE BLESSING OF GOD. This is when we can truly say that there is "no sorrow," *i.e.* no real cause for regret that we have come to possess and to enjoy them. But when is this? 1. When they have been acquired without any reason for self-reproach—justly, purely, honourably. 2. When we have not lost as much as we have gained by their acquisition. We may lose so much in time, or in health and energy, or in wise and elevating friendship, or in the opportunity for worship and service, that the balance in the sight of heavenly wisdom may be against us. 3. When they do not become a heavy burden which we can ill bear. This they often do become. Frequently wealth becomes more of a burden than a blessing to its possessor. He would be a much lighter-hearted and less care-encumbered man if he had not so much substance to dispose of and to preserve. And so of power and influence. 4. When they do not become a snare to us, leading us into pride, or into a selfish separateness and unneighbourliness, or into a guilty self-indulgence, or into "an unenlightened and unchristian disdain of the common people," or into an overweening and fatal miscalculation of our own power and importance, or into a deadening and suicidal worldliness. These great evils may not mean present "sorrow," as we ordinarily understand that term. But they are such evils as our Divine Father sees with Divine regret; they are such as our heavenly Friend would fain deliver us from; and when riches of any kind end in them, they cannot be said to be the result of his blessing. Moreover, they all lead on and down, sooner or later, to grievous ends; those who yield to them are on their way to "pierce themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Tim. vi. 10). Hence—

III. THE PROFOUND WISDOM OF MODERATION in all human and earthly ambitions. Who shall say how much of riches he can stand? Who can tell where that point is to be found, on the other side of which is spiritual peril and ultimate "sorrow" of the worst kind? "Give me neither poverty nor riches" is the wish and the prayer of the wise and reverent.—C.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XI.

Ver. 1.—**A false balance**; literally, *balances of deceit* (ch. xx. 23). The repetition of the injunctions of Deut. xxv. 13, 14 and Lev. xix. 35, 36 points to fraud consequent on increased commercial dealings, and the necessity of moral and religious considerations to control practices which the civil authority could not adequately supervise. The standard weights and measures were deposited in the sanctuary (Exod. xxx. 13; Lev. xxvii. 25; 1 Chron. xxiii. 29), but cupidity was not to be restrained by law, and the prophets had continually to inveigh against this besetting sin (see Ezek. xlv. 10; Amos viii. 5; Micah vi. 11). Honesty and integrity are at the foundation of social duties, which the author is now teaching. Hence comes the reiteration of these warnings (ch. xvi. 11; xx. 10). **A just weight**; literally, *a perfect stone*, stones having been used as weights from early times. So we read (2 Sam. xiv. 26) that Absalom weighed his hair "by the king's stone" (*eben*).

Ver. 2.—**Then cometh shame** (ch. xvi. 18; xviii. 12); literally, *cometh pride, cometh also shame*. Pride shall have a fall; self-assertion and self-confidence shall meet with mortification and disgrace in the end. "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased" (Luke xiv. 11); "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. x. 12). Septuagint, "Where violence (ὕβρις) entereth, there also dishonour." **But with the lowly is wisdom.** "Mysteries are revealed unto the meek" (Ecclus. iii. 19, Complutensian; Ps. xxv. 9, 14). The humble are already rewarded with wisdom, because their disposition fits them to receive grace and God's gifts (comp. ch. xv. 33). Septuagint, "The mouth of the humble meditateth wisdom."

Ver. 3.—**The integrity**—the simple straightforwardness—**of the upright shall**

**guide them** in the right way, and give them success in their undertakings with the blessing of God (comp. ver. 5). Septuagint, "the perfection of the straightforward" (ch. x. 9). **The perverseness** (*seleph*); ch. xv. 4, and there only. Vulgate, *supplantatio*; Septuagint, *ὑποσκελισμός*, "the tripping up," making others fall, putting a stumbling-block in others' way. **Transgressors**; treacherous and deceitful. Such persons shall be caught in their own net (Ps. xxxv. 8); they not only bring punishment on themselves when their evil designs are discovered and frustrated, but they ruin their moral nature, lose all sense of truth and right, and are rejected of God. This clause and the following verse are omitted in the Vatican and some other manuscripts of the Septuagint.

Ver. 4.—**Profit not**; afford no refuge (ch. x. 2). **In the day of wrath** (ch. vi. 34), when God visits individuals or nations to punish them for sin (comp. Ecclus. v. 8). Such visitations are often spoken of (comp. Isa. x. 3; Ezek. vii. 19; Zeph. i. 15, 18, etc.). More especially will this be true in the great *dies iræ*. '**Righteousness . . . death** (see on ch. x. 2; and comp. Tobit iv. 10; xii. 9). The Septuagint here adds a sentence which is similar to ver. 10: "When the righteous dieth he leaveth regret, but the destruction of the wicked is easy and delightsome (*πρόχειρος καὶ ἐπίχαρτος*)."

Ver. 5.—**The perfect**; the upright and honest. Vulgate, "simple;" Septuagint, "blameless." **Shall direct**—make straight or smooth—**his way** (ch. iii. 6). The good man, not blinded by passion, follows a safe and direct path of life; but the wicked, led by his own evil propensions, and losing the light of conscience (John xi. 10), stumbles and falls. Septuagint, "Righteousness cutteth straight (*ὀρθοτομεῖ*) blameless paths, but ungodliness walketh in iniquity." Ὀρθοτομέω occurs in ch. iii. 6, and nowhere else in the Septuagint. St. Paul adopts the word in 2 Tim. ii. 15.

Ver. 6.—An emphatic reiteration of the preceding sentences. **Naughtiness**; "strong desire," as ch. x. 3, which leads to sin (ch. v. 22; Micah vii. 3). The indulgence of their passions destroys sinners. Septuagint, "Transgressors are taken by lack of counsel."

Ver. 7.—**His expectation**; that which he hoped for and set his heart upon, worldly prosperity, long life, impunity,—all are cut off, and the moral government of God is confirmed, by his death (Ps. lxxiii. 17—19). (For "the hope of the ungodly," see the forcible expressions in Wisd. v. 14.) **Of unjust men**; Vulgate, *sollicitorum*; Septuagint, *τῶν ἀσεβῶν*. The word seems to mean "vanities," *i.e.* "men of vanity"—abstract for concrete. Others translate, "godless hope," or "expectation that bringeth grief," or "strong, self-confident men;" "men in the fulness of their vigour." But the rendering of the Authorized Version is well supported, and the two clauses are co-ordinate. The Septuagint, in order to accentuate the implied antithesis, has seemingly altered the text, and introduced a thought which favours the immortality of the soul, "When a righteous man dieth, hope perisheth not; but the boast of the wicked perisheth" (Wisd. iii. 18).

Ver. 8.—**Out of trouble**; *i.e.* God is at hand to help the righteous out of straits (*de angustia*, Vulgate); or takes him away from the evil to come (Isa. lvii. 1; Wisd. iv. 10—14). Septuagint, "escapeth from the chase." **In his stead** (ch. xxi. 18). The evil from which the righteous is saved falls upon the wicked. As Abraham says to Dives in the parable, "He is comforted, but thou art tormented" (Luke xvi. 25). Of this substitution many instances occur in Scripture. Thus Haman was hanged on the gallows which he had erected for Mordecai (Esth. vii. 10); Daniel's accusers were cast into the den of lions from which he was saved (Dan. vi. 24; comp. Isa. xliii. 4).

Ver. 9.—**An hypocrite** (*chaneph*); *simulator*, Vulgate. So translated continually in Job, *e.g.* viii. 13; xiii. 16, etc. Others take it to mean "profane," "godless." Such a man, by his falsehoods, insinuations, and slanders, destroys his neighbour as far as he is able (ch. xii. 6). Septuagint, "In the mouth of the wicked is a snare for fellow-citizens." **Through knowledge.** By the knowledge which the just possess, and which they display by judicious counsel, peace and safety are secured. Septuagint, "Knowledge affords an easy path (*εὔοδος*) for the just."

Ver. 10.—**The city**; any city. Ewald would argue that such language could not be used of the capital of the Jews till the times of Asa or Jehoshaphat. But what is to prevent the sentence being taken generally of any city or community? The Vatican manuscript of the Septuagint and some others give here only the first clause, "In the prosperity of the righteous the city succeeds," adding from ver. 11, "but by the mouths of the wicked it is overthrown" (see on ver. 4; comp. Ps. lviii. 10, etc.).

Ver. 11.—This verse gives the reason of the rejoicing on the two occasions just mentioned (comp. ch. xiv. 34; xxviii. 12). **By the blessing of the upright**; *i.e.* their righteous acts, counsels, and prayers (Wisd. vi. 24). **By the mouth of the wicked.** Their impious language and evil advice bring ruin upon a city.

Ver. 12.—**He that is void of wisdom**

**despiseth his neighbour**; uses words of contempt about his neighbour. Septuagint, "sneers at his fellow-citizens." The following clause indicates that contemptuous language is chiefly intended. **Holdeth his peace.** An intelligent man is slow to condemn, makes allowance for others' difficulties, and, if he cannot approve, at least knows how to be silent. *Nam nulli tacuisse nocet, nocet esse locutum.* "Speech is silver," says the proverb, "silence is golden." Septuagint, "A man of sense keeps quiet."

Ver. 13.—**A tale-bearer.** The word implies one who goes about chattering, gossiping, and slandering (Lev. xix. 16); Vulgate, *qui ambulat fraudulenter*; Septuagint, "the man of double tongue." To such a man it is safe to trust nothing; he **revealeth secrets** (ch. xx. 19). **He that is of a faithful spirit**; a steadfast, trusty man, not a gadder about; he retains what is committed to him (Ecclus. xxvii. 16, "Whoso discovereth secrets loseth his credit, and shall never find friend to his mind"). Septuagint, "He that is faithful in spirit [*πνοῇ*, as in ch. xx. 27, where see note] concealeth matters."

Ver. 14.—**Where no counsel is.** The word properly means "steersmanship," "pilotage" (ch. i. 5; xii. 5; xxiv. 6). So Vulgate, *gubernator*; Septuagint, *κυβέρνησις*, "They who have no government fall like leaves," reading *alim* instead of *am*. **In the multitude of counsellors** (ch. xv. 22; xx. 18; xxiv. 6). This would go to prove the superiority of a popular government over the despotism of a single ruler. But the caution of our homely proverb is not inopportune, "Too many cooks spoil the broth."

Ver. 15.—**He that is surety for a stranger**; or, *for another* (see ch. vi. 1). **Shall smart for it.** "Evil shall fall on him evilly who is surety." **He that hateth suretyship**; guaranteed, as the word implies, by the striking of hands in public (ch. xvii. 18). Vulgate, "who is cautious of snares," especially of the insidious dangers that lurk in suretyship. **Is sure**; is at rest and has nothing to fear. There is no paronomasia in the Hebrew. The play on "suretyship" and "sure" in the Authorized Version is either accidental or was introduced with the idea of giving point to the sentence. The Septuagint translates differently, "A wicked man doeth evil when he mixes with the righteous; he hateth the sound of safety (*ἦχον ἀσφαλείας*)." This perhaps means that the fraudulent creditor deceives the good man who has stood security for him; and henceforward the good man cannot bear to hear immunity and safety spoken of (see note on ch. xx. 16).

Ver. 16.—**A gracious woman**; a woman full of grace. Septuagint, *εὐχάριστος*, "agreeable," "charming." The author is thinking of personal attractions, which, he says, win favour; but we may apply his expression to moral excellences also, which obtain higher recognition. **Retaineth . . . retain**; better, *obtain . . . win*, as in ch. xxix. 23. The two clauses are parallel in form, not in sense, and imply that beauty is more effective than strength, and honour is better than wealth. The Septuagint takes a narrow view: "A graceful woman bringeth glory to her husband." The last clause is rendered, "The manly (*ἀνδρεῖοι*) are supported by wealth." Between the two clauses the LXX. and the Syriac introduce the following paragraphs: "But a seat of dishonour is a woman that hateth righteousness. The indolent come to want wealth, but the manly," etc.

Ver. 17.—**The merciful man**; the kind, loving man. Septuagint, *ἀνὴρ ἐλεήμων*. **His own soul**; *i.e.* himself. His good deeds return in blessings upon himself. "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. v. 7). **Troubleth his own flesh**; brings retribution on himself. Some commentators, comparing Ecclus. xiv. 5 ("He that is evil to himself, to whom will he be good?"), translate, "He who does good to himself is a kind man to others, and he who troubles his own body will be cruel to others." The sentiment is quite untrue. Self-indulgence does not lead to regard for others; and a severe, ascetic life, while it encourages stern views of human weaknesses, does not make a man cruel and uncharitable. The Vulgate takes "his own flesh" to mean "his neighbours," as Judah calls his brother Joseph "our flesh" (Gen. xxxvii. 27). But the parallelism confirms the Authorized Version.

Ver. 18.—**A deceitful work**; work that brings no reward or profit, belying hope, like "fundus mendax" of Horace, 'Od.,' iii. 1. 30. The Septuagint has, "unrighteous works," which seems a jejune rendering, and does not bring out the contrast of the **sure reward** in the second member (comp. ch. x. 2, 16). **To him that soweth righteousness** (Hos. x. 12; Gal. vi. 8, 9). To "sow righteousness" is to act righteously, to live in such a way that the result is holiness. The "reward," in a Jew's eyes, would be a long life in which to enjoy the fruits of his good conduct. We Christians have a better hope, which is, perhaps, adumbrated by this analogy: as the seed sown in the field does not produce its fruit till the time of harvest, so righteousness meets with its full recompense only in the great harvest at the end of all things. The Revised Version renders, *The wicked earneth deceitful wages: but he that soweth righteousness hath a sure reward.* This makes a good antithesis. The Septua-

gint renders the last clause, "but the seed of the righteous is a true reward (*μισθὸς ἀληθείας*)."

Ver. 19.—This verse is not to be connected with the preceding, as in the margin of the Revised Version, "so righteousness," etc., each couplet in these chapters being independent, the connection, such as it is, being maintained by the use of catchwords, such as "righteous," "wicked," "upright," etc. **As righteousness tendeth to life.** The various uses of the first word כֵּן (*ken*) have led to different renderings. The Authorized Version takes it for "as;" the Revised Version as an adjective: *He that is steadfast in righteousness.* It is, perhaps, better, with Nowack, to regard it as an adverb: "He who is honestly, strictly, of righteousness, is to life." The meaning is plain: real, genuine righteousness hath the promise of this life and of that which is to come (1 Tim. iv. 8). The LXX., reading בֵּן (*ben*), translate, "A righteous son is born for life." **He that pursueth evil** (ch. xiii. 21); Septuagint, "the persecution of the impious," *i.e.* that which an impious man inflicts. But the Authorized Version is correct, and the clause means that he who practises evil brings ruin eventually on himself—a warning trite, but unheeded (comp. ch. i. 18).

Ver. 20.—**They that are of a froward heart** (ch. xvii. 20); Septuagint, "perverse ways." The word means "distorted from the right," "obstinate in error." **Upright in their way** (ch. ii. 21; xxix. 27; Ps. cxix. 1).

Ver. 21.—Though **hand join in hand** (ch. xvi. 5); literally, *hand to hand*, which may be taken variously. The Septuagint and some other versions take the phrase in the sense of unjust violence: "He who layeth hand upon hand unjustly;" Vulgate, *manus in manu*, "hand in hand," which is as enigmatical as the Hebrew. Some Jewish interpreters consider it an adverbial expression, signifying simply "soon." Some moderns take it to mean "sooner or later," as the Italian *da mano in mano*, or, in succession of one generation after another (Gesenius, Wordsworth). Others deem it a form of adjuration, equivalent to "I hereby attest, my hand upon it!" And this seems the most probable interpretation; assuredly the Divine justice shall be satisfied by the punishment of the wicked (comp. Ps. xxxvii.). The Authorized Version gives a very good sense: "Though hands be plighted in faith, and men may associate together in evil, the wicked shall not go unpunished" (comp. Isa. xxviii. 15). St. Gregory ('Mor. in Job,' lib. xxv.) takes a very different view: "Hand in hand the wicked shall not be innocent;" for hand is wont to be joined with hand when it rests at ease, and no laborious employment exercises it. As though he were saying, "Even when the hand rests from sinful deeds, yet the wicked, by reason of his thoughts, is not innocent" (Oxford transl.). This exposition is, of course, divorced from the context. **The seed of the righteous.** This is not "the posterity of the righteous," but is a periphrasis for "the righteous," as in Ps. xxiv. 6; cxii. 2, "the generation of the righteous" (comp. Isa. lxv. 23). The climax which some see here—as if the author intended to say, "Not only the good themselves, but their descendants also shall be delivered"—is non-existent and unnecessary. Septuagint, "But he that soweth righteousness shall receive a sure reward," which is another rendering of the second member of ver. 18. **Shall be delivered;** *i.e.* in the time of God's wrath (vers. 4, 23; ch. ii. 22).

Ver. 22.—This is the first instance of direct "similitude" in the book. **As a jewel [a ring] of gold in a swine's snout.** The greatest incongruity is thus expressed. Women in the East wore, and still sometimes wear, a ring run through the nostril, and hanging over the mouth, so that it is necessary to hold it up when taking food. Such a *nezem* Abraham's servant gave to Rebekah (Gen. xxiv. 22; comp. Isa. iii. 21; Ezek. xvi. 12). The Septuagint has *ἐνώτιον*, "an ear-ring." So is **a fair woman which is without discretion;** without taste, deprived of the faculty of saying and doing what is seemly and fitting. The external beauty of such a woman is as incongruous as a precious ring in the snout of a pig. Lesètre quotes an Arab proverb: "A woman without modesty is food without salt." Whether swine in Eastern countries were "ringed," as they are with us nowadays, is unknown; if they were thus treated, the proverb is still more vivid.

Ver. 23.—(Comp. ch. x. 28.) **The desire of the righteous is only good.** They want only what is just and honest, and therefore they obtain their wishes. **The expectation of the wicked**—that on which they set their hope and heart—**is wrath** (ch. xi. 4), is an object of God's wrath. Other commentators, ancient and modern, take the clause to imply that the wishes of evil men, animated by wrath and ill temper, are only satisfied by inflicting injuries on others. Delitzsch would translate *ebrah*, "excess," "presumption," as in ch. xxi. 24. But the first interpretation seems most suitable (comp. Rom. ii. 8, 9). The LXX., pointing differently, for "wrath" reads "shall perish."

Ver. 24.—**There is that scattereth;** that giveth liberally, as Ps. cxii. 99, "He hath dispersed, he hath given to the needy." **And yet increaseth;** becomes only the richer in wealth and more blessed by God (comp.

ch. xix. 17). Nutt quotes the old epitaph, "What we spent, we had; what we saved, we lost; what we gave, we have." Experience proves that no one ultimately loses who gives the tithe of his income to God (see on ch. xxviii. 27). There is **that withholdeth more than is meet**; *i.e.* is niggardly where he ought to be liberal. But the expression is best taken as in the margin of the Revised Version, "that withholdeth what is justly due," either as a debt or as a proper act of generosity becoming one who desires to please God and to do his duty. **But it tendeth to poverty.** That which is thus withheld is no real benefit to him, it only increases his want. Septuagint and Vulgate, "There are who, sowing what is their own, make the more; and there are who, gathering what is another's, suffer loss." Dionysius Cato, 'Distich. de Mor.,' liv. 4. 1—

"Despice divitias, si vis animo esse beatus,
Quas qui suscipiunt mendicant semper avari."

Ver. 25.—The sentiment of the preceding verse is here carried on and confirmed. **The liberal soul**; literally, *the soul of blessings*, the man that blesses others by giving liberally. **Shall be made fat** (ch. xiii. 4; xxviii. 25). The term is used of the rich and prosperous (Ps. xxii. 29). Septuagint, "Every simple soul is blessed." **He that watereth**—benefits and refreshes others—**shall be watered also himself**; shall receive the blessing which he imparts. The Vulgate introduces another idea, *Qui inebriat, ipse quoque inebriabitur*, where the verb implies rather abundance than excess, as in ch. v. 19, etc. The Septuagint departs widely from the present text: "A passionate man is not graceful" (εὐσχήμων), *i.e.* is ugly in appearance and manner—a sentiment which may be very true, but it is not clear how it found its way into the passage. St. Chrysostom comments upon it in 'Hom.' xvii. on St. John. There are some Eastern proverbs on the stewardship of the rich. When a good man gets riches, it is like fruit falling into the midst of the village. The riches of the good are like water turned into a rice-field. The good, like clouds, receive only to give away. The rivers themselves drink not their water; nor do the trees eat their own sweet fruit, and the clouds eat not the crops. The garment in which you clothe another will last longer than that in which you clothe yourself. Who gives alms sows one and reaps a thousand.

Ver. 26.—**He that withholdeth corn.** The practice reprehended is not confined to any one time or place. The avaricious have always been found ready to buy corn and other necessary articles of consumption when plentiful, and wait till there was dearth in the market or scarcity in the land, and then sell them at famine prices. Amos sternly reproves this iniquity (viii. 4, etc.). It is a sin against justice and charity, and it is said of him who is guilty of it, **the people shall curse him** (ch. xxiv. 24). Such selfishness has often given rise to tumult and bloodshed, and has been punished in a signal manner. The legend of Bishop Hatto shows the popular feeling concerning these Dardanarians, as they were called by Ulpian ('Digest. Justin.,' xlvii. 11. 6). Such a one St. Chrysostom ('Hom. in 1 Cor.,' xxxix.) calls "a common enemy of the blessings of the world, and a foe to the liberality of the Lord of the world, and a friend of mammon, or rather his slave." The Septuagint gives a curious rendering: "He who holdeth corn may he leave it for the peoples!" *i.e.* may neither he nor his heirs be benefited by his store, but may it be distributed among others far and near! **That selleth it**; literally, *that breaketh it*, as it is said of Joseph when he sold corn to the Egyptians (Gen. xli. 56; xlii. 6).

Ver. 27.—**He that diligently seeketh good**; literally, *he that seeketh in the morning*, as so often in Scripture, the phrase, "rising early," implies unimpaired powers and diligence (ch. xxvii. 14; Jer. vii. 13, etc.). **Procureth favour**; better, *seeketh favour*; by his very act of striving after what is good, he is striving to do what may please and benefit others, and thus to please God. Vulgate, "Well does he rise early who seeketh good." **It**—mischief—**shall come unto him**; the consequences of his evil life shall fall upon his head. Says an Indian proverb, "When men are ripe for slaughter, even straws turn into thunderbolts."

Ver. 28.—There are many expressions in this and the following verses which recall Ps. i. **He that trusteth in his riches shall fall** (ch. x. 2; Ps. xlix. 6, 7; lii. 7; Ecclus. v. 8). Wealth is of all things the most uncertain, and leads the heart astray from God (1 Tim. vi. 17). **As a branch**; "as a leaf" (Ps. i. 3; Isa. xxxiv. 4). The righteous grow in grace and spiritual beauty, and bring forth the fruit of good works. Septuagint, "He who layeth hold on what is righteous [or, 'helpeth the righteous'] shall spring up (ἀνατελεῖ)."

Ver. 29.—**He that troubleth his own house**; he that annoys and worries his family and household by niggardliness, bad management, and captious ill temper. So the Son of Sirach writes (Ecclus. iv. 30), "Be not as a lion in thy house, nor frantic (φαντασιοκοπῶν, 'suspicious') among thy servants." Septuagint, "he who has no friendly intercourse (ὁ μὴ συμπεριφερόμενος)

with his own house." **Shall inherit the wind**; he will be the loser in the end; no one will lend him a helping hand, and his affairs will fall to ruin. **The fool**—the man who acts thus foolishly—shall be **servant to the wise of heart**; to the man who administers his household matters in a better and more orderly manner (see on ch. xii. 24). It is implied that the troubler of his own house shall be reduced to such extremity as to have to apply for relief to the wise of heart. The other side of the question is given by the Son of Sirach: "Unto the servant that is wise shall they that are free do service" (Ecclus. x. 25). The prodigal in the parable prayed his father to make him one of his hired servants (Luke xv. 19).

Ver. 30.—**The fruit of righteousness** (*of the righteous*) **is a tree of life** (ch. iii. 18; xiii. 12); *lignum vitæ*, Vulgate. That which the righteous say and do is, as it were, a fruitful tree which delights and feeds many. A good man's example and teaching promote spiritual health and lead to immortal life. Septuagint, "From the fruit of righteousness springeth a tree of life." **And he that winneth souls is wise**; rather, *he that is wise winneth souls*. The latter member is parallel to the former. He who gives men of the tree of life attracts souls to himself, to listen to his teaching and to follow his example. With this "winning of souls" we may compare Christ's promise to the apostles that they should "catch men" (Luke v. 10; comp. Jas. v. 20). The Septuagint introduces an antithesis not found in our Hebrew text: "But the souls of transgressors are taken untimely away." Ewald and others change the present order of clauses in vers. 29 and 30, thinking thus to improve the parallelism. They would rearrange the passage in the following way: "He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind; but the fruit of the righteous is a tree of life. The foolish shall be servant to the wise of heart; but he that is wise winneth souls." There is no authority whatever in the versions or older commentators for this alteration; and the existing arrangement, as we have shown, gives a very good sense.

Ver. 31.—**The righteous shall be recompensed in the earth.** There are two ways of understanding this verse. The word rendered "recompensed," שָׁלֵם (*shalam*), is a *vox media*, and can be taken either in a good or bad sense. So the meaning will be, "The righteous meets with his reward upon earth, much more the sinner," the "reward" of the latter being, of course, punishment. But the versions lead to another interpretation, by which "recompensed" is rendered "chastised;" and the meaning is—if even the righteous shall be punished for their trespasses, as Moses, David, etc., how much more the wicked! The Septuagint, quoted exactly by St. Peter (1 Epist. iv. 18) has, "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*Just weights.* The point of this proverb is different from that of our low-toned though often useful saying, "Honesty is the best policy." Every day we are discovering more and more how profoundly true that saying is, if not in the narrow view some take of it, yet in its broad issues and in the long run. But no man will be truly honest who puts policy before honesty, and bases his morality on selfish expediency. Therefore, if we are ever to reap the personal profit promised in the English proverb, we must mould our conduct on higher principles, such as that of the Hebrew proverb, which teaches us that dishonesty in trade is hateful to God, and that justice is his delight.

I. COMMERCE IS INCLUDED IN THE RIGHTFUL DOMAIN OF RELIGION. Few men would deny the abstract proposition that commerce has its morals, though many may be very indifferent in the application of them. But it must be further seen that commerce has its religion. There is a religious way of carrying on trade, and an irreligious way of doing it. God is in the shop as well as in the church. He is as much concerned with the manner in which we buy and sell as with the style in which we pray; nay, more so, for his chief interest is with our real, daily, practical life.

II. RELIGION REQUIRES JUST WEIGHTS IN TRADE. Religion requires them. No one would dare to admit that morality did not require them. But we have now to see that religion especially demands them. This is the place where the incidence of religion on trade is to be felt. Religion carried into business does not mean praying for prosperity and then cheating our neighbours in order to secure the answer to our prayer, nor giving to missionary collections a small dole out of the profits of swindling. It means

honesty in business preserved for God's sake. He will not hear our prayers while the weights and measures are being tampered with.

III. THE RELIGIOUS REQUIREMENT OF JUST WEIGHTS IS BASED ON THE OBLIGATIONS OF TRUTH AND OF OUR DUTY TO OUR NEIGHBOURS. 1. *Truth.* God hates all lies. False balances are concrete lies. They are worse than verbal untruths; for they are deliberate and permanent. A weak man may be surprised into a hasty expression that does not accord with his convictions under the shock of a sudden temptation. But to construct and keep false balances is to deceive with full consideration of what is being done. Adulteration is a similar offence. People who construct elaborate machinery for the very purpose of adulterating articles of trade should feel that all their ingenuity aggravates their condemnation. 2. *Our duty to our neighbours.* In a Christian country surely we should have some regard for the great maxim of Christ, that we should do to others as we would that they would do unto us. The tradesman should put himself in the customer's case, the buyer in that of the seller. Brotherly kindness is the best human safeguard for integrity; but above this should be our regard for the approval of God. We please God not so much by singing hymns and offering sacrifices as by honest business. "A just weight is his delight."

Ver. 2.—*The shame of pride and the wisdom of humility.* I. THE SHAME OF PRIDE. Pride claims honour, and thinks itself secure of obtaining it. It would dread disgrace above all things, would rather starve and perish than suffer from contempt. Yet a true insight into life shows that pride is the direct precursor of shame, of the very thing it would most wish to keep off. Thus, like ambition, pride "o'erleaps itself." 1. *Pride claims too high a place.* The proud man, thinking highly of himself, thrusts himself into positions where he is unable to meet what is required of him. If he took the lower place, no one would think ill of him; he might then be respected. But he makes himself ridiculous by aiming too high. The greatest of men have found out the folly of this ambition of pride. Others besides Shakespeare's Wolsey can say—

> "I have ventured,
> Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,
> This many summers in a sea of glory;
> But far beyond my depth: my high-blown pride
> At length broke under me; and now has left me,
> Weary, and old with service, to the mercy
> Of a rude stream, that must for ever hide me."

2. *Pride refuses to receive correction.* It will not stoop to confess itself in error. Satisfied with its own condition, it will not listen to advice, nor try for any improvement. Thus it remains stationary. The flecks and flaws of character which a humble man would allow his neighbour to point out and help him to remove become stereotyped in the proud man. Thus faults which would be forgiven and forgotten if they were only transitory in the growth of character bring disgrace by becoming permanent and characteristic. 3. *Pride provokes criticism.* No man is wise in being proud until he knows he is without reproach. For the very attitude of pride challenges attacks. It offends the pride of others, and in sheer self-defence they will set to work to discover the faults which charity or a happy indifference would otherwise leave undisturbed.

II. THE WISDOM OF HUMILITY. Humility is not only right and beautiful; it is also wise. Both the Old and the New Testaments insist upon this truth. It was the mistake of Stoicism—the highest effort of secular morality—that it failed to see this. Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius—in other respects so near to the Christian ideal—are here severed from it by an impassable chasm. They were both Pharisees. The shame which pride brings, of course, suggests the wisdom of its opposite. But this wisdom has its positive recommendations. Humility, choosing lowly places, finds refuge in safe ones; admitting imperfection, confessing sin, it is ready to repent, and therefore capable of beginning a better life and of rising to perfection. Winning the hearts of men by its unassuming character, it escapes jealous criticism, and finds that faults are covered by love. Humility need not be the confession of unworthiness. Christ the Sinless One, Christ the Son of God, was the humblest and meekest of men. The

Christian is called to walk in the steps of his Master, and to seek his joy in renouncing himself. Ultimately he will find his honour in the same course. "For every one that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Ver. 13.—*The tale-bearer.* Tale-bearing may result from spite and malice, or it may be an incident of idle gossip; but even in its milder phases it is a most mischievous practice, and one deserving of severe reprobation. Connected with what are called the minor moralities of life, the evil of it is far too little recognized by many Christian people, people who undoubtedly endeavour on the whole to square their conduct with right principles. It is very important, therefore, that the character of this very common fault should be exposed.

I. WHEN CONFIDENCE HAS BEEN REPOSED, TALE-BEARING IS SHAMEFULLY DISHONOURABLE. All of us admit in the abstract that it is mean and dastardly to betray confidence. But the practice is terribly frequent with people whose character should be proof against it. Of course, no man of principle would deliberately worm a secret out of an innocent, trusting friend for the very purpose of blazing it abroad. But there are cases in which the evil is less clearly recognized. 1. *Confidence may be implied when it is not expressed.* A man need not say in so many words that he is telling us a secret, and bind us over to keep silent by solemn promises, in order to put us under an obligation not to betray his confidence. If he evidently trusts us, calls us into his counsels as an exceptional privilege of friendship, and tells us what we know he would not wish us to make public, the duty not to repeat his words is scarcely less binding. If, through being admitted into a man's house, we have discovered the skeleton in his cupboard, by accepting his hospitality, we are pledged not to reveal it. 2. *Confidence may be betrayed through carelessness.* If any one lends a jewel to a friend, he is required not only not to sell it, but not to leave it exposed to the danger of theft. Confidence is a jewel. It must be guarded. Should we through recklessness reveal what is entrusted to us, we are culpable. Two practical considerations: (1) Do not be over-anxious to learn secrets. They bring with them painful, difficult obligations. Those people who are most careless in betraying confidence are generally most eager in their curiosity to pry into the affairs of their neighbours. Both habits imply a low moral tone. (2) Be careful how you give confidence. This is not merely a maxim of prudence; it is a rule of charity, for the trust is an obligation, possibly a very arduous one. Why should you force it upon a friend, and so increase his burdens?

II. WHEN CONFIDENCE HAS NOT BEEN REPOSED, TALE-BEARING IS UNCHARITABLE. 1. *It is unkind, even if nothing damaging to character is said.* We may know many innocent things about a man which it would be highly unbecoming to make public. The modest will respect decency of soul as well as of body. The veil of mental reserve is a requirement which should distinguish the civilized man from the savage as much as the clothing of his body. One of the penalties of royalty is the exposure of private and home life in "the fierce light that beats upon a throne." Unhappily, this evil grows upon public characters; and the tendency of "society papers" to pander to idle curiosity with personal gossip about celebrities is one of the most unwholesome habits of our day. 2. *It is often injurious when no harm is meant.* The report is misunderstood, or it is unfairly judged by going forth without the lights and shades of accompanying circumstances, like a text without its context. Thus a deed appears harsh which would be condoned if the causes which led up to it were all known. Like a rolling snowball, rumour grows as it progresses through the world. The love of dramatic effect unconsciously colours the "simple, round, unvarnished tale," till the author could no longer recognize it. 3. *It is ungenerous when it is a true tale of guilt.* We are not called to tell all the evil which we know of our neighbours. Charity would hide it. It is most inhuman to take pleasure in the vivisection of character. On the other hand, we must bear in mind that it is sometimes our duty to speak out unpleasant truths, as in bearing witness to a crime from obligations of justice, and in giving a servant's character; untruthfulness in the latter case is dishonest, unjust to employers, and directly unfair to persons of good character by the depreciation of the value of truthful testimonials in the loss of confidence in all such documents.

In conclusion, see how injurious tale-bearing is to the tale-bearer. 1. It rouses retaliation. Who among us can defy the tongue of slander thus provoked? 2. It degrades

the mind. Wordsworth has described the lowering influence of narrow personal talk in contrast with conversation on topics of larger, nobler interest—

"Sweetest melodies
Are those that are by distance made more sweet.
Whose mind is but the mind of his own eyes,
He is a slave—the meanest we can meet."

Ver. 17.—*The merciful man.* It would be our duty to be merciful if we suffered thereby, and indeed we can never be truly merciful solely from motives of self-interest, since genuine mercy must spring from sympathy. Nevertheless, we sadly need all aids to righteousness—the lower as well as the higher; and therefore it may be useful for us to consider how much it makes for our own profit that we should be merciful.

I. THE MERCIFUL MAN WILL OBTAIN MERCY FROM OTHER MEN. We never know in what straits the future may find us. Proud in our independence to-day, we may be in abject need before long, or at least in circumstances which make our welfare largely dependent on others. We are so much members one of another that it is not for our own good that we should injure one another. He is in the most precarious position who has provoked enemies by his cruelty. Let him beware of the turn of the tide of fortune. The tyrant calls forth the assassin. Employers who grind down their work-people cause that very indifference to their interests of which they complain. If generosity wins friendship, surely it is a valuable grace. None love so much as they who have been forgiven much.

II. ONLY THE MERCIFUL MAN WILL OBTAIN MERCY FROM GOD. This is an absolute principle the importance of which is too little recognized. In the Old Testament God tells us that he desires "mercy, and not sacrifice" (Hos. vi. 6); *i.e.* that the practice of the former, rather than the offering of the latter, is the ground of acceptance by him. Christ signalizes mercy by giving it a place in the Beatitudes, and saying that the blessing of the merciful is that they shall obtain mercy (Matt. v. 7); calls upon us to love our enemies (Matt. v. 44); inserts in his model prayer one sole condition—that God "forgives us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors" (Matt. vi. 12); and tells us that our offerings to God must be preceded by our forgiveness of men (Matt. v. 23, 24). Therefore the cruel man troubleth his own flesh, for he excludes himself from the enjoyment of God's mercy—the one essential of his eternal welfare.

"Consider this—
That in the course of justice, none of us
Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy:
And that same prayer should teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy."

III. THE MERCIFUL MAN IS BLESSED IN THE VERY EXERCISE OF MERCY. 1. *The exercise of mercy is pleasing.* The temptation to hatred promises a devilish pleasure; but it is a delusive promise. Once the passion is indulged, it works pain in the soul. The expression of rage is no sign of pleasure. Cruelty makes a hell within, and peoples it with demons that torture the man himself even more than its victims. By a singular law of nature the exercise of mercy begins in the pain of self-sacrifice, but it soon bears fruit in inward peace and gladness. 2. *The exercise of mercy is elevating and ennobling.* Cruelty degrades the soul. Charity refines, exalts, sanctifies. The glory of God is in his mercy.

"Wilt thou draw near the nature of the gods?
Draw near them then in being merciful:
Sweet mercy is nobility's true badge."

Thus, to quote one more familiar saying of Shakespeare's, we find that mercy

"Is twice bless'd,
It blesses him that gives and him that takes."

Ver. 24.—*Meanness.* The Book of Proverbs is sometimes accused of taking too low and worldly a view of conduct, and of giving undue importance to prudential, self-regarding duties. Whatever truth there may be in these charges—and no doubt the New Testament does describe so pure and lofty an ideal of life as to leave the morals

of Solomon and his compeers in a decidedly inferior rank—gives only the greater emphasis to those maxims of broad and noble character which are so clear and imperative as to claim attention even from moralists who observe the less exalted standards of character. Thus it is very significant that, with all its inferiority to Christianity, the ethics of the Book of Proverbs unhesitatingly and repeatedly condemns all meanness, and does honour to liberal habits. Even from a selfish and comparatively worldly point of view, meanness is shown to be a miserable mistake, and generosity a wise and profitable virtue. It is evident that high Christian principles would condemn meanness. It is interesting to see that the morals of the Proverbs are equally opposed to it.

I. MEANNESS IS UNPROFITABLE BECAUSE IT IS DISPLEASING TO GOD. Let us set this consideration first, as of highest importance. Too many leave it to the last or ignore it altogether. They calculate the consequences of their actions on narrow, earthly principles; possibly they inquire what view their neighbours may take of it. But God's judgment on it they consider to be of little or no account. Yet surely, if there is a God at all, the first question should be—How far will our conduct be approved by him? If there is a providence that "shapes our ends," schemes that ignore this leave out of account the most important factor in determining the final issue of events. If God is really overruling our life, and will mete out to us curse and blessing according to his view of it, the way in which he will regard it is no mere problem of idle speculation; it is the most pressing question of practical life, more important than all other things put together. Now, God does hate selfishness, greed, and meanness, and he loves unselfishness and generosity; he will therefore punish the one and reward the other.

II. MEANNESS IS UNPROFITABLE BECAUSE IT EXCLUDES US FROM THE SYMPATHY OF OTHERS. No vice is more anti-social. Even cruelty does not seem to sever the ties of friendship more thoroughly. Regarded only from a commercial point of view, it is short-sighted. The mean customer who strikes off the odd pence in the payment of a bill does this at the cost of checking all generosity in those who deal with him. The mean employer of labour saves a little by his grinding harshness, but he loses far more by provoking his workpeople to take no interest in their work. Meanness destroys those great pleasures and comforts of life which come from the love and friendship of our neighbours.

III. MEANNESS IS UNPROFITABLE BECAUSE IT FAILS TO SACRIFICE THE PRESENT FOR THE FUTURE. The mean farmer will not sow sufficient seed, and consequently he will reap a short harvest. In business men must launch out liberally if they are to make large returns. From the lowest up to the highest concerns of life, self-sacrifice and generosity are requisite for ultimate profit. We must be willing to give up earthly wealth for the heavenly inheritance. The miser who clutches at his gold when God claims it will fail to obtain the pearl of great price.

IV. MEANNESS IS UNPROFITABLE BECAUSE IT DEGRADES AND NARROWS THE SOUL. It is a vice that destroys all noble aspirations and all lofty aims. It dwarfs the spiritual stature. It shuts out visions of the infinite. It confines thought, affection, and desire to a miserable little world of worthless interests. In groping after the small gain that meanness idolizes, we lose all power of pursuing better things. The same meanness may be carried into religion, to our soul's undoing. The pursuit of selfish salvation to the neglect of our duty to others overreaches itself. Whosoever desires to save his life, or his soul, will lose it. But in working for the good of others while forgetting our own advantage, we find our own soul most profited. "He that watereth shall be watered also himself."

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—11.—*The ways of honour and of shame.* I. JUSTICE AND INJUSTICE IN COMMON THINGS. Jehovah delights in "full weight," and abominates the tricky balance. This may be applied: 1. Literally, to commerce between man and man. 2. Figuratively, to all social relations in which we may give and receive. Work is only honest if thorough; if honest and thorough, it is religious. If principle be the basis of all our transactions, then what we do is done "unto the Lord, and not unto

men." If we are indifferent to principle in the common transactions of the week, it is impossible to be really religious in anything or on any day.

II. HAUGHTINESS AND MODESTY. Extremes meet. The former topples over into shame; the latter is lifted into the heights of wisdom. 1. No feeling was more deeply stamped on the ancient mind than this. Among the Greeks *hubris*, among the Romans *insolence*, designated an offence peculiarly hateful in the eyes of Heaven. We see it reappearing in the songs and proverbs of the gospel: "He hath brought down the mighty from their seat, and exalted them of low degree;" "Every one that humbleth himself shall be exalted; but he that exalteth himself shall be abased." 2. It is stamped upon all languages. Thus, in English, to be *high, haughty, lofty, overbearing*, are terms of censure; *lowly, humble*, terms of praise. In the German the words *uebermuth, hochmuth*, point to the same notion of *excess* and *height* in the temper. 3. At the same time, let us remember that the good temper may be counterfeited. Nothing is more easy than to suppose we have humbled ourselves by putting on a *manner*. Yet nothing is more detestable than the *assumption* of this particular manner. True humility springs from seeing ourselves *as we are*; pride, from nourishing a fanciful or ideal view of ourselves. Wisdom must begin with modesty; for a distorted or exaggerated view of self necessarily distorts our view of all that comes into relation with self.

III. RECTITUDE AND FAITHLESSNESS. (Ver. 3.) The former means *guidance*, for it is a clear light within the man's own breast; the latter, self-destruction. As scriptural examples of the one side of the contrast, may be cited Joseph and Daniel; of the other, the latter, Saul, Absalom, Abithophel, Ahab, and Ahaziah.

IV. RECTITUDE AND RICHES. (Ver. 4; see on ch. x. 2.) 1. Riches cannot purchase the grace of God, nor avert his judgments. 2. Rectitude, though not the *first cause* of salvation, is its necessary condition. To suppose that we can be saved from condemnation without being saved from sin is a gross superstition.

V. SELF-CONSERVATIVE AND SELF-DESTRUCTIVE HABITS. (Vers. 5, 6; comp. ch. iii. 6; x. 3.) Honesty and rectitude level the man's path before him; wickedness causes him to stumble and fall. Straightforwardness means deliverance out of dangers, perplexities, misconceptions; while the eager greed of the dishonest man creates distrust, embarrassment, inextricable difficulty.

> "He that hath light within his own clear breast
> May sit in the centre and enjoy bright day:
> But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts,
> Benighted walks under the midday sun;
> Himself is his own dungeon."
>
> (Milton.)

VI. HOPE AND DESPONDENCY IN DEATH. (Ver. 7.) The former seems implied. If the Old Testament says *expressly* so little about a future life, some of its sayings may be construed as allusions to and indications of it. It is little that *we* can know *definitely* of the future life. But the least we do know is that hope is inextinguishable in the good man's soul; it is its own witness, and "reaps not shame." But despondency and despair are the direct result of wicked living. To cease to hope is to cease to wish and to cease to fear. This must be the extinction of the soul in the most dreadful way in which we can conceive it.

VII. THE EXCHANGE OF PLACES FOLLOWS MORAL LAW. (Ver. 8.) The good man comes out of distress, and the evil becomes his substitute in sorrow. So with the Israelites and Pharaoh, a great typical example; so with Mordecai and Haman; with Daniel and his accusers. Great reversals of human judgments are to be expected; many that were last shall be first, and the first last.

VIII. THE SOCIAL PEST AND THE TRUE NEIGHBOUR. (Ver. 9.) The pernicious power of slander. The best people are most injured by it, as the best fruit is that which the birds have been pecking at; or, as the Tamil proverb says, "Stones are only thrown at the fruit-laden tree." The tongue of slander "out-venoms all the worms of Nile." It spares neither sex nor age, nor helplessness. It is the "foulest whelp of sin." It promotes nothing that is good, but destroys much. Knowledge, on the other hand—in the form of sound sense, wide experience—if readily imparted, is a boon

to all. And the best of boons, for gifts and charities soon lose their benefit, while a hint of wisdom lives and germinates in the mind in which it has been deposited.

IX. OBJECTS OF SYMPATHY AND ANTIPATHY. (Ver. 10.) Gladness follows the success of the good and the downfall of the evil. The popular feeling about men's lives, as manifested at critical periods of failure or success, is a moral index, and suggests moral lessons. There is a true sense in which the voice of the people is the voice of God. Compare the scene of joy which followed Hezekiah's success in the promotion of true religion (2 Chron. xxix., xxx.), and the misery under Ahaz (2 Chron. xxviii.); also the rejoicings on the completion of Nehemiah's work (Neh. viii.); and for jubilation at evil men's deaths, Pharaoh, Sisera, Athaliah (Exod. xv.; Judg. v.; 2 Kings xi. 13—20).

X. SOUND POLITICS AND PERNICIOUS COUNSELS. (Ver. 11.) The blessing, *i.e.* the beneficial principles and administration of good and wise men exalt a city (or state). On the other hand, unprincipled counsels, even if temporarily successful, lead in the end to ruin. "It is impossible," said Demosthenes, "O men of Athens, that a man who is unjust, perverse, and false should acquire a firm and established power. His policy may answer for once, may hold out for a brief period, and flourish marvellously in expectations, if it succeed; but in course of time it is found out, and rushes into ruin of its own weight. Just as the foundation of a house or the keel of a ship should be the strongest part of the structure, so does it behove that the sources and principles of public conduct should be true and just. This is not the case at the present time with the actions of Philip." Compare the examples of Elisha (2 Kings xiii. 14, etc.), Hezekiah, and Isaiah (2 Chron. xxxii. 20—23), on the one hand; and the Babel-builders (Gen. xi. 4—9) and the Ammonites (Ezek. xxv. 3, 4) on the other; also Jer. xxiii. 10; Hos. iv. 2, 3.—J.

Vers. 12—15.—*Social sins denounced.* I. THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL SIN. It dissolves mutual bonds of confidence, corrupts and disintegrates the social order and stability. In the mixed condition of human character and society there are elements of weakness and elements of strength. Our speech about others and behaviour to them tends either to bring out their weaknesses, so promoting discontent, suspicion, and distrust, or it tends to bring out their good qualities, so promoting genial confidence and good will.

II. SOME EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL SINS. Great stress, as usual, is laid upon the tongue. 1. There is *contemptuous talk* about our neighbour. The art of depreciation is cruel to others, and moreover is, as the text says, senseless. What good can come of it? Of Byron's poetry the great Goethe said, "His perpetual fault-finding and negation are injurious even to his excellent works. For not only does the discontent of the poet infect the reader, but the end of all opposition is negation; and negation is nothing. If I call bad *bad*, what do I gain? But if I call *good* bad, I do a great deal of mischief. He who will work aright must never rail, must not trouble himself at all about what is ill done, but only do well himself. For the great point is, not to pull down, but to build up; and in this humanity finds pure joy." 2. Still worse is *open slander* (ver. 13). Secret detraction is like an arrow shot in the dark, and does much secret mischief. Open slander is like the pestilence that rages at noon-day. It sweeps all before it, levelling the good and bad without distinction. A thousand fall beside it, and ten thousand on its right hand. They fall, so rent and torn in their tender parts, as sometimes never to recover the wounds or the anguish of heart which they have occasioned (Sterne). 3. *Independent counsels* (ver. 14) are another source of social mischief. As when there was no king in Israel, and when every man did that which was right in his own eyes, and the people became the prey of their enemies (Judg. ii. 19, *seq.*; xvii. 6; xxi. 25). The spiritual forces in a nation, the intelligence and honest patriotism of its rulers, are ever of more importance than wealth, fleets, or armies. 4. *Rash undertakings.* (See on ch. vi. 1, *seq.*) To promise more than there is a reasonable prospect of performing; to enter imprudently into bargains, covenants, or treaties, not easy to abide by, yet involving disgrace and dishonour if broken. The serious penalties which follow acts of imprudence should instruct us as to their real *sinfulness.* The good intention is marred by the hasty or thoughtless execution.

III. SOME SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS. 1. *Seasonable silence.* (Ver. 12.) As we are not to believe all we hear, so neither are we to speak all we know; to be cautious in believing any ill of our neighbour, and to be cautious in repeating what we do believe, are alike duties. 2. *Kindly desire.* "The honest man's ear is the sanctuary of his absent friend's name, of his present friend's secret; neither of them can miscarry in his trust" (Bishop Hall). 3. *Fulness of counsel.* (Ver. 14.) The "multitude of counsellors" implies *association*, *conference*, and *co-operation*. By the exchange of ideas we enrich, define, classify, or correct our own. The same subject needs to be looked at from opposite points of view, and by minds of different habit; and the just medium is thus arrived at. 4. *Caution.* (Ver. 15.) Especially with reference to the incurring of responsibilties. To fetter or lose our freedom of action is to deprive ourselves of the very means of doing further good. One of the acts of benefaction is to contrive that neither the doer of the kindness shall be hampered by excessive responsibility nor the recipient of it by excessive obligation. 5. As the foundation of all, *intelligence* and *love*—the inner light which fills the intellect with illumination and the heart with glowing affection. These are the sources of truth in friendship, safety in counsel, general usefulness to society.—J.

Ver. 16.—*The true grace of womanhood.* Even as the mighty keep a firm hold upon their possessions, so does the virtuous woman watch over her chastity and honour, to guard it from assault.

I. THE PURITY OF WOMAN IS HER "HIDDEN STRENGTH" (Milton). "She that has that is clad in complete steel."

II. IT IS HER CHIEF ORNAMENT. It clothes her amidst dangers with "unblenched majesty" and "noble grace."

III. IT IS ROOTED IN RELIGION, FOUNDED LIKE MANLY TRUTH IN THE FEAR OF GOD.

IV. IT IS PRECIOUS IN THE SIGHT OF GOD.

> "So dear to Heaven is saintly chastity,
> That when a soul is found sincerely so,
> A thousand liveried angels lackey her,
> Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt,
> And in clear dream and solemn vision
> Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear."
>
> (Milton.)

J.

Ver. 17.—*Religion and self-interest.* The loving man does good to himself, while the cruel afflict their own souls. As examples of the former, see Joseph in prison (Gen. xl. 6), the Kenites (1 Sam. xv. 6), David and the Egyptian slave (1 Sam. xxx. 11—20), David's conduct to Jonathan (2 Sam. ix. 7; xxi. 7), Job praying for his friends (Job xlii. 10), the centurion and the Jews (Luke vii. 2—10), the people of Melita to Paul (Acts xxviii. 1—10). For examples of the latter, see Joseph's brethren (Gen. xxxvii.; xlii. 21), Adoni-bezek (Judg. i. 6, 7), Agag (1 Sam. xv. 33), Haman (Esth. ix. 25).

I. RELIGION APPEALS TO THE WHOLE RANGE OF OUR MOTIVES, FROM THE LOWEST TO THE HIGHEST. We should cultivate the higher, but not ignore the lower.

II. TO DO GOOD TO OTHERS IS TO DO CERTAIN GOOD TO OURSELVES. We thus make friends, and they are a defence.

III. TO INJURE OTHERS IS CERTAINLY TO INJURE OURSELVES. Thus we make enemies. And "he that hath a thousand friends hath not one to spare; he that hath an enemy shall meet him everywhere."—J.

Ver. 18.—*The principle of recompense.* I. EVERY ACTION IS A SECONDARY CAUSE, AND IS FOLLOWED BY ITS CORRESPONDING EFFECT.

II. THE EFFECT CORRESPONDS IN KIND AND IN DEGREE TO THE CAUSE.

III. HUMAN CONDUCT MAY THUS BE VIEWED AS A SOWING FOLLOWED BY REAPING, WORK BY WAGES, ACTION BY REACTION.

IV. THE GAIN OF THE WICKED IS DECEPTION ILLUSORY. Illustrations: Pharaoh's

attempt to decrease Israel resulted in their increase and his own destruction. Caiaphas seeking by murderous expediency to save the nation brought about its ruin. The persecution of the Church at Jerusalem led to the greater diffusion of the gospel (Acts viii.).

V. THE REWARD OF THE RIGHTEOUS IS STABLE AND SURE. Illustrations: The patient continuance in well-doing of Noah, Abraham, Joseph. Compare the sowing of St. Paul in tears, *e.g.* at Philippi (Acts xvi.), with his joyous reaping, as his Epistle to the Philippians witnesses. The reward is *eternal*—"a crown of righteousness that fadeth not away." "What we weave in time we shall wear in eternity."—J.

Ver. 19.—*The tendencies of conduct.* I. ALL ACTIONS HAVE AN IMMEDIATE AND A REMOTE RESULT.

II. IT IS THE FINAL RESULT THAT MUST BE CONSIDERED IN ESTIMATING DIFFERENT COURSES OF CONDUCT.

III. THERE ARE TWO IDEAL TERMINI TO CONDUCT—LIFE AND DEATH. An old proverb says, "We know not who live or die." But we may know towards which issue certain habits are tending.

IV. TENACIOUS RECTITUDE IS THE WAY OF LIFE; BLIND PURSUIT OF THE OBJECTS OF PASSION, THE WAY TO DEATH.—J.

Ver. 20.—*The Divine view of the oppositions in conduct.* I. GOD VIEWS PERVERSITY WITH DISPLEASURE. Moral perversity is analogous to physical deformity; the line is crooked when it should be straight.

II. HE VIEWS RECTITUDE WITH DELIGHT. The morally right is the æsthetically beautiful. The true, the beautiful, and the good are one in God, and he can only delight in that which reflects himself. Hence his delight in the well-beloved Son, and in all who are conformed to his image.—J.

Ver. 21.—*Inevitable doom and certain escape.* I. A SOLEMN ASSEVERATION OF DOOM. The first words should be rendered, "The hand upon it!" referring to the custom of striking hands in a compact, and meaning the same as "My word for it!" Experience, the laws of nature, the assurances of God's prophets, the voice of conscience, all ratify this doom; the sinner must meet his fate, and there is no ultimate deliverance.

II. AN ASSURANCE OF SAFETY. The generation of the righteous, *i.e.* all that belong to that class, will escape from affliction, distress, condemnation, all woes that belong to time; for his refuge is in the eternal arms. If exiled from earth, it is to find a home in the bosom of God.—J.

Ver. 22.—*Beauty ill set off.* The comparison of the gold ring in the swine's snout suggests the idea of *glaring incongruity.* And the like is the incongruity between beauty and impurity in woman.

I. THE SOURCE OF OUR DELIGHT IN PHYSICAL BEAUTY IS THAT IT EXPRESSES MORAL WORTH. Philosophers have always found it impossible to define the beautiful as an object. Analysis at last results in this—that in every beautiful object we detect an *analogy* to some perception in our own minds. It is a visible presentation of spiritual beauty.

II. OUR DISPLEASURE IN THE ASSOCIATION OF PHYSICAL BEAUTY WITH MORAL WORTHLESSNESS ARISES FROM THE PRESENCE OF A CONTRADICTION. And the mind is made to love harmony.

III. THUS WE HAVE A WITNESS IN OURSELVES THAT GOD DESIGNED BEAUTY AND VIRTUE TO BE INDISSOLUBLY UNITED. As the sign and the thing signified—the body and the soul. Sin ever puts asunder what God has joined, and all vice is incongruous with the beauty of his world.—J.

Ver. 23.—*Wishes and hopes.* The wishes of the righteous are only good, for God prospers and fulfils them; but the hope of the wicked is extinguished in calamity (the wrath of God).

1. WISHES AND HOPES HAVE A CERTAIN POWER TO FULFIL THEMSELVES. (See Mozley's fine sermon on this subject.)

II. THE REGULATION OF THE WISHES IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF SELF-DISCIPLINE.
III. TO WISH AND TO HOPE FOR NOTHING BUT THE BEST (IN ACCORD WITH THE WILL OF GOD) IS AN INSURANCE AGAINST DISAPPOINTMENT.
IV. SELFISH HOPES LEAD TO UNANSWERED PRAYERS AND TO BITTER CHAGRINS.—J.

Vers. 24—26.—*The narrow and the large heart.* I. THRIFTY SPENDING. All wise outlay of money is a form of thrift. The increase of capital depends upon the observance of certain laws and rules of prudence; and the prudence which enables to amass enables also to spend. Spending in works of benevolence is seldom known to impoverish a man, for it is seldom disjoined from calculation and economy in personal habits. But whether we can trace out the manner of the connection in every instance or not, it is real and profound. Wise distribution is the condition of steady increase. In the highest point of view benevolence is a "lending to the Lord."

II. UNTHRIFTY SAVING. Niggardliness tends to poverty, because it stints the energies. It springs from a false view of the value of money, or an exaggerated view. The true source of happiness, as of wealth, lies at last in the will, its energy, its industry. He who has so little faith in this as to put all his reliance on the mere means of living, may well become poor outwardly, as he certainly is inwardly.

III. THE SATISFACTION OF DOING GOOD. Here, again, we must look to the *reflex* effect of actions. The indirect results are the wider and the more important. From every free forth-going of the heart in acts of love and kindness there is a certain return *into* the heart. It is not sufficiently considered that whatever gives *expansion* to the mind—large views, broad sympathies—is so much gain in actual power. And again, that we cannot directly do much towards the removal of our own troubles, but obliquely may quell or diminish them by aiming at removing the troubles of others. Fulness of interests in the heart will not give room for grief to gnaw.

IV. SELFISHNESS AND GENEROSITY IN COMMERCE. (Ver. 26.) In time of dearth the avaricious proprietor, keeping back his corn to secure a higher price, brings down upon himself curses; while he who thinks of humanity more than of personal profit earns the blessings of the poor. The maxim that "business is business" is true, but may be pushed too far. If a trader profits by a war or scarcity, that is an accident; but it is not an accident, it is a crime, if he votes for war or interferes with the natural action of the market with a view to personal gain. If the same conditions of trade make the man rich which impoverish the many, he will feel it to be his duty to give the more out of his abundance.—J.

Vers. 27—31.—*Temporal and eternal contrasts.* I. MEN FIND WHAT THEY SEEK. (Ver. 27.) The favour of God, which includes all the elements of happiness by well-doing, or sorrow by ill-doing. This law of antecedence and consequence in moral things, thus so reiteratedly pressed upon us, cannot be too constantly before the mind. Every moral action is a prophecy before the event; every moral result, a fulfilment of a previous prophecy.

II. THE CAUSES OF DECAY AND OF PROSPERITY. (Ver. 28.) Trust in riches leads to moral downfall (comp. ch. x. 2; Ps. xlix. 6, 7). By trust in riches is meant the habit of depending on them and their accessories—luxury and ease—as the main good in life. It is in this sense that "riches slacken virtue and abate her edge." The laxity and dissoluteness of the mind may well be compared to the limp and falling leaf. He, on the other hand, whose trust is in spiritual resources—the treasures of the kingdom of God—is like a tree full of sap; his foliage is abundant; his leaf ever green (Ps. xcii. 13; Isa. lxvi. 14).

III. THE RETRIBUTION OF GREED AND OPPRESSION. (Ver. 29.) The man who "troubles his house" is the close-fisted and greedy, who in his covetousness keeps his household upon scant fare or withholds from them their due pay (ch. xv. 27). Ahab is thus charged by Elijah as a "troubler of Israel" (1 Kings xviii. 17, 18). But he reaps the wind, *i.e. nothing* from his misplaced care and exertion (Isa. xxvi. 14; Hos. viii. 7). Nay, he so comes down in the scale as actually often to fall into slavery to a just and merciful lord (ver. 24). These reversals in human life—more marked or easily observable, perhaps, in ancient times than with ourselves—remind men of a

superior judgment, which constantly revises and corrects the short-sighted and superficial judgments of men.

IV. THE PRODUCTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. (Ver. 30.) All that the good man says and does becomes a source of blessing and life (a "tree of life") to many. He exercises an *attractive* power, and gathers many souls to his side for the service of God and the cause of truth.

V. THE CERTAINTY OF RECOMPENSE. (Ver. 31.) This may be taken as an argument from the greater to the less. The sins of the righteous do not escape chastisement; how much less those of men unreconciled to God! "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Pet. iv. 18).—J.

Ver. 1.—(See homily on ch. xvi. 11, including ch. xx. 10—23.)—C.

Ver. 2.—(See homily on ch. xvi. 18.)—C.

Vers. 3—5, 8—11, 19, 20, 28, 31.—*The pricelessness of integrity.* We have here a view of the exceeding worth of moral integrity, or of righteousness; we see what, in the judgment of the wise, it will do for its possessor. It will—

I. DIRECT HIS WAY. "The integrity of the upright shall guide them; ... the righteousness of the perfect [*i.e.* the upright] shall direct his way" (vers. 3—5). And we read (ch. x. 9) that "he that walketh uprightly walketh surely." The man who honestly and earnestly seeks guidance of God will find what he seeks; he will know what he should do, and whither he should go, and how he should act, in the various relations of life. Instead of moving onwards and backwards, instead of inclining this way and that, he will walk straight on in the highway of justice, purity, devotion. And he will walk "surely." It is not in the way of holiness that the snares of sin or the stumbling-blocks of folly are scattered about.

II. DELIVER HIM IN DANGER OR DISTRESS. (Vers. 4, 8, 9.) "Many are the afflictions" even "of the righteous," but "the Lord delivereth him," etc.; "Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness" (Ps. cxii. 4). Righteousness brings deliverance in many ways. 1. It secures the favour, and thus the merciful interposition, of the Almighty. 2. It commands the esteem, and thus the succour, of the good and true. 3. It confers mental and physical vigour on its subjects, and makes them strong for the day of peril and of need. 4. It endows with those moral qualities—conscientiousness, consciousness of rectitude, courage, patience, hopefulness, perseverance—which lead to victory.

III. MAKE HIM THE SOURCE OF ENLARGEMENT TO OTHERS. "The city is exalted" (ver. 11). Every man is something the better for the integrity of his neighbour; and the contribution of many righteous men to the exaltation and enlargement of the city, or the Church, or the society, is very great. They are the salt which preserves it; they are the fountain and the garner which supply its need and minister to its strength.

IV. PROMOTE HIS PROSPERITY. (Vers. 28, 31.) As a rule, upon the whole, the righteous man will prosper and be recompensed "on the earth." Sobriety, purity, justice, prudence; in fact, *integrity* conducts to well-being now and here.

V. SECURE FOR HIM THE GOOD PLEASURE OF THE HIGHEST. (Ver. 20.) What a recompense is this—"to be a delight unto the Lord," to "have this testimony, that he pleases God"! What a reward of the purest and most enduring kind to the Christian man, that he is "pleasing Christ," is living every day in the sunshine of his Lord's approval!

VI. ISSUES IN THE FULNESS OF LIFE. "He that is steadfast in righteousness shall attain unto life." 1. Unto the fulness of spiritual life below; nearness of access to God; a real approval by God and of delight in him; constancy of service rendered unto him; growing likeness to his Divine spirit and character. 2. Unto the fulness of eternal life hereafter.—C.

Vers. 7—10 (latter part).—*Two sad aspects of death.* Death is the most unwelcome of all themes for human thought, certainly for the thought of the wicked. Yet has he special reason for considering its approach. For it is likely to arrive sooner than if he were righteous. As we read in this chapter, "Righteousness delivereth from death"

(ver. 4); on the other hand, "The wicked shall fall by his own wickedness" (ver. 5). "The wages of sin is death," and every departure from rectitude is a step towards the grave. But how melancholy a thing is the death of the wicked! It means—

I. A MELANCHOLY EXTINCTION. Not, indeed, of the man himself, but of his work and of his hope. When the wicked dies, everything, except, indeed, the evil influences he has created and circulated, comes to a dreary end. His expectation, his hope, perishes. He can take nothing that he has toiled for into that other world which he is entering. All his laborious exertion, his elaborate contrivances, his selfish schemes, his painful humiliations, come to nothing; they are buried in the grave. He may have a powerful and well-stored mind, but he has cherished no desire, has entertained no ambition which reaches beyond the horizon of mortal life, and with the stopping of his heart-beat, every imagination of his spirit perishes; there is an untimely and utter end of all his brightest hopes. A sad and dismal outlook for a human spirit! How great and how blessed the contrast of a good man! His largest hopes are then on the point of being realized; his purest and brightest expectations are about to be fulfilled. This earth is, more or less, the scene of disappointment; but in the country whose bourne he is about to cross, he will find himself where

> "Trembling Hope shall realize
> Her full felicity."

II. A PAINFUL RELIEF. "When the wicked perish, there is shouting." 1. It is bad enough when a man's death is only felt by a very few souls. With the many opportunities we have of connecting ourselves honourably and attaching ourselves strongly to our fellows, we ought to be so much to our neighbours, that when we pass away there will be many to regret us and to speak with a kindly sorrow of our departure. Poor and fruitless must that life have been when this is not so. 2. It is seriously sad when a man's death excites no regret; when "the mourners" do not mourn; when the only thing that is real about the funereal scene is the drapery of woe. It is a pitiful thing when Christ's minister cannot pray for Divine comfort, because, though there are those who are bereaved, there is none that is afflicted. 3. It is a *most* melancholy thing when a man's death is felt to be a positive relief; when, as he is borne to the grave, those who knew him cannot help being glad that one more root of mischief is plucked up, one more source of sorrow taken away. That a *man*, created to be a light, a refuge, a blessing, a brother, a deliverer, should be put away with a feeling in every one's heart of gladness that he will be seen no more, put out of sight with the sentiment that the sooner he is forgotten the better,—this is sad indeed. What, then, is—

III. THE CONCLUSION OF THE WISE? It is this: "Let me die the death of the righteous." But the disappointing career of the author of these words (Numb. xxiii. 10; Josh. xiii. 22) should be a solemn warning and a powerful incentive to form the firm resolution to *live the life* of the righteous, lest, as in Balaam's case, death should overtake us when we are in the ranks of the enemy.—C.

Ver. 17.—*Honourable self-love; the effect of conduct on character.* Our great temptation, and therefore our great peril, is to look at all things in a selfish light; to ask ourselves, concerning each event as it unfolds itself—*How will it affect me?* This is very far indeed from the spirit of Christ; his spirit is that of unselfishness, of generous regard for the welfare of others. To bear one another's burdens is to fulfil his law and to reproduce his life. Yet is there one respect in which we certainly do well to consider ourselves. We do well to pay very particular attention to the effect of our conduct on our own character, to ask ourselves—How are these actions of mine telling on my manhood? Are they building up, or are they causing to crumble and decay? The consideration is twofold.

I. THE INJURY WE MAY DO OURSELVES, ESPECIALLY BY UNKINDNESS. "He that is cruel troubleth his own flesh." Habitual cruelty does even more harm to itself than to its victim. *That* indeed is bad enough; for it is not only the present suffering which is inflicted by it; it is the diseased sensitiveness and the abjectness of spirit; it is the loss of courage and of confidence and of hopefulness that is left behind, which is the deepest and the darkest mark of cruelty on the object of it. But worse than even this is the moral injury which cruelty does to itself. It not only (1) calls down the

strong condemnation of man, and (2) draws forth the strong rebuke and penalty of God; (3) it *indurates the soul* of the sinner. It makes him shockingly insensitive to human suffering. It may go so far as to cause him to take a savage and a diabolical delight in inflicting and in witnessing it. Thus it drags a man down to the very lowest levels. And what is true of cruelty, or of unkindness which very soon becomes cruelty, is true in other ways of other sins. All wrong-doing, falsehood, dishonesty, lasciviousness, profanity, covetousness, intemperance, makes its mark and leaves its stain upon the soul of the evil-doer; and the further he goes and the deeper he continues in sin, the deeper is the mark and the darker and broader is the stain.

II. THE BLESSING WE MAY BRING UPON OURSELVES, ESPECIALLY BY KINDNESS. "The merciful man doeth good to his own soul." Mercy may here stand for any form of kindness or of goodness of heart. It will include kindliness of manner, generosity of disposition, practical helpfulness, pity for those who suffer or are sad, patience with the erring and the froward, magnanimity under ill treatment, considerateness toward the weak and the unprivileged. All these forms of "mercy" bring a blessing to the merciful heart. They secure the appreciation and the affection of the best among men; they gain the approval and benediction of God. And they react with most valuable benignity on the heart itself. They contribute to: 1. A tenderness of spirit, a responsiveness of heart, which allies us very closely to our Divine Lord. 2. An excellency and even nobility of action which makes us "the children of our Father in heaven" (Matt. v. 45). 3. A breadth of sympathy and largeness of view which make *us ourselves* truly wise and worthy in the sight of God.—C.

Ver. 21.—*Divine providence.* "Reckonest thou this, O man, who doest such things, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" (Rom. ii. 3). No doubt men do indulge the thought that they will do wrong things with impunity; that, though others suffer, yet will they succeed in eluding justice; that they will have shrewdness enough to stop at the right point and to save themselves from the penalty of indiscretion. Sin is deceitful, and it imposes on its victims with strong and fatal delusions.

I. THE CERTAINTY THAT SIN WILL SUFFER. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished." 1. How impotent must mere numbers be against the decision and the action of the Almighty! There is a certain sense of security that men have in being a part of a large multitude. But it is a false sense. What do numbers avail against the action of the elements of nature, or against the outworking of the laws which determine the well-being and ill-being of the soul? 2. Confederacies of evil men are confessedly insecure. "Hand may join in hand;" the covetous, the dishonest, the violent, may combine; but in the heart of evil there are the seeds of unfaithfulness and treachery; and the alliance will break down in time. Sin carries in its folds the germ of its own undoing. 3. Against the continued success of sin many forces are combining. (1) All honest and true men have a direct and strong interest in deposing and dishonouring it. (2) It usually inflicts on some one man, or family, or city, an injury which calls forth an intense and invincible resentment. (3) It has within it the elements of physical and moral weakness, which are sure to be developed in time. (4) It is always open to the accusation of conscience and to consequent exposure. (5) It must move and even hasten towards utter demoralization and the loss of all that is most worth keeping. (6) It has against it the decree and the overruling action of the Holy One (Ps. xxxiv. 16; and text). Sin *never is* absolutely unpunished, even when it imagines that it is; and it never *remains* unpunished, though it may seem to have excellent chances of escape. The judgment of God will overtake it in time.

II. THE HOPE OF THE RIGHTEOUS. "The seed of the righteous shall be delivered." "The generation of the upright shall be blessed" (Ps. cxii. 2). Even if God allows a man to go on long without the proof of his Divine favour, yet will he not withhold his blessing. It will come upon the children, if not upon the upright man himself. And who is there that would not be more than willing that God should bless him through his offspring? To clothe them with honour, to satisfy them with substance, to deliver them in their time of trouble, to make them citizens of the kingdom of Christ, to employ them as ambassadors of Christ,—is not this a most ample and rich reward for all our personal fidelity? If God blesses us in our children, we are blessed indeed.—C.

Vers. 24—26.—*Expensive economy, etc.* We are accustomed to speak as if the man who spends freely is a spendthrift, and as if the man who restrains his hand is on the way to wealth. But if that is our thought, we are often and much mistaken. There is an—

I. EXPENSIVE ECONOMY. "There is that withholdeth," etc. 1. If we keep back the wage that is due to the workman, we shall miss the blessing that goes with justice, and suffer the curse which attends injustice (Jas. v. 1—4). 2. If we keep back the corn we should sow more plentifully, or the strength we should expend more liberally, or the mental power we should employ more patiently and systematically, we shall reap less bountifully, we shall make less profit, we shall do less work in the spiritual sphere. "He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly" (2 Cor. ix. 6). 3. If we shut up our thought and our care to our own heart, or even our own home, we shall lose all the harvest of love and blessing we might reap if we did not withhold ourselves from those outside our door. It is a poor economy, indeed, that hides its talent in a napkin.

II. PROFITABLE EXPENDITURE. There is a bound beyond which we should not go in putting forth our resources, physical, pecuniary, mental, spiritual. What that limit is every one must decide for himself. Regard should certainly be had to the preservation of health and to the necessity for replenishment. But we may often wisely and rightly go very much further than we do; and if we did we should find that we were liberally repaid. Our scattering would mean increase, our liberality would mean nourishment, our endeavour to enrich others would result in our own growth and ripeness; watering them, we should ourselves be watered. This is true of: 1. *Human sympathy* and love. The friendly man makes many friends; and to have true friends is to be blessed indeed. 2. *The energetic pursuit* of our vocation, whatever it may be. It is the man who throws his full energies into his work who is repaid in the end. 3. *Generous helpfulness.* Give money, time, thought, counsel, whatever you have to give, unto those who need it, unto the young, the ignorant, the baffled and beaten, the unfortunate, the slain in life's battle-field; and there shall come back to you that which will be far more valuable than anything or all that you have expended. There shall come to you (1) the smile of that Divine Saviour who gave himself for us, who, though he was rich, for our sake became poor; (2) the gratitude of those whom you serve, afterwards and yonder if not now and here; (3) spiritual enlargement,—the "soul will be made fat," the heart will expand, and Christian graces of many kinds and of much beauty will make their home there.

III. THE SUPERIOR CLAIM. (Ver. 26.) A man has a right to do the best he can for himself; the best, even, for his own purse, though that is saying something very different and *much less.* But this right may soon be traversed. It *is* so crossed when a man cannot go any further without injuring his brethren; that bars his way; obligation limits claim. In other words, the claim of our fellow-men is greater far than that of our individual self. When the people are lacking bread, we may not hold back our corn. God has given us our powers and our resources, not that we may build up a fortune, but that we may be of true service in a world which is full of need. To grow rich is not at all necessary to any one, and proves to be a curse to multitudes; to feed the hungry, to minister to want and sorrow, to still the cry of pain or perishing, to make glad the heart and bright the life,—that is the real privilege and heritage of man.—C.

Ver. 30.—*Wisdom's brightest crown and hardest task.* "He that winneth souls is wise." Wisdom does many things for us; but we shall find—

I. ITS BRIGHTEST CROWN in the souls that it wins. Wisdom wins wealth, honour, friendship, knowledge; acquaintance with men and with nature; high position and commanding rule; the gratification that attends achievement. Wisdom makes great changes in the face of nature, and effects great results in the organization of men. But the crown which it wears is its beneficent work in human souls. "He that winneth souls is wise" indeed. For to do that is: 1. To arrest a stream of evil influence, the full outflow and consequence of which it is impossible to estimate. 2. To originate a stream of holy and helpful influence, the growing and widening range of which we cannot imagine. 3. To turn back a human spirit from a course which leads downward to an opposite course which leads homeward and heavenward; it is to change the

direction of one in whom are boundless capacities of accomplishment and of endurance, and to change it permanently for the better. 4. It is to give joy of the purest kind to hearts of the greatest worth, and satisfaction to the Divine Saviour himself (see Jas. v. 19, 20). It is wisdom's brightest crown; but it is also—

II. ITS HARDEST TASK. He that winneth souls must be, or needs to be, wise indeed; for he has a very great thing to do. He has: 1. To oppose himself to he knows not what supernatural hostilities (Eph. vi. 12). 2. To do battle with human obduracy and the evil spirit of procrastination. 3. To contend with the spiritual blindness and insensibility which are the sad consequence of long disloyalty. 4. To baffle the arts of false friendship and overcome the blandishments of an evil world. 5. To silence the deceitful voices which whisper to the awakened soul that there is no need to render an immediate and whole-hearted decision; and thus to lead it to a full surrender to Christ and to his service. 6. To persuade to a life of earnest and habitual devotion and holy usefulness. The practical lessons of the text are: (1) That we cannot expend ourselves too lavishly in the great work of winning men to Jesus Christ. There is no room for extravagance here. (2) That we have need to put forth our whole strength to gain so great a victory. (3) That when we have done all we can do we must remember that nothing is accomplished without the influence which is from above.—C.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 1.—**Instruction**; correction, discipline, which shows a man his faults, gives him a lowly opinion of himself, and opens his mind to receive *knowledge*, especially the knowledge of himself and of all moral obligations. **Is brutish**; is as insensible to higher aspirations, to regret for the past or hope of amendment, as a brute beast (comp. ch. xxx. 2). On this point St. Augustine is quoted: "Quicumque corripi non vis, ex eo sane corripiendus es quia corripi non vis. Non vis enim tua tibi vitia demonstrari; non vis ut feriantur, fiatque tibi utilis dolor, quo medicum quæras; non vis tibi tu ipse ostendi, ut cum deformem te vides, reformaturum desideres, eique supplices ne in illa remaneas fœditate" ('De Corrept. et Grat.,' v.). Such conduct is unworthy of one who is possessed of an immortal soul and infinite capacity for progress and improvement.

Ver. 2.—**A good man.** The word is general, the particular virtue intended being often modified by the context. In view of the contrast in the second clause, it means here "pure," "straightforward," having a heart free from evil thoughts. As the psalm says, "Surely God is good to Israel, even to such as are pure in heart" (Ps. lxxiii. 1). **Obtaineth favour of the Lord** (ch. viii. 35); Septuagint, "Better is he who findeth favour from the Lord." **A man of wicked devices** (ch. xiv. 17); one whose thoughts are perverse and artful. **Will he**—Jehovah—**condemn**; Vulgate, "He who trusts to his imaginations doeth wickedly;" Septuagint, "A man that is a sinner shall be passed over in silence (*παρασιωπηθήσεται*)."

Ver. 3.—**A man shall not be established by wickedness.** Man is metaphorically compared to a tree, especially the olive. Wickedness gives him no firm hold for growth or life (comp. ch. x. 25). **The root of the righteous shall not be moved.** The righteous are planted in a good soil, are "rooted and grounded in love" (Eph. iii. 17), and the root being thus well placed, the tree is safe, and brings forth much fruit (comp. ver. 12; Job xiv. 7—9).

Vers. 4—12 contain proverbs concerning the management of a house and business.

Ver. 4.—**A virtuous woman**; one whose portrait is beautifully traced in ch. xxxi. The term is applied to Ruth (Ruth iii. 11). The Vulgate renders, *diligens;* Septuagint, *ἀνδρεία.* The expression means one of power either in mind or body, or both. The same idea is contained in *ἀρετὴ* and *virtus.* Such a woman is not simply loving and modest and loyal, but is **a crown to her husband**; is an honour to him, adorns and beautifies his life, making, as it were, a joyous festival. So St. Paul (1 Thess. ii. 19) calls his converts "a crown of glorying." The allusion is to the crown worn by the bridegroom at his marriage, or to the garlands worn at feasts (comp. Cant. iii. 11; Isa. lxi. 10; Wisd. ii. 8). The Son of Sirach has much praise for the virtuous woman: "Blessed is the man that hath a good (*ἀγαθῆς*) wife, for the number of his days shall be double. A virtuous (*ἀνδρεία*) woman rejoiceth her husband, and he shall fulfil the years of his life in peace" (Ecclus. xxvi. 1, 2). **She that maketh ashamed**; "that doeth shamefully" (ch. x. 5; xix. 26); one who is a terrible contrast to the woman of

strong character—weak, indolent, immodest, wasteful. Is **as rottenness in his bones** (ch. xiv. 30; Hab. iii. 16). Such a wife poisons her husband's life, deprives him of strength and vigour; though she is made "bone of his bones, and flesh of his flesh" (Gen. ii. 23), far from being a helpmate for him, she saps his very existence. Septuagint, "As a worm in a tree, so an evil woman destroyeth a man." Here again Siracides has much to say, "A wicked woman abateth the courage, maketh an heavy countenance and a wounded heart: a woman that will not comfort her husband in distress maketh weak hands and feeble knees" (Ecclus. xxv. 23). Thus runs a Spanish maxim (Kelly, 'Proverbs of All Nations')—

"Him that has a good wife no evil in life
that may not be borne can befall;
Him that has a bad wife no good thing in
life that chance to, that good you may
call."

Ver. 5.—**The thoughts of the righteous are right**; literally, *judgments*; i.e. just and fair, much more than words and actions. St. Gregory ('Mor. in Job,' lib. xxv.) takes another view, seeing in "judgments" the stings of conscience, and a rehearsal of the day of account. "The righteous," he says, "approach the secret chambers of the Judge in the recesses of their own hearts; they consider how smartly he smites at last, who long patiently bears with them. They are afraid for the sins which they remember they have committed; and they punish by their tears the faults which they know they have perpetrated. They dread the searching judgments of God, even in those sins which perchance they cannot discover in themselves. And in this secret chamber of inward judgment, constrained by the sentence of their own conduct, they chasten with penitence that which they have committed through pride" (Oxford transl.). But **the counsels of the wicked**—which they offer to others—**are deceit**. The mere "thoughts" are contrasted with the mature, expressed "counsels." Septuagint, "The wicked steer (κυβερνῶσι) deceits." (For "counsels," see notes, ch. i. 5 and xx. 18.)

Ver. 6.—**The words of the wicked are to lie in wait**—a lying in wait—**for blood** (see ch. i. 11). The wicked, by their lies, slanders, false accusations, etc., endanger men's lives, as Jezebel compassed Naboth's death by false witness (1 Kings xxi. 13). **The mouth of the upright shall deliver them**; *i.e.* the innocent whose blood the wicked seek. The good plead the cause of the oppressed, using their eloquence in their favour, as in the Apocryphal Story of Susannah, Daniel saved the accused woman from the slanders of the elders.

Ver. 7.—**The wicked are overthrown, and are not**; or, *overthrow the wicked, and they shall be no more*. The verb is in the infinitive, and may be rendered either way; but the notion is scarcely of an overthrow. The Vulgate has, *verte impios;* i.e. change them a little from their previous state, let them suffer a blow from any cause or of any degree, and they succumb, they have no power of resistance. What the stroke is, or whence it comes, is not expressed; it may be the just judgment of God—temptation, trouble, sickness—but whatever it is, they cannot withstand it as the righteous do (see ch. xi. 7). Some commentators see in the phrase the idea of suddenness, "While they turn themselves round, they are no more" (ch. x. 25; Job xx. 5). Septuagint, "Wheresoever the wicked turn, he is destroyed." **The house of the righteous**, being founded on a secure foundation, **shall stand** (Matt. vii. 24, etc.).

Ver. 8.—**According to his wisdom**. A man who gives practical proof of wisdom by life and character, whose words and actions show that he is actuated by high views, is praised and acknowledged by all (see on ch. xxvii. 21). Thus we read of David, that he behaved himself wisely, "and he was acceptable in the sight of all the people" (1 Sam. xviii. 5). The Septuagint, taking *lephi* differently, renders, "The mouth of the prudent is commended by men." **He that is of a perverse heart**; Vulgate, "a vain and senseless man;" Septuagint, "one slow of heart (νωθρομάρδιος)." One who takes distorted views of things, judges unfairly, has no sympathy for others, **shall be despised**.

Ver. 9.—This verse may be translated, *Better is a man who is lightly esteemed and hath a slave, than he that boasts himself and lacketh bread;* i.e. the man who is thought little of by his fellows, and is lowly in his own eyes, if he have a slave to minister to his wants (which all Orientals of even moderate wealth possess), is better off than one who boasts of his rank and family, and is all the while on the verge of starvation. "Respectful mediocrity is better than boastful poverty." Ecclus. x. 27, "Better is he that laboureth and aboundeth in all things, than he that boasteth himself, and wanteth bread." But the words rendered, **hath a slave**, are literally, *a servant to himself*. So the Vulgate has, *sufficiens sibi*, "sufficing himself," and the Septuagint, δουλεύων ἑαυτῷ, "serving himself." And the expression implies attending to his own concerns, supplying his own wants. Hence the gnome means, "It is wiser to look after one's own business and provide for one's own necessi-

ties, even if thereby he meets with contempt and detraction, than to be in real want, and all the time assuming the airs of a rich and prosperous man." This latter explanation seems most suitable, as it is not at all clear that, at the time the book was written, the Israelites of moderate fortune kept slaves, and the proverb would lose its force if they did not do so. Says a mediæval jingle—

"Nobilitas morum plus ornat quam genitorum."

Ver. 10.—**A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast.** For "regardeth," the Hebrew word is literally "knoweth" (Exod. xxiii. 9); he knows what animals want, what they can bear, and treats them accordingly (comp. ch. xxvii. 23). The LXX. translates "pitieth." The care for the lower animals, and their kind treatment, are not the produce of modern sentiment and civilization. Mosaic legislation and various expressions in Scripture recognize the duty. God's mercies are over all his works; he saves both man and beast; he hateth nothing that he hath made (Ps. xxxvi. 6; cxlv. 9; Jonah iv. 11; Wisd. xi. 24). So he enacted that the rest of the sabbath should extend to the domestic animals (Exod. xx. 10); that a man should help the over-burdened beast, even of his enemy (Exod. xxiii. 4, 5); that the unequal strength of the ox and the ass should not be yoked together in the plough (Deut. xxii. 10); that the ox should not be muzzled when he was treading out the corn (Deut. xxv. 4); that the sitting bird should not be taken from her little brood (Deut. xxii. 6), nor a kid seethed in its mother's milk (Exod. xxiii. 19). Such humane injunctions were perhaps specially needed at a time when man's life was little regarded, and animal sacrifices had a tendency to make men cruel and unfeeling, when their symbolical meaning was obscured by long familiarity. These enactments regarding animals, and the mysterious significance affixed to the blood (Gen. ix. 4; Lev. xvii. 10—14), afforded speaking lessons of tenderness and consideration for the inferior creatures, and *à fortiori* taught regard for the happiness and comfort of fellow-men. Our blessed Lord has spoken of God's care of flowers and the lower creatures of his hand. **But the tender mercies**; literally, *the bowels*, regarded as the seat of feeling. The wicked cannot be supposed to have "tender mercies;" hence it is best to take the word in the sense of "feelings," "affections." What should be mercy and love are in an evil man only hard-heartedness and cruelty.

Ver. 11.—A contrast between industry and idleness, repeated at ch. xxviii. 19. **He that tilleth his land.** Agriculture was the first of industries, and always highly commended among the Jews, bringing a sure return to the diligent (ch. x. 5; xx. 4; xxvii. 18, 23—27; and Ecclus. xx. 28). **He that followeth after vain** persons; rather, *vain things*; *μάταια*, Septuagint, empty, useless employments, profitless business, in contrast to active labour on the land. The Vulgate renders, *qui sectatur otium*, "he who studieth ease;" but the original, *reikim*, will not bear this meaning. **Is void of understanding**; he not only, as is implied, will be reduced to poverty, but shows moral weakness and depravity. The Septuagint and Vulgate here introduce a paragraph not found in our Hebrew text: "He who takes pleasure (*ὃς ἐστιν ἡδύς*) in carouses of wine will leave disgrace in his strongholds (*ὀχυρώμασι*)" (Isa. xxviii. 7, 8; Hab. ii. 16). Probably this verse is derived from the following, with some corruption of the text.

Ver. 12.—Modern commentators have endeavoured to amend the text of this verse by various methods, which may be seen in Nowack's note on the passage; but the existing reading gives an appropriate sense, and alteration is not absolutely needed, though it is plain that the LXX. had before them something different from the Masoretic text. **The wicked desireth the net of evil** men (Eccles. vii. 26), that he may use the means which they take to enrich themselves; or *matsod* may mean, not the instrument, but the prey—"such booty as evil men capture;" or yet again, the word may mean "fortress," *i.e.* the wicked seeks the protection of evil men. So the Vulgate, *Desiderium impii munimentum est pessimorum*, "What the wicked desire is the support of evil men," or, it may be, "the defence of evil men," *i.e.* that these may be secured from suppression and interruption. Another interpretation, which, however, seems somewhat forced, is that "the net" is a metaphor for the judgment of God, which overtakes sinners, and into which they run with such blind infatuation that they seem to "desire" it. The safest explanation is the second one given above, which signifies that the wicked man seeks by every means to obtain the prey which he sees sinners obtain, and, as is implied, gets small return for his labour, does not advance his interests. **But the root of the righteous yieldeth** fruit. The root supplies the sap and vigour needed for healthy produce. Without any evil devices or plotting, the righteous gain all that they want as the natural result of their high principles. Another rendering is, "He (the Lord) will give a root of the righteous," will enable them to stand firm in time of trial. Septuagint, "The desires

of the impious are evil; but the roots of the pious are in strongholds," *i.e.* are secure.

Ver. 13.—**The wicked is snared by the transgression** of his lips; rather, *in the transgression of the lips is an evil snare* (ch. xviii. 7). A man by speaking unadvisedly or intemperately brings trouble upon himself, involves himself in difficulties which he did not foresee. Often when he has spoken in order to injure others, the slander or the censure has redounded on himself (comp. Ps. vii. 15, 16; ix. 16). **The just**; the man who does not offend with his lips, avoids these snares. The Septuagint here introduces a couplet not found in the Hebrew: "He who looketh gently (*ὁ βλέπων λεῖα*) shall obtain mercy; but he who frequents the gates [or, 'contends in the gates,' *συναντῶν ἐν πύλαις*] will harass souls." This seems to mean the man who is calm and considerate for others will himself be treated with pity and consideration (Matt. v. 7); but he who is a gossip, or a busybody, or litigious, will be always vexing his neighbours.

Ver. 14.—**A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth** (ch. xiii. 2; xiv. 14; xviii. 20). A man's words are like seeds, and if they are wise and pure and kindly, they will bring forth the fruit of love and favour and respect. Christian commentators see here a reference to the day of judgment, wherein great stress is laid on the words (Matt. xii. 37). **Of a man's hands.** That which a man has done, his kindly actions, shall meet with full reward (comp. Isa. iii. 10, 11; Matt. xxv. 35, etc.; Rom. ii. 6).

Ver. 15.—**The way of a fool is right in his own eyes**; *i.e.* in his own judgment (ch. iii. 7; xvi. 2). The second clause is best translated, as in the Revised Version, "But he that is wise hearkeneth unto counsel," distrusting his own unaided judgment, which might lead him astray (ch. xiii. 10; xiv. 12; xvi. 25; xxi. 2; comp. Ecclus. xxxv. 19; Tobit iv. 18). Theognis, 221, etc.—

*Ὅς τις τοι δοκέει τὸν πλησίον ἴδμεναι οὐδέν,*
*Ἀλλ' αὐτὸς μοῦνος ποικίλα δήνε' ἔχειν,*
*Κεῖνός γ' ἄφρων ἐστί, νόου βεβλαμμένος ἐσθλοῦ,*
*Ἴσως γὰρ πάντες ποικίλ' ἐπιστάμεθα.*

"Who thinks his neighbour nothing knows,
And he alone can see,
Is but a fool, for we perhaps
Know even more than he."

Ver. 16.—**A fool's wrath is presently** ("in the day," *αὐθημερόν*) **known.** A foolish man, if he is vexed, insulted, or slighted, has no idea of controlling himself or checking the expression of his aroused feelings; he at once, in the same day on which he has been incensed, makes his vexation known. **A prudent man covereth**—concealeth—**shame**; takes no notice of an affront at the moment, knowing that by resenting it he will only make matters worse, and that it is best to let passions cool before he tries to set the matter right (comp. ch. xx. 22; xxiv. 29). Christ's injunction goes far beyond this maxim of worldly prudence: "I say unto you that ye resist not evil;" "Unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other" (Matt. v. 39; Luke vi. 29); and it is certain that these maxims might be carried into practice much more than they are, even in the present state of society. Septuagint, "A clever man (*πανοῦργος*; *callidus*, Vulgate) concealeth his own disgrace." Corn. à Lapide quotes a Hebrew proverb which asserts that a man's character is accurately discerned "by purse, by cup, by anger;" *i.e.* by his conduct in money transactions, under the influence of wine, and in the excitement of anger.

Ver. 17.—He that **speaketh**—breatheth out fearlessly (ch. vi. 19)—**truth showeth forth righteousness.** The truth always conduces to justice and right, not only in a matter of law, but generally and in all cases. Vulgate, "He who speaks that which he knows is a discoverer of justice;" Septuagint, "A just man announces well-proved assurance [or, 'the open truth'] (*ἐπιδεικνυμένην πίστιν*)." **A false witness** showeth forth **deceit** (ch. xiv. 5, 25); exhibits his true character, which is fraud, treachery, and wrong-doing.

Ver. 18.—**There is that speaketh.** The word implies speaking thoughtlessly, rashly; hence we may render, "a babbler," "prater." Such a one inflicts wounds with his senseless tattle. **Like the piercings of a sword.** The point of the simile is seen when we remember that the edge of the sword is called its "mouth" in the Hebrew (Gen. xxxiv. 26; Exod. xvii. 13, etc.; comp. Ps. lix. 7; lxiv. 3). The Greek gnome says—

*Ξίφος τιτρώσκει σῶμα, τὸν δὲ νοῦν λόγος.*

"A sword the body wounds, a word the soul."

Vulgate, *est qui promittit*, which restricts the scope of the clause to the making of vain promises (Lev. v. 4; Numb. xxx. 7—9), continuing, *et quasi gladio pungitur conscientiæ*, "And is pierced as it were by the sword of his conscience," where "conscience" is added to make the meaning plain. Such a man suffers remorse if he breaks his promise, or if, like Jephthah, he keeps it. **The tongue of the wise is health**; it does not pierce and wound like that of the chatterer, rather it soothes and heals even when it reproves (ch. iv. 22; x. 11).

Ver. 19.—**The lip of truth shall be established for ever.** Truth is consistent, invincible, enduring; and the fact belongs

not only to Divine truth (Ps. cxvii. 2; Matt. xxiv. 35), but to human, in its measure. Septuagint, "True lips establish testimony," pointing the last word *ad* as *ed*. **Is but for a moment**; literally, *while I wink the eye* (Jer. xlix. 19; l. 44). Lying never answers in the end; it is soon found out and punished (ch. xix. 9; Ps. lii. 5). Septuagint, "But a hasty (ταχύς; *repentinus*, Vulgate) witness hath an unjust tongue." One who gives his testimony without due consideration, or influenced by evil motives, readily falls into lying and injustice. With the latter half of the verse we may compare the gnome—

Ἀλλ' οὐδὲν ἔρπει ψεῦδος εἰς γῆρας χρόνου.
"Unto old age no lie doth ever live."

"A lie has no legs," is a maxim of wide nationality; and "Truth may be blamed, but shall ne'er be shamed."

Ver. 20.—**Deceit is in the heart of them that imagine evil**; *i.e.* that give evil advice; such are treacherous counsellors, and their advice can only work mischief, not joy and comfort (see on ch. iii. 29). **But to the counsellors of peace** (health and prosperity) **is joy.** They who give wholesome advice diffuse joy around. Vulgate, "Joy attends them;" Septuagint, "They shall be glad;" but the original signifies rather to cause joy than to feel it.

Ver. 21.—**There shall no evil**—mischief—**happen to the just.** The mischief (*aven*) intended is not misfortune, calamity, but the evil consequences that follow on ill-doing (ch. xxii. 8); from these the righteous are saved. Our Lord goes further, and says (Matt. vi. 33), "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these (temporal) things shall be added unto you." Vulgate, "Nothing that happens can make a just man sorrowful;" for he knows it is all for the best, and he looks toward another life, where all seeming anomalies will be cleared up. Septuagint, "The just man takes pleasure in naught that is unjust." **The wicked shall be filled with mischief**; rather, *with evil*, moral and physical (Ps. xxxii. 10). The Old Testament takes a general view of God's moral government without regarding special anomalies.

Ver. 22.—(Comp. ch. vi. 17; xi. 20.) **They that deal truly**; Septuagint, ὁ δὲ ποιῶν πίστεις, "he who acts in good faith."

Ver. 23.—**A prudent man concealeth knowledge** (ver. 16; ch. x. 14). He is not wont to utter unadvisedly what he knows, but waits for fitting opportunity, either from humility or wise caution. Of course, in some cases reticence is sinful. The LXX., reading the passage differently, renders, "A prudent man is the seat of intelligence (θρόνος αἰσθήσεως)." **The heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness** (ch. xiii. 16; xv. 2). A foolish man cannot help exposing the stupid ideas that arise in his mind, which he considers wisdom. Septuagint, "The heart of fools shall meet with curses."

Vers. 24—28 speak of the means of getting on in life.

Ver. 24.—**The hand of the diligent shall bear rule** (ch. x. 4). For "diligent" the Vulgate has *fortium*, "the strong and active;" Septuagint, ἐκλεκτῶν, "choice." Such men are sure to rise to the surface, and get the upper hand in a community, as the LXX. adds, "with facility," by a natural law. **But the slothful** (literally, *slothfulness*) **shall be under tribute**; or, *reduced to compulsory service*, like the Gibeonites in Joshua's time, and the Canaanites under Solomon (Josh. ix. 21, 23; 1 Kings ix. 21). So ch. xi. 29, "The fool shall be slave to the wise;" and an Israelite reduced to poverty might be made a servant (Lev. xxv. 39, 40). The LXX., taking the word in another sense, translates, "The crafty shall be for plunder;" *i.e.* they who think to succeed by fraud and trickery shall become the prey of those who are stronger than themselves.

Ver. 25.—**Heaviness**—care—**in the heart of man maketh it stoop** (ch. xv. 13; xvii. 22). Care brings dejection and despair; hence the Christian is bidden to beware of excessive anxiety, and not to perplex himself with solicitude for the future (Matt. vi. 34; 1 Pet. v. 7). **A good word maketh it glad.**

Λύπην γὰρ εὔνους οἶδεν ἰᾶσθαι λόγος.
"A word of kindness grief's keen smart can heal."

Septuagint, "A word of terror disturbs the heart of a (righteous) man, but a good message will gladden him." The "word of terror" may be an unjust censure, or evil tidings. Says a Servian proverb, "Give me a comrade who will weep with me; one who will laugh I can easily find."

Ver. 26.—**The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.** This rendering has the authority of the Chaldee, and would signify that a good man is superior to others morally and socially, is more respected and stands higher, though his worldly position be inferior. But the clause is better translated, *The just man is a guide to his neighbour*, directs him in the right way; as the Syriac puts it, "gives good counsel to his friend." Septuagint, "The righteous wise man (ἐπιγώμων) will be a friend to himself;" Vulgate, "He who regards not loss for a friend's sake is righteous," which is like Christ's word, "Greater love hath no man than this, that

a man lay down his life for his friends" (John xv. 13). Hitzig, Delitzsch, and others, reading differently, translate, "A just man spieth out (or, looketh after) his pasture;" *i.e.* he is not like the sinner, hampered and confined by the chain of evil habits and associations, but is free to follow the lead of virtue, and to go whither duty and his own best interests call him. This gives a very good sense, and makes a forcible antithesis with the succeeding clause. **But the way of the wicked seduceth them**; "causes them, the wicked, to err." Far from guiding others aright, the wicked, reaping the moral consequences of their sin, drift hopelessly astray themselves. Before the last clause some manuscripts of the Septuagint add, "But the judgments of the wicked are harsh; evils shall pursue sinners" (ch. xiii. 21). The whole is probably a gloss.

Ver. 27.—**The slothful man** (literally, *sloth*) **roasteth not that which he took in hunting.** There is some doubt concerning the correct meaning of the word translated "roasteth" (רָדַךְ), which occurs only in the Chaldee of Dan. iii. 27, where it signifies "burned" or "singed," according to the traditional rendering. It seems to be a proverbial saying, implying either that a lazy man will not take the trouble to hunt, or, if he does hunt, will not prepare the food which he has taken in the chase, or that he does not enjoy it when he has gotten it. Others render, "will not start his prey;" or "catch his prey," Septuagint; or "secure his prey," *i.e.* will not keep in his net what he has caught, but carelessly lets it escape. The Vulgate renders, "The cheat will gain no profit." The word rendered "cheat," *fraudulentus* in the Latin, and δόλιος in the Greek, is the same as that rightly translated "slothful" (ver. 24). **But the substance of a diligent man is precious**; *i.e.* the substance which an honest, industrious man acquires by his labour is stable and of real value. This second clause, however, is variously translated. Revised Version, *But the precious substance of men is to the diligent*, or, *is to be diligent*; Delitzsch, "Diligence is a man's precious possession;" Septuagint. "A pure man is a precious possession." The Authorized Version is probably erroneous, and the rendering should be, as Delitzsch and Nowack take it, "But a precious possession of a man is diligence."

Ver. 28.—**In the way of righteousness is life** (comp. ch. x. 2). For the promise of temporal prosperity which the Jew saw in such passages as these we substitute a better hope. **And in the pathway thereof**—of righteousness—**there is no death.** Many combine the two words thus: "no-death," *i.e.* immortality; but examples of such combination are not forthcoming, and the anomaly is not necessitated by the failure of the usual rendering to afford an adequate sense. The Greek and Latin versions are noteworthy. Septuagint, "The ways of the revengeful (μνησικάκων) are unto (לְ, not לֹא) death." St. Chrysostom refers ('Hom. xvi. in Eph.') to this rendering: "He here speaks of vindictiveness; for on the spur of the moment he allows the sufferer to act in order to check the aggressor; but further to bear a grudge he permits not; because the act then is no longer one of passion, nor of boiling rage, but of malice premeditated. Now, God forgives those who may be carried away, perhaps upon a sense of outrage, and rush out to resent it. Hence he says, 'eye for eye;' and yet again 'The ways of the revengeful lead to death." Vulgate, "A devious path leads to death"—a path, that is, which turns aside from the right direction, a life and conversation which are alien from justice and piety. But both the Septuagint and the Vulgate have missed the right meaning of the words in question; *derek nethibah*, "pathway." Many see in this verse a plain evidence that the writer believed in the immortality of the soul. We have reason to suppose that such was his faith, but it cannot be proved from this passage, though we may consider that he was guided to speak in terms to which later knowledge would affix a deeper interpretation (see ch. xiv. 32, and note there). It is Jesus Christ "who hath brought life and immortality (ἀφθαρσίαν) to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. i. 10). Writers in Solomon's time could speak only darkly about this sublime and comforting hope, though later, as in the Book of Wisdom and throughout most of the Apocryphal books, it formed a common topic, and was used as a reason for patience and resignation.

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 3.—*The instability of wickedness.* I. WICKEDNESS MAY BRING TEMPORAL PROSPERITY. It is important to observe the limitations of our subject. The Bible is not an unreasonable book; it does not ignore the patent facts of life; it does not deny that there are pleasures of sin. The very statement that "a man shall not be *established* by wickedness" implies that he may be lifted up, and may really enjoy prosperity for a season. Though not built up, he may be puffed up. This is to be borne in mind,

lest the experience come as a delusion. All the warnings about the fatality of a sinful course are given with a frank recognition of its transient advantages. Therefore the occurrence of these advantages does not contradict the warnings.

II. WICKEDNESS DOES NOT SECURE STABLE PROSPERITY. It does not "*establish.*" There is no faculty for building in it. There are "tents of wickedness;" but these are frail and flimsy compared to "the house of the Lord" (Ps. lxxxiv.). When at its best and brightest, the product of evil is but a bubble that will burst with a touch of righteous judgment. The equilibrium is unstable. There is no foundation of truth to support the poor structure; it is not built according to the laws of righteousness; it is not guarded against the shock of adverse circumstances. The bad prosperous man has many enemies. All the course of the universe is in the long run directed against him. He has not God on his side, and at any moment the suspended hand of justice may fall upon his unsheltered head.

III. WICKEDNESS WILL NOT LEAD TO PERMANENT PROSPERITY. The pleasures of sin, at the best, do but endure for a season. The sinner lives, so to speak, "from hand to mouth." If in this life only he had hope, the prospect would be poor; for most of the delights of wickedness are very brief, and the consequences of shame and trouble soon follow even upon earth. The harvest of a young man's folly may be reaped by middle age. But when we consider the eternal future, the utter inability of wickedness to establish any enduring prosperity becomes clearly visible. For no one can pretend that his wicked devices extend beyond the grave; and no one can fortify himself against the pains of a future state by any successful Macchiavellianism, however cleverly devised it may be with a view to worldly security.

IV. WICKEDNESS SECURES NO PROSPERITY TO A MAN HIMSELF. "*A man* shall not be established by wickedness." His business may be so established; his plans and devices may be made firm. But these things are not the man himself, and all the while they are prospering he may be tottering to ruin, like a consumptive millionaire or a paralytic winner of a lottery-prize. Then the whole pursuit has ended in failure; for what is the use of the huntsman's success in shooting the game if he cannot bring home and enjoy what he has acquired?

V. RIGHTEOUSNESS IS A TRUE SECURITY. It has a root in the eternal laws of God. Though the storm tear off its "peaceable fruits," this deep and hidden source remains. We cannot be satisfied with only wearing a "robe of righteousness." We must have the living thing with its deep root—a growth which Christ plants (Rom. iii. 22).

Ver. 10.—*Justice to animals.* I. ANIMALS HAVE RIGHTS WHICH MAY BE OUTRAGED BY INJUSTICE. We hear more of kindness to animals than of justice towards them. It seems to be assumed that they have no rights, and that all our consideration for them must spring from pure generosity, perhaps even from a superabundant condescension. The exercise of it is treated almost as a work of supererogation. These assumptions are based on an inordinate regard for our own supremacy. Man may consider himself as the lord of creation. If he may take this exalted view of himself, he cannot on that account shake off all obligations towards the dumb serfs on his estate. This natural feudalism requires protection, etc., from the aristocracy of creation, while it allows of the exaction of dues from the underlings. For we are all animals, though men are more than animals. All orders of creation are made by one God, and all share in many common wants and feelings. The young lions are represented as crying to God for their food, and he as giving them their meat in due season. Christ tells us that God feeds the ravens—those wild birds of the mountains, while not a homely sparrow falls to the ground without the notice of our heavenly Father. It is not for us to be above giving their due to fellow-creatures for whom God cares so tenderly. These animals not only make mute appeals to our compassion; they cannot be ill treated without injustice.

II. THE CHARACTER OF A MAN WILL BE REVEALED BY HIS TREATMENT OF ANIMALS. 1. *Character is revealed in the treatment of the helpless.* A man's cattle are his property, and they are in his power. He is more free in his treatment of them than in his behaviour towards his fellow-men. Therefore his true character will come out the more clearly when he is in his stable than when he is in his dining-room. 2. *The lower creatures claim consideration.* (1) Their very inferiority gives point to this

claim. Man stands to them somewhat in the position of a God. Therefore it becomes him to show the spirit of a limited Providence in his treatment of them. (2) Moreover, when he owns any animals, he is involved in especial responsibilities. He is their guardian, and their welfare largely depends upon him. (3) Further, if they render him patient service, the least that he can do is to give them all things necessary to make their lot of bondage happy to them. (4) Lastly, their affectionateness vastly strengthens the ties of obligation. Horses and dogs learn to love their masters, and love has its sacred claims in animals as well as in men. 3. *Lack of consideration for animals is a sign of a base nature.* The very sympathy of the wicked is cruelty, but this cruelty is not possible without the evil heart, of which it is the corrupt fruit. The brutal cattle-drover, and the heartless horseman who lashes his weary, patient animal, do but make a public exhibition of their own low natures.

Ver. 17.—*Truth and righteousness.* We have here a suggestion of the close connection between truth and righteousness. This connection is based on a reciprocal relation. Truthfulness is a trait of righteousness, and righteousness is advanced by truthfulness.

I. TRUTHFULNESS IS A TRAIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. The truth here referred to is that which is most often mentioned in the Bible, viz. subjective truth, the agreement between our convictions and our utterances. We cannot attain to perfect objective truth, to the truth which consists in an agreement between our beliefs and the facts of the universe, because all men sometimes err even with the most innocent intention of finding the truth. We are liable to delusions from without, and to the influence of an unconscious bias from within. But we can all utter what we believe to be true. Now, this truth-speaking is one of the most solemn and absolute obligations of righteousness. 1. *The grounds of the obligation.* (1) We recognize the awful duty of truthfulness in our conscience. (2) The Teutonic conscience is supposed to respond to this duty more readily than the Oriental conscience. Yet it is clearly and firmly insisted on in the Bible. (3) It is most evident in the transparent life of Christ, who is a true Witness to the truth (John xviii. 37). (4) All social arrangements presuppose truthfulness; without it society becomes a confusion. Truth cements the social fabric; lying dissolves it. A city of universal liars would be an inferno of mutual distrust, suspicion, and necessary isolation. 2. *The bearing of the obligation.* (1) On small things. Slight inaccuracies of speech may seem to be of no importance; but they open the door for more gross forms of deceit, by generating a habit of indifference to truth. Apart from this tendency, the least untruth is treason against the royal supremacy of truth. (2) In difficult cases. When we are severely tried, it is hard to speak the truth. Yet it is just then that truthfulness becomes a positive quality. Under such circumstances only a character that is morally sound will stand the strain. Indeed, it needs the grace of Christ to keep true in word and deed under all provocations to easier paths.

II. RIGHTEOUSNESS IS ADVANCED BY TRUTHFULNESS. 1. *In the individual.* Untruthfulness is certain to issue in a lower moral tone all round. We cannot abandon one of the guardian towers of the soul without risking the whole citadel. The liar is not only a person who uses false language. His cowardly habit eats into the very heart of virtue and rots the moral fibre of his soul. On the other hand, there is no more bracing moral tonic than a loyal and reverent regard for truth. The true man is likely to be honest, just, and pure in all respects. 2. *In the world.* Truth always makes for righteousness. No greater blunder was ever made than the supposition that "pious frauds" could be used for advancing the cause of Christianity. Any temporary gain that could be produced in this way must be unsound from the first, and the ultimate issue is certain to be moral indifference and unbelief. Some truths are unpleasant, some ugly, some seemingly hurtful. Yet, in the end, truth makes for soul-health. Above all, is not he who is "the Truth" also the great Source of the world's righteousness?

Ver. 23.—*Concealing knowledge.* I. KNOWLEDGE MUST FIRST BE POSSESSED. We cannot hide what we do not hold. The idea of secreting knowledge suggests the owning of a large amount of it, or at least of knowledge of some value. The tradesman who

puts all his wares in the window is not the proprietor of a large stock. It cannot be a superficial mind which conceals much knowledge. Such an action suggests a granary of truth, a storehouse of ideas, a territory rich in minerals that lie far below the surface.

II. KNOWLEDGE MUST THEN BE PRIZED. Men may hide things from various motives —from shame as much as from love, because the things are bad quite as much as on account of any value set upon them. Thus the criminal tries to hide the evidences of his crime—buries his victim in a wood, or flings the tell-tale knife into a pond. But it is not with this ugly knowledge, which a man would only too gladly banish from his own mind, that we are now concerned. There are choice secrets, rare attainments, and much-valued stores of information. Such knowledge may well be kept for its own sake.

III. KNOWLEDGE SHOULD NEVER BE DISPLAYED. The vanity which would make a show of knowledge is one of the weakest traits of humanity. It is usually a sign that but little is really known. A great pretence is made by the aid of a mere smattering of information cleverly arranged, like the scenery on a small stage adjusted to suggest a long vista. Such a parade of learning springs from more love of admiration than love of truth. The loyal seeker after truth will have little thought of "making an effect" by the exhibition of his mental properties. He will prize his possessions on their own account, though no one else may be aware of their existence.

IV. KNOWLEDGE MAY SOMETIMES BE ABUSED. We may know damaging facts about a neighbour, and then charity will urge us to hide our knowledge. The feverish passion for gossiping tears the cloak of common decency which should cover the knowledge of what is bad. It is shocking that details of crime and vice are made familiar to millions by the blare of the newspaper trumpet. But, further, the knowledge of good things may sometimes be abused. The revelation may be premature; God did not send forth his Son till "the fulness of the times." Truth may be misapprehended. The most sacred things may be degraded by irreverent handling.

V. KNOWLEDGE IS TO BE USED. We do not have it as a hidden jewel to be laid by in a secret place and forgotten. Though buried in the soul and little talked about, it is a living thing, like a seed in the soil. It is given us that it may influence our lives and become a vital part of our souls.

VI. KNOWLEDGE SHOULD BE WISELY IMPARTED. We have no right to keep to ourselves any knowledge that would be helpful to our brethren. Concealment must never go so far as to hide from others the good news of God. The gospel is for the world. All Divine truth is for all honest inquirers. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Ver. 25.—*Depression.* This proverb shows us depression of soul in its own distress and gloom, and then gives a hint of the way in which it may be remedied.

I. THE STATE OF DEPRESSION. The heart is bowed down with heaviness. This is very different from external adversity and from the natural feelings that are produced by such a condition. It may be quite independent of circumstances. The buoyant soul will face great calamities with comparative cheerfulness, while the heavy heart is depressed among signs of unbroken prosperity. 1. *Depression is caused by personal conditions.* Not being the reflection of circumstance, it must be the expression of internal experience. Frequently it is a result of a man's bodily state, a merely nervous disorder or a consequence of deranged health. We look for religious remedies when the true cure is in the hands of the physician. But it may be that melancholy thoughts have depressed the soul. Then the gloom within is projected on to the world without, and the sunniest scenes are overclouded. 2. *Depression is a deplorable state of mind.* It is a source of deep distress to the sufferer. It spreads an atmosphere of gloom among others. It checks enterprise by paralyzing hope. If the joy of the Lord is our strength, sorrow of soul must be a source of weakness. Depressed Christian people discredit the name of religion by making it appear unattractive to the world. Gratitude is scarcely compatible with depression, and the soul that has given way to this deplorable experience is not likely to sing the praises of God. Thus depression tends to check worship. On the other hand, it reveals the soul's great need of God, who in his long-suffering compassion has pity on his distressed children. "He knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust."

II. THE CURE OF DEPRESSION. When it is due to physical causes, physical remedies may be needed. In many cases, change of scene and brighter circumstances may help to remove it. But there are also social and moral remedies, among which not the least valuable is a wise expression of brotherly kindness. Pure condolence may do more harm than good by aggravating the painful symptoms, and yet "a good word maketh" the heart "glad." 1. *The utterance of the word may be helpful.* Isolation and silence are depressing. "It is not good for man to be alone." The heavy heart seeks solitude, and uncongenial society cannot be helpful. But sympathetic society *is* healing, even though it be admitted with reluctance. Christ founded a Church. He sought to cheer his people amid the various scenes of their heavenward pilgrimage by means of Christian companionship. 2. *The contents of the word should be helpful.* We may not do much good by moralizing. Though advice for the depressed is easy to find, it is not often acceptable. But words of affection are wonderfully healing. Cheerful thoughts should help the depressed. 3. *It is our duty to relieve the depressed.* To blame, to shun, or to patronize are all un-Christlike methods. But the Christian should endeavour to make the world brighter by his presence. Above all, if it is possible to lead the depressed to hope in God, the surest method of cure is within our reach.

Ver. 28.—*Righteousness and life.* I. THE ASSOCIATION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND LIFE. It is something to have two such great ideas brought into close juxtaposition. Their very proximity is a revelation. They mutually illumine one another. We know more of righteousness when we see its bearing on life, and we have a better understanding of life when we recognize its dependence on righteousness. There is thus a *relationship* of ideas to be recognized here over and above the separate forms of the ideas themselves. The limitation of the subject is also instructive. We do not see to what else righteousness may be related. It may or it may not bring happiness, wealth, and success. What it is related to is distinct from all these ends, and greater than any of them—viz. life.

II. THE FORM OF RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT IS CONNECTED WITH LIFE. This is the *path* of righteousness. It is not righteousness regarded as an abstract idea, or viewed only as a law. It is not an external garment of righteousness, nor an internal principle of righteousness. It does not consist in one or more isolated deeds of righteousness. On the contrary, what is here presented to us is a view of a continuous course of righteous action. It may not be the highest path of holiness, but it is at least a right path. The traveller may stumble upon it, loiter by the way, even forget himself at times, and sleep. Yet, on the whole, this is the course he pursues. He is trying to do the right thing in his daily experience.

III. THE INFLUENCE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS UPON LIFE. The path *is* life. 1. It is the path of *a living soul.* No one can continuously pursue a right course unless he has the spiritual life in him. Dead souls may be galvanized into momentary spasms of goodness by an electrifying example or the shock of a great authority. But the path of righteousness can only be trodden by those who have within them the soul-energy to follow it. 2. It is the path that *quickens life.* It is not like the deadly tracts of sin, those ways of wickedness that lead down into the fatal swamps of soul-death. This path runs over bracing mountain heights. 3. It is the path that *leads to life.* There is a fuller life beyond, not yet reached; and righteousness is the way to it. Every attainment in holiness is accompanied by a deepening of the soul-life. The way of God leads to eternal life. The gospel of Christ does not set aside this Old Testament principle, but it gives the new righteousness of a new life.

IV. THE FATAL RESULT OF LEAVING RIGHTEOUSNESS. "A devious way leadeth to death." 1. *The way of evil is devious.* It is not only an alternative; it is a departure from the normal course. He who is in it is where he ought not to be. Then this way is no direct high-road; it is a wandering bypath. 2. *The deviousness of the way is fatal to the traveller upon it.* The higher way is made for the good purpose of leading to the city of life. The devious way is not purposely made; it is a lawless beaten track, which runs out into the wilderness. It must be dangerous to follow such a course. To pursue it to the end is to court soul-destruction.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—3.—*Primary truths.* I. THE WISDOM OF SUBMISSION, THE FOLLY OF RESISTANCE, TO REPROOF. As self-knowledge is the most precious and indispensable, and as it comes to us by chastisement, *i.e.* by disappointment, humiliation, pain of various kinds,—to welcome correction, to be willing and anxious to know our faults, is the mark of true wisdom. To fret at reproof, to be angry with the counsellor, to hate the revealing light, is the worst folly and stupidity.

II. THE FAVOUR AND THE DISFAVOUR OF GOD ARE DISCRIMINATING. The good reap his good will; the crafty and malicious are exposed to his condemnation.

III. MORAL STABILITY AND INSTABILITY. Wickedness gives no firm foundation. The bad man is insecure, as a tottering wall or a leaning fence. The good man is like the oak, firmly and widely rooted, which may defy a thousand blasts and storms.—J.

Vers. 4—11.—*Blessings and miseries of domestic life.* I. ELEMENTS OF HAPPINESS IN THE HOME. 1. *The virtuous wife.* (Ver. 4.) The word is literally "a woman of *power*," and the idea of force lies in the word and the idea of *virtue*. Her moral force and influence makes itself felt in all the life of the household (ch. xxxi. 10; Ruth iii. 11). She is her husband's "crown of rejoicing" (comp. 1 Thess. ii. 19), his glory and pride.

"A thousand decencies do daily flow
From all her thoughts and actions."

2. *Noble thoughts and words.* (Ver. 5.) This expression includes, of course, noble words and deeds, and implies all that we speak of as *high principles*. And these are the very foundations and columns of the home. But expressly also the straightforward speech of the good man is named. (Ver. 6.) There is "deliverance" in the mouth of the righteous; men may build upon his word, which is as good as his bond. 3. Hence, *stability belongs to the house of the good man.* (Ver. 7.) If we trace the rise of great families who have become famous in the annals of their country, the lesson is on the whole brought home to us that it is integrity, the true qualities of manhood, which formed the foundation of their greatness. On a smaller scale, the history of village households may bring to light the same truth. There are names in every neighbourhood known as synonyms of integrity from father to son through generations. 4. *Prudence* is an indispensable element in character and reputation. But let us give the proper extension to the idea of prudence which it has in this book. It is the wide view of life—the mind "looking before and after," the contemplation of all things in their long issues, their bearings upon God, destiny, and eternity. The prudence which often passes by that name may be no prudence in this higher sense. 5. *Self-help.* (Ver. 9.) To be "king of two hands," and bear one's part in every useful toil and art, to be a true "working man," is the only honourable and true way of living. "Trust in thyself;" every heart vibrates to that iron string. "Heaven helps those who help themselves." Proverbs unite with experience to bid us lean upon the energies God has placed in brain and hand and tongue. He is never helpless who knows the secret of that self-reliance which is one with trust in God. 6. *Mercifulness.* (Ver. 10.) The good man "knows the soul of his beast;" enters into their feelings, pains, and needs, and feeds them well. The Law of Moses is noted for its kindness to animals. And in the East generally there is a deep sense that animals are not only the slaves of man, but the creatures of God. A person's behaviour to dumb creatures is, like behaviour to women and children, a significant part of character. 7. *Industry and diligence.* (Ver. 11.) The picture of the hard-working farmer or peasant rises to the mind's eye. Enough bread, competence, is ever conditioned by industry. Times may go hard with the farmer, but the evil that is foreseen and fought against by extra diligence is no evil when it comes; and how seldom are the truly industrious known to want, even in the most unfavourable seasons! This is a bright picture of domestic soundness, happiness, and prosperity. Let us contrast it with—

II. ELEMENTS OF MISERY IN THE HOME. 1. *The vicious wife.* Like a canker in her

husband's bones. The slothful, or drunken, or extravagant, or frivolous wife is the centre of all evil in the house; she is like a stagnant pool in a weed-grown garden. One may tell in many cases by the mere aspect of the house whether there be a good wife and mother dwelling there or not. 2. *Unprincipled habits.* (Ver. 5.) Where the speech is impure, where there is mutual reserve and concealment, conspiracy and counter-conspiracy going on, neither truth nor love, how can a home be otherwise than cursed? 3. *Fierce spite.* (Ver. 6.) All spite is murderous, and if it does not issue in the last extreme of violence, at least it lacerates the heart, burns, and is self-consuming. When taunts, recriminations, answering again, fill the air of a house, the very idea of the family and its peace must vanish. 4. *Dissolution and break-up.* There are homes that go to pieces, names that sink into obscurity, families that die out; and a moral lesson may here too be often inferred. 5. *Moral perversity* is at the root of these evils (ver. 8). There is a twist in the affections, a guilty misdirection of the will. Contempt in others' minds reflects the moral basis, and prophesies its miserable end. 6. *Idle vanity and pride*, again, contrasted with that habit of honest self-help which is free from false shame, is another of the tokens that things are not going well. To be above one's situation, to shun humble employment, to stand upon one's dignity,—these are sure enough marks of want of moral power, and so of true stability. 7. *Cruelty*, again, to inferiors or to dumb creatures marks the corrupt heart. Even the comparative tenderness of the bad man is a spurious thing, for there is no real kindness from a heart without love. 8. The *frivolous pursuit of pleasure*, again, the "chase after vanity," opposed to steady industry, is one of the unfailing accompaniments of folly and conducements to failure, poverty, and misery.

LESSONS. 1. The indications of a sound state of things in the household, or the reverse, are numerous and manifold, but all connected together. Partial symptoms may point to widespread and deeply seated evil. 2. At bottom the one condition of happiness is the fear of God and the love of one's neighbour; and the cause of misery is a void of both.—J.

Vers. 12—22.—*Virtues and vices in civil life.* I. SOME VICES OF SOCIETY. 1. *Envious greed.* (Ver. 12.) The wicked desires the "takings" of the evil. It is a general description of greedy strife and competition, one man trying to forestall another in the bargain, or to profit at the expense of his loss; a mutually destructive process, a grinding of egoistic passions against one another, so that there can be no mutual confidence nor peace (Isa. xlviii. 22; lvii. 21). The hard selfishness of business life, which may be worse than war, which elicits generosity and self-denial. 2. *Tricks of speech.* (Ver. 13.) How much of this there is, in subtler forms than those of ancient life, in our day! Exaggerations of value, suppression of faults in articles of commerce, lying advertisements, coloured descriptions, etc.,—all these are snares, distinct breaches of the moral law; and were they not compensated by truth and honesty in other directions, society must crumble. 3. *Conceit of shrewdness* (ver. 14) is a common mark of dishonest men. This may seem right in their own eyes, no matter what a correct-moral judgment may have to say about it. There may lurk a profound immorality beneath the constant phrase, "It pays!" Want of principle never does *pay*, in God's sense. The seeming success on which such men pride themselves is not real. They laugh at the preacher, but expose themselves to a more profound derision. 4. *Passion and impetuosity.* (Ver. 16.) The temper unfits for social intercourse and business. Flaming out at the first provocation, it shows an absence of reflection and self-control. How many unhappy wounds have been inflicted, either in word or deed; how many opportunities lost, friendships broken, through mere temper! 5. *Lying and deceit.* (Ver. 17.) The teaching of the book harps upon this string again and again. For does not all evil reduce itself to a lie in its essence? And is not deceit or treachery in some form the real canker in a decaying society, the last cause of all calamity? "We are betrayed!" was the constant exclamation of the French soldiers during the last war, upon the occurrence of a defeat. But it is self-betrayal that is the most dangerous. 6. *Foulness or violence of speech.* (Ver. 18.) The speech of the fool is compared to the thrusts of a sword. Not only all abusive and violent language, but all that is wanting in tact, imagination of others' situation, is condemned. 7. *Designing craft.* (Ver. 20.) The

wicked heart is a constant forge of mischief. And yet, after this catalogue of social ills, these moral diseases that prey upon the body of society and the state, let us be comforted in the recollection (1) that all evil is transient (ver. 19); and (2) that its just and appropriate punishment is inevitable. The first and last of frauds with the wicked is that he has cheated himself and laid a train of malicious devices which will take effect upon his own soul certainly, whoever else may escape.

II. SOCIAL VIRTUES. 1. They are the *condition of security* to the practiser of them. The root of the righteous is firmly fixed (ver. 12). In time of distress he finds resources and means of escape (ver. 13). 2. They yield him a *revenue of blessing*. He reaps the good fruit of his wise counsels and pure speech. They come back to him in echoes—the words of truth he has spoken to others (ch. xiii. 2; xviii. 20). And so too with his good actions. They come back with blessing to him who sent them forth with a prayer (ver. 14). Spiritual investments bring certain if slow returns. 3. Some *characteristics* of virtue and wisdom *enumerated*. (1) It is the part of wisdom to *listen* to *all* proffered advice, from any quarter, to discriminate and select that which is good, and then *follow* it (ver. 15). In critical times we ought, indeed, to find ourselves our own best counsellors, in the privacy of prayer, in communion with the Divine Spirit. But it is ever well to consult friends. Conversation with such wonderfully helps us to clear our own perceptions, resolve our own doubts, confirm our own right decisions. (2) It is the part of prudence to *ignore affronts* (ver. 16), instead of hastily resenting them like the fool. A good illustration may be taken from Saul, as showing the contrast in the same person of wisdom and folly in this matter (1 Sam. x. 27 and xx. 30—33). In the heathen world, Socrates was a noble example of patience under injuries. He taught his disciples that the man who offered an unjust affront really more injured himself than him who received it; and that if the insulted person resented it, he did but place himself on a level with the aggressor. Either you have deserved the affront or you have not. If you have, submit to it as a chastisement; if you have not, content yourself with the testimony of your conscience. But above all, the example of our Saviour is the example for us, "who when he was reviled, reviled not again, but submitted himself to him that judgeth righteously." His whole behaviour at his trial should make a deeper impression upon us than a thousand arguments. 4. *Truthful speech* is one of the most eminent signs of virtue and godliness. How constantly is this emphasized! (1) *Truthful and right speech* can only proceed from the truthful mind. "He who breathes truth," says ver. 17, "utters right." We must make truth the atmosphere of our being, our very life itself, as in ancient thought the breath is identified with the life. (2) *Truthful and wise speech* is also known by its *effects* (ver. 18). It *heals*, it brings salvation—correction to error, comfort to the wounded heart. Compare the picture of our Lord in the synagogue at Nazareth, and the words he quotes from Isaiah as expressive of the purport of his ministry (Luke iv. 16, etc.). (3) It is *valid, abiding*, permanent in value (ver. 19). Much in our knowledge is subject to the laws of change and growth. We grow out of the old and into the new. But the simple sentiments of piety and duty common to all good men are capable of no change, no decay. Of them all the good man will ever say, "So was it when I was a boy; so is it now I am a man; so let it be when I grow old!" 5. *Joy, peace, and eternal safety* are the portion of the wise and just (vers. 20, 21). Joy in the heart, peace in the home and amongst neighbours, safety here and hereafter. Translated into the language of the gospel, "Glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life!" (Rom. ii. 7). For in one word, he enjoys the favour of his God, and this contains all things (ver. 22).—J.

Ver. 23.—*Experimental truths:* 1. *Prudent reserve and foolish babbling.* I. PRUDENCE HAS REGARD TO TIME, PLACE, AND PERSONS; FOLLY HAS NONE.

II. PRUDENCE KNOWS THAT THERE IS A TIME FOR SILENCE; THE FOOL WILL STILL BE TALKING. A quiet tongue shows a sound head.

III. ANXIETY TO MAKE KNOWN OUR OPINIONS MAY BE BUT ANXIETY TO EXALT OURSELVES. Great talkers are great nuisances. The ambitious aim to shine cannot be hidden. The fool talks as if he were ambitious to be known for a fool.

IV. SILENCE IS ALWAYS SEASONABLE IN REFERENCE TO SUBJECTS WE DO NOT UNDERSTAND. Were this rule observed, conversation would be generally more enter-

taining and more profitable. At the same time, a great many pulpits would be emptied, and publishers and printers would have a sorry time of it (comp. 1 Tim. i. 6, 7). Let us confess that there is a great deal of the fool in every one of us.—J.

Ver. 24.—2. *The promotion of the diligent and the subjection of the slothful.* I. THE DILIGENT RISE IN LIFE. This is too obvious to need insisting upon. But often, when wonder is expressed at the rise of ordinary men, this solution may be recurred to. As a rule, it is not the greatest wits who fill the high places of the realm, but the greatest workers.

II. HE ONLY IS FIT TO GOVERN WHO HAS BEEN WILLING TO SERVE. For in truth the spirit of the true servant and that of the true ruler are alike in principle; it is respect for law, for right beyond and above self-will and self-interest, which animates both. If this has been proved in the trials of an inferior situation, its genuineness has been discovered, and it becomes a title to promotion. Abraham's servant (Gen. xxiv. 2, 10) and Joseph (Gen. xxxix. 4, 22) are illustrations from patriarchal life.

III. THE SLOTHFUL DECAY. This too is obvious. But perhaps we often fail to fix the stigma of sloth in the right place. Many busy, energetic, fussy people miscarry because their activity is ill-placed. To neglect one's *proper vocation and work* is idleness, no matter what may be the uncalled-for activity in other directions.—J.

Ver. 25.—3. *Depression and comfort.* I. DEPRESSION IS COMMON.

II. TROUBLE AFFECTS THE HEART. When we use the word "discouragement" we point to a state that is both bodily and psychical. The action of the heart is lowered, and there is less energy to act and to endure.

III. THE IMMEDIATE EFFECT OF SYMPATHY. The kindly word, and all that it expresses of love and fellow-feeling on the part of our friend, quickens the pulse, and restores, as by magic, the tone of the mind.—J.

Ver. 26.—4. *Good guidance and misleading counsels.* The true translation seems to be, "The righteous directs his friend aright: but the way of the wicked leads them astray."

I. WE ARE ALL SUSCEPTIBLE TO THE INFLUENCES OF THOSE ABOUT US. This is true even of the strongest minds; how much more of the feebler!

II. WE ARE ALWAYS SAFE IN THE COMPANY OF MEN OF RECTITUDE. The character of the man, not his mere opinions, is the force that goes forth from him to enlighten and guide.

III. WE ARE NEVER SAFE IN THE COMPANY OF UNPRINCIPLED PERSONS; no matter how correct their conversation or unexceptionable their expressed opinions.—J.

Ver. 27.—5. *Laxity and industry.* I. LAXITY GOES EMPTY-HANDED. The proverb seems to call up the image of a hunter who is too lazy to pursue the game.

II. INDUSTRY IS ITSELF A CAPITAL. Toil is as good as treasure; such seems to be the force of the proverb. And we may be reminded of the parable of the farmer who indicated to his sons the treasure in the field; their persevering toil in digging led to their enrichment.—J.

Ver. 28.—6. *The straight road and the bypath.* I. RECTITUDE MAY BE COMPARED TO A STRAIGHT ROAD. It has a definite beginning, a clearly marked course, a happy termination.

II. ALL IMMORALITY AND IRRELIGION MAY BE COMPARED TO BYPATHS. See Bunyan's Bypath Meadow in 'Pilgrim's Progress.'

III. LIFE AND DEATH ARE THE TWO GREAT TERMINI. All the more impressive because we know not what they contain of blissful or of dread meaning: "Behold, I set before you life and death!" is the constant cry of wisdom, of every true teacher, of the unchanging gospel.—J.

Vers. 1, 15.—*The downward and the upward paths.* Whether we are daily ascending or descending depends very much on whether we are ready or are refusing *to learn.* The man of open mind is he who moves up, but the man whose soul is shut against the light is he who is going down.

I. THE DOWNWARD PATH. We strike one point in this path when we come to: 1. *The forming of a false estimate of ourself.* When "our way is right in our own eyes" (ver. 15), and that way is the wrong one, we are certainly in the road that dips downward. The wise who love us truly are grieved when they see us imagining ourselves to be humble when we are proud of heart, generous when we are selfish, spiritual when we are worldly-minded, sons of God when we are children of darkness; they know well and sorrow much that we are in a bad way, in the downward road. 2. *The consequent refusal* to receive instruction. The man who thinks himself right is one who will oppose himself to all those who, and to all things which, approach him to instruct and to correct. He takes up a constant attitude of rejection. Whenever God speaks to him by any one of his many agents and influences, he is resolutely and persistently deaf. 3. *The consequent sinking* into a lower state; he becomes "brutish." A man who never admits correcting and purifying thoughts into his mind is sure to decline morally and spiritually. If our soul is not fed with truth, and is not cleansed with the purifying streams of Divine wisdom, it is certain to recede in worth; it will partake more and more of earthly elements. The finer, the nobler, the more elevating and enlarging elements of character will be absent or will grow weaker; the man will sink; he will become brutish.

II. THE UPWARD PATH. This is, naturally and necessarily, the reverse of the other. It is that wherein: 1. We form a *true* estimate of ourselves. 2. We *open* our minds to welcome wisdom from all quarters. We hearken "unto counsel," *i.e.* to the words of those who are wiser than ourselves. And it may be that some who have much less learning, or experience, or intellectual capacity than we can claim are in a position to advise us concerning the way of life. It may be even "the little child" who will "lead" us into the circle of truth, into the kingdom of God. And not only unto "counsel" shall we hearken; we shall give heed, if we are wise, to the suggestions of nature, to the teaching of events, to the promptings of the Divine Spirit. We shall be always ready and even eager to learn and willing to apply. 3. We attain to a higher and deeper wisdom. "Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge." In the upward way which he of the humble heart and open mind is travelling there grow the rich fruits of heavenly wisdom. The higher we ascend, the more of these shall we see and gather. To love counsel is to love knowledge; it is to love truth; it is to become the friend and disciple and depository of wisdom. There is a knowledge which is very precious that may be had of all men; it is found on the plain where all feet can tread. There is also a knowledge which dwells upon the hills; only the traveller can reach this and partake of it; and the path which climbs this height is the path of humility and heedfulness; it is taken only by those who are conscious of their own defect, and who are eager to learn *all* the lessons which the Divine teacher is seeking to impart.—C.

Vers. 3, 12.—*Strength and fruitfulness.* Concerning the righteous man two things are here affirmed.

I. IN HIM IS STRENGTH. "The root of the righteous shall never be moved." The strong wind comes and blows down the tree which has not struck its roots far into the soil; it tears it up by the roots and stretches it prone upon the ground. It has no strength to stand because its root is easily moved. The righteous man is a tree of another kind; *his* root shall never be moved; he will stand against the storm. But he must be a man who deserves to be called and considered "righteous" because he is such in deed and in truth; for they are many who pass for such of whom no such affirmation as this can be made. The man of whom the text speaks: 1. *Is well rooted.* He is rooted (1) in *Divine truth*, and not merely in human speculation; (2) in *deep conviction*, and not merely in indolent acceptance of inherited belief, or in strong but evanescent emotion; (3) in the *fixed habit* of the soul and of the life, and not merely in occasional, spasmodic outbursts. 2. *Is immovable.* There may come against him the strong winds of bodily indulgence, or of pure affection, or of intellectual struggle and perplexity, or of worldly pressure; but they do not avail; he is immovable; his roots only strike deeper and spread further in the ground. He "stands fast in the Lord;" he is a conqueror through Christ who loves him. For: 3. He is *upheld by Divine power.* While his own spiritual condition and his moral habits have much to

do with his steadfastness, he will be the first to say that God is "upholding him in his integrity, and setting him before his face."

II. IN HIM IS FRUITFULNESS. "The root of the righteous yieldeth fruit" (ver. 12). The ungodly man cannot be said to bear fruit, for the product of his soul and of his life does not deserve that fair name. 1. The *forms* of godly fruitfulness are these: (1) all excellency of spirit; (2) all beauty and worthiness of life, the presence of that which is pleasing in the sight of God and admirable in the sight of man; (3) all earnest endeavour to do good, the patient, persevering effort to instil the thoughts of Christ into the minds of men, to awaken their slumbering consciences, to lift up their lives, to ennoble their character, to enlarge their destiny. 2. The *source and the security* of such fruitfulness are: (1) Union with the living Vine. (2) Abiding in him (John xv. 1—8). (3) The wise and kind discipline of the Divine Husbandman (John xv. 2; Heb. xii. 10, 11).—C.

Ver. 5.—*Right* (*just*) *thoughts.* "The thoughts of the righteous are right," or are "just" (Revised Version). There is something more than a truism in these words. We may see first—

I. THE PLACE OF THOUGHT IN MAN. This is one of the greatest importance, for it is the deepest of all; it is at the very foundation. 1. *Conduct rests on character.* It is often said that conduct is the greater part of life; it is certainly that part which is most conspicuous, and therefore most influential. But it is superficial; it rests on character; it depends on the principles which are within the soul. It is these which determine a man's position in the kingdom of God. 2. Character is determined by *our prevalent and established feeling;* by what we have learned to love, by what we have come to hate. As a man *thinketh in his heart,* as he feels in his soul, *so is he;* it is our final and fixed attachments and repulsions that decide our character. 3. *Feeling springs from thought.* As we think, we feel. By the thoughts admitted to our minds and entertained there are determined our loves and our hatreds. Life, therefore, is ultimately built on thought. What are we thinking?—this is the vital question. Now, the thoughts of the righteous, the upright, the good, the true man, are right, or *just.*

II. THE JUST THOUGHTS OF THE GOOD. A good man's thoughts are such as are: 1. *Just to himself.* He owes it to himself to think only those thoughts which are pure and true. If he harbours those which are impure and untrue, he is doing himself deadly injury, he is inflicting on his spirit, on himself, a fatal wound. This he has no right to do; he is bound, in justice to himself, to guard the gate of his mind against these—to admit only those which are true and pure. 2. *Just to his neighbours.* He owes it to them to think thoughts that are *honest* and *charitable.* We wrong our brethren, in truth and fact if not in appearance, when we think of them that which is not fair toward them. Every really righteous man will therefore banish thoughts which are not thoroughly honest, and also those which are uncharitable; for to be uncharitable is to be essentially and most materially unjust. 3. *Just to God.* We owe to our Divine Creator and Redeemer all thoughts which are (1) reverent, leading us to piety and devotion; (2) grateful, leading us to thankful praise; (3) submissive, leading us to the one decisive, all-inclusive act of self-surrender, and to daily and hourly obedience to his holy will; (4) *trustful,* leading us to a calm assurance that all is well with us, and that the darkness or the twilight will pass into the perfect day.—C.

Ver. 9.—*Consideration or comfort?* It is worth remarking that we might obtain a very wholesome truth from the text, if we take the exact reverse of the proverb as worded in our version; for then we reach the wise conclusion—

I. THAT SELF-RESPECT, HOWEVER INDIGENT, is better than "being ministered unto" at the cost of reputation. It is better to lack bread, or even life itself, really *honouring ourself,* than it is to receive any amount of service from others, if we have forfeited the regard of the good, and are deservedly "despised." But taking the words as they are, and reaching the sense intended by the writer, we gather—

II. THAT DOMESTIC COMFORT AND SUFFICIENCY ARE MUCH TO BE PREFERRED TO THE GRATIFICATION OF PERSONAL VANITY. One man, in order that he may have consideration and deference from his neighbours, expends his resources on those outward appearances which will command that gratification; to do this he has to deny himself the attend-

ance which he would like to have, and even the nourishment he needs. Another man disregards altogether the slights he may suffer from his meddlesome and intrusive neighbours, in order to supply his home with the food and the comforts which will benefit his family. It is the latter who is the wise man. For: 1. The gratification of vanity is a very paltry satisfaction; there is nothing honourable, but rather ignoble about it; it lowers rather than raises a man in the sight of wisdom. 2. The gratification thus gained is likely to prove very ephemeral, and to diminish constantly in its value; moreover, it is personal and, in that sense, selfish. 3. Domestic comfort is a daily advantage, lasting the whole year round, the whole life long. 4. Domestic comfort not only benefits the head of the household, but all the members of it, and he who makes a happy home is contributing to the good of his country and his kind. Using now the words of the text as suggestive of truths which they do not actually hold, we learn—

III. THAT THERE IS A VALUABLE SERVICE WHICH ALL MAY SECURE. "He that hath a servant." Men are divisible into those that *are* servants and those that *have* them. Some are the slaves of their evil habits; these are to be profoundly pitied, however many menservants or maidservants they may have at their call. But we may and should belong to those who hold their habits, whether of the mind or of the life, under their control and at their command. If that be so with us, then, though we should have no dependents at all in our employ, or though we ourselves should *be* dependents, living in honourable and useful service, we shall have the most valuable servants always at hand to minister to us, building up our character, strengthening our mind, enlarging our life.

IV. THAT WE SHOULD SECURE NOURISHMENT AT ALL COSTS WHATEVER. We must never be "the man that lacketh bread." To attain to any honour, to receive any adulation, to indulge any fancy, and to "lack bread," is a great mistake. For nourishment is strength and fulness of life; it is so in (1) the physical, (2) the intellectual, (3) the moral and spiritual realm. With the regularity and earnestness with which we ask for "daily bread," we should labour and strive to secure it, for our whole nature.—C.

Ver. 16.—(See homily on ch. xxix. 11.)—C.

Ver. 24.—(See homily on ch. xxvii. 23.)—C.

Ver. 26.—*Growth and seductiveness.* The goal which a man will reach must depend on the tendency of the habits he has formed, or the way in which his life inclines, whether upward or downward. Are his habits such that we can properly speak of them as *growing* toward perfection, or such as may be more properly thought of as conducting or seducing to wrong and ruin?

I. THE GROWTH OF GOODNESS. "The righteous is more *abundant* than his neighbour" (marginal reading). He is more abundant because: 1. The blessing of God rests upon him, and his reward is in fruitfulness in some direction. 2. Righteousness means or includes virtue, temperance, industry, thrift, culture; and these mean prosperity and success. 3. God's great prevailing law that "to him that hath [uses, or puts out, what powers he has] is given, and he shall have abundance," is constantly operating here and now, in all realms of human action; consequently, the good man is reaping the beneficial result. (1) In the *physical* world, bodily, muscular exercise "is profiting," and ends in abounding health and strength and capacity of endurance. (2) In the *mental* world, study and patient observation result in abounding knowledge and intellectual grasp. (3) In the *spiritual* world, devotion and the daily learning of Christ (Matt. xi. 28) end in abounding virtue, in the "more abundant life" which the Saviour offers to confer. Thus the life of the righteous man is one of continual growth in all good directions, and he is "more abundant than his neighbour."

II. THE SEDUCTIVENESS OF SIN. "The way of the wicked seduceth them." We read (Heb. iii. 13) of "the deceitfulness of sin." And we know only too well by experience and observation how seductive and deceitful are its ways. 1. It begins with a pleasureableness which promises to continue, but which fails, which indeed turns to misery and ruin (see ch. vii. 6—27). At first it is a soft green slope, but the end is a steep and rocky precipice over which the victim falls. 2. It promises an easy escape

from its hold, but it coils its cords around its subjects with quiet hand, until it holds them in a fast captivity. 3. It persuades its adherents that its ways are right when they are utterly wrong, and thus sings to sleep the conscience which should be aroused and active. 4. It pleads the crowded character of its path, and assures of safety; although the presence of a multitude is no guard or guarantee whatever against the condemnation and the retribution of the Almighty. But let youth understand that all these are "refuges of lies." For the truth is that (1) the way of transgressors is all too soon found to be "hard" indeed. (2) After a very little way is trodden, it is most difficult, and further on all but impossible to return. (3) The paths of sin are all grievously wrong in the sight of Divine purity. (4) "The wages of sin is death."—C.

Ver. 28.—*The one way of life.* "All that a man hath will he give for his life;" but of what worth is life to many men? What does it mean to them but work and sleep and indulgence? Of how many is it true that they "are dead while they live"! But "in the way of righteousness there is life, and in the pathway thereof is no death."

I. THE WAY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS THE ONE PATH OF LIFE. It is the one and only path; for the paths of sin are those of spiritual death. In them the human traveller is separated from God, from all excellency of character, from all true and lasting joy; and what is this but death in everything except the name? It is not the true, the real life of man. But righteousness in the full, broad sense in which the word is here employed, includes: 1. *Devotion;* the spirit of reverence, the act of prayer, the approach of our human spirit to God, and our habitual walking with him and worship of him. 2. *Virtue;* the practice of truthfulness, temperance, purity, integrity; the exercise of self-restraint, the discharge of the duties which we owe to our fellow-men, respecting ourselves and honouring them. 3. *Service;* the endeavour, in a spirit of loving-kindness, to raise, to succour, to guide, to bless, all whom we can reach and influence. 4. *Joy;* i.e. not mere excitement or gratification, which may expire at any moment, and may leave a sting or a stain behind, but rather that honourable and pure elation of spirit which springs from conscious rectitude, which is the consequence of our being in harmony with all that is around us, and with him who is above us, which lasts through the changes of circumstances, which "through all time abides," which "satisfies and sanctifies the soul." This *is* life; this is life *indeed;* this is worth calling *life;* and this is in the way of righteousness.

II. ITS IMMUNITY FROM DEATH. "In the pathway," etc. 1. No death during mortal life; so long as we walk in the light of Divine truth there is no fear of our stumbling into error and falling into the condition of spiritual death; our life in God and with him will be steadily maintained. 2. No real death at the end of that life; for though we must pass through "the portal we call death," yet "it is *not* death to die," when the termination of mortal existence is the starting-point of the celestial life; when the being unclothed of the earthly tenement means the "being clothed upon with our house which is from heaven," when "absence from the body" means "presence with the Lord." 3. Fulness and enlargement of life for ever; for our hope and confident expectation is that, along whatever paths our God may lead us in the heavenly spheres, the way we shall take will be one that will be ever disclosing greater grandeurs, ever opening new sources of joy, ever unfolding new secrets, and making life mean more and more to our rejoicing spirits as the years and ages pass.—C.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XIII.

Ver. 1—ch. xv. 19.—Second section in this collection.

Ver. 1.—**A wise son heareth his father's instruction.** The Authorized Version introduces the verb from the second member. The Hebrew is elliptical, "A wise son, his father's discipline," *i.e.* is the object or the result of his father's education; he owes his wisdom to it. Septuagint, "A clever (*παροῦργος*) son is obedient to his father." **But a scorner** (ch. i. 22) **heareth not rebuke;** one who mocks at goodness and despises filial piety will not listen to reproof. Septuagint, "A disobedient son is in destruction." Compare the case of Eli's sons, and their fate (1 Sam. ii. 25; iv. 17).

Ver. 2.—**A man shall eat good by the fruit of his mouth** (ch. xii. 14; xviii. 20). By his kindly speech and wise counsels he shall gain the good will of his neighbours and the blessing of God. Schultens observes that the word rendered "good" (*tob*) means what is pleasant to taste and smell, while that translated "violence" (*chamas*) signifies literally what is crude and unripe. **The soul of the transgressors** shall eat **violence** (ch. i. 31). The Authorized Version introduces the verb from the first clause unnecessarily. The meaning of this rendering is that sinners, especially the treacherous, bring on themselves retribution; the injuries which they devise against others recoil on their own heads (ch. x. 6). The Hebrew is, "The soul (*i.e.* the desire, or delight) of the perfidious (is) violence." Such men have only one thing at heart, viz. to wrong their neighbour, and to increase their own property by any, even nefarious, proceedings. Septuagint, "Of the fruits of righteousness the good man shall eat; but the lives of transgressors shall perish untimely."

Ver. 3.—**He that keepeth** (guardeth) **his mouth keepeth his life** (ch. xviii. 21; xxi. 23; comp. Ps. xxxix. 1; Jas. i. 26). Thus the gnome—

Ἡ γλῶσσα πολλοὺς εἰς ὄλεθρον ἤγαγεν.

"The tongue hath many to destruction led."

And Ecclus. xxviii. 25, "Weigh thy words in a balance, and make a door and bar for thy mouth. Beware thou slide not by it, lest thou fall before him that lieth in wait." **But he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction** (ch. x. 14). The Vulgate paraphrases, "He who is inconsiderate in speech shall experience evils;" Septuagint, "will terrify himself"—will occasion to himself many terrible alarms and inflictions. Hence the psalmist prays, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips." So we have in the Danish, "A silent man's words are not brought into court;" and in the Spanish, "Let not the tongue say what the head shall pay for;" while the Italians tell us, "The sheep that bleats is strangled by the wolf;" and "Silence was never written down" (Kelly). (See on ch. xviii. 6; xx. 19.)

Ver. 4.—(Comp. ch. x. 4.) **The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing**; literally, *and nothing is there*—he gains nothing (ch. xiv. 6; xx. 4). He has the wish, but not the will, and the empty wish without corresponding exertion is useless (ch. xxi. 25, etc.). Vulgate, "The indolent wishes, and wishes not;" he wishes for something, but he wishes not for the labour of getting it; he would like the result, but he hates the process by which the result is to be obtained. Septuagint, "In desires every idle man is occupied;" his mind is fixed wholly on aimless wishes, not on action. **Shall be made fat** (ch. xi. 25); Septuagint, "The hands of the valiant are fully occupied (ἐν ἐπιμελείᾳ)."

Ver. 5.—**Lying**; Vulgate, *verbum mendax*; Septuagint, λόγον ἄδικον; literally, *a word of falsehood*. But *debar*, "word," is used, like ῥῆμα in Hellenistic Greek, in a general sense for "thing," *i.e.* the subject of speech. So here it is not only verbal lying that is meant, but every kind of deceit and guile. This naturally betrays itself by the speech, according to the proverb, "Show me a liar, and I will show you a thief." **A wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame.** The clause is variously translated. Vulgate, *confundit et confundetur*, "causes shame to others and to himself." Septuagint, "is put to shame, and shall not have licence of tongue (παῤῥησίαν)." The Revised Version margin, "causeth shame and bringeth reproach." Delitzsch, "brings into bad odour (Gen. xxxiv. 30) and causes shame." Hitzig, "behaveth injuriously and shamefully." The antithesis is best brought out by the rendering that marks the effect of the wicked man's "lying;" "He brings disgrace upon others (who have trusted him or have been associated with him) and causes shame."

Ver. 6.—**Righteousness keepeth** (guardeth) **him that is upright in the way**; literally, *uprightness of way*, abstract for concrete, as in the second member, "sin" for "sinner." Those who are good and innocent in the walk of life are preserved from evil, moral and material. **Wickedness overthroweth the sinner**; literally, *sin*. "Overthroweth," makes to slip. Vulgate, *supplantat*. The LXX. inverts the clause, "Sin makes the impious worthless (φαύλους)" (see ch. xi. 3, 5, 6). The verse is omitted in many Greek manuscripts.

Ver. 7.—**There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing.** "Maketh" may mean "feigns." There are some who pretend to be rich while really they are poor (as ch. xii. 9), and there are some who make themselves, *i.e.* pretend to be poor (as misers) while they have much wealth. The Vulgate elucidates this meaning by rendering, *quasi dives* and *quasi pauper*; and the Hebrew verbs confirm its correctness. The proverb in both members teaches one not to trust to appearances. Septuagint, "There are who enrich themselves, having nothing; and there are who humble themselves amid much wealth." It is obvious that such a version lends itself to a Christian interpretation. The first clause reminds one of the rich fool who laid up treasure for himself, and was not rich toward God (Luke xii.

21; comp. Rev. iii. 17, 18). The second clause teaches that wealth expended in God's service makes a man rich in the treasury of heaven (Luke xii. 21, 33). One who thus uses the means entrusted to him could be spoken of like St. Paul, "as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (2 Cor. vi. 10).

Ver. 8.—**The ransom of a man's life are his riches.** A rich man can save himself from many difficulties and dangers by the sacrifice of a portion of his wealth, *e.g.* when his money or his life is demanded by a robber; when men in authority make extortionate demands on pain of death; or when he has incurred extreme penalty by infringement of law (Exod. xxi. 22, 30). Spiritually discerned, the passage recalls Christ's injunction, "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when it shall fail, they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles" (Luke xvi. 9). **The poor heareth not rebuke;** has not to listen to (Job iii. 18) threats from the covetous or abuse from the envious. He has nothing to lose, and no one can gain anything by interfering with him. So the poor man is at peace. "A hundred men cannot rob one pauper."

"Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator."

Ver. 9.—**The light of the righteous rejoiceth;** *lætificat*, Vulgate. But the verb is intransitive, and means "burn joyfully," bright and clear, as the sun rejoices as a strong man to run a race (Ps. xix. 5). This light (*or*) is the grace and virtue which adorn the good man's life, and which beam through all his actions with a cheerful, kindly radiance (comp. ch. iv. 18, 19). This is a true light, kindled in his heart by God, different from **the lamp** (*ner*) **of the wicked,** which is devised and lighted by themselves, and has no element of permanence, but soon **shall be put out** (ch. xxiv. 20; comp. ch. xx. 20; Job xviii. 5; John i. 8; v. 35, where the distinction between "light" and "lamp" is maintained). The lamp of the wicked is the false show of wisdom or piety, which may glimmer and deceive for a time, but is ere long detected and brought to naught. There may be here an allusion to a common custom in the East. "No house, however poor," says Dr. Geikie ('Holy Land,' i. 117), "is left without a light burning in it all night; the housewife rising betimes to secure its continuance by replenishing the lamp with oil. If a lamp goes out, it is a fatal omen" (comp. 1 Kings xv. 4; Jer. xxv. 10; Rev. xviii. 23). Septuagint, "The light of the righteous is everlasting; but the light of sinners is quenched." Then is introduced a couplet not found in the Hebrew, of which the latter part is borrowed from Ps. xxxvii. 21 or cxii. 5, "Crafty souls go astray in sins; righteous men show mercy and pity." The Vulgate inserts this paragraph after ver. 13.

Ver. 10.—**Only by pride cometh contention.** Some render "surely" (*raq*) for "only," as in Gen. xx. 11. Others rightly translate, "By pride cometh only, nothing but, contention." Vulgate, "Between the proud disputes are always rife." One who is haughty and overbearing, or who is too conceited to receive advice, is sure to quarrel with others. Septuagint, "An evil man with insult doeth evil." **With the well-advised is wisdom;** those who are not, like the proud, above taking advice and following it, are wise (ch. xi. 2; xii. 15). As the Vulgate puts it, "They who do all things with counsel are directed by wisdom." The LXX., reading differently, has, "They who know themselves are wise," which implies that the wise know their own weakness and imperfection, and hearken humbly to good counsel.

Ver. 11.—**Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished;** literally, *wealth by a breath;* i.e. wealth obtained without labour and exertion, or by illegitimate and dishonest means, is soon dissipated, is not blessed by God, and has no stability. Vulgate, "riches acquired hastily;" Septuagint, "substance gotten hastily with iniquity." This makes the antithesis more marked, the contrast being between wealth gotten hastily and that acquired by diligent labour. *Cito nata, cito pereunt,* "Quickly won, quickly gone" (see on ch. xx. 21; xxi. 5). Says the Greek maxim—

Μὴ σπεῦδε πλουτεῖν, μὴ ταχὺς πένης γένῃ.

"Haste not for wealth, lest thou be quickly poor."

**He that gathereth by labour;** literally, *with the hand,* handful after handful. Vulgate, *paulatim,* "little by little," by patient industry. *Labor improbus omnia vincit.* Septuagint, "He that gathereth for himself with piety shall be increased." Then is added, "A good man is merciful and lendeth," from Ps. xxxvii. 26. The Septuagint here uses the term εὐσέβεια, which is received in St. Paul's pastoral Epistles and St. Peter's, taking the place of the earlier phrase, φόβος Κυρίου.

Ver. 12.—**Hope deferred maketh the heart sick.** Delay in the accomplishment of some much-desired good occasions sinking of the spirits, languor, and despondence. Many refer this sentence to the impatient longing for heaven which holy men feel, such as we may read in 'De Imitatione,' iii. 48, 49, and in the hymns, "For thee, O dear, dear country," and "We've no abiding city," etc.

And St. Paul can exclaim (Rom. vii. 24), "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (comp. Rom. viii. 23; Phil. i. 23). Septuagint, "Better is he who taketh in hand to aid with all his heart, than he who promises and raises hopes" (comp. Jas. ii. 15, 16). **When the desire cometh**—when the object of the longing is obtained—**it is a tree of life** (ch. xi. 30); there are then no longer languor and despondence, but strength and refreshment and vigorous action. Septuagint, "A good desire is a tree of life."

Ver. 13.—**Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed.** "The word" is either the commandment of God (Deut. xxx. 14), or warning and instruction. He who despises and neglects this word "brings on himself destruction." Many good authorities take the latter verb in another sense, "is pledged by it;" as Revised Version in margin, "maketh himself a debtor thereto," *i.e.* is still bound to fulfil his obligations to it; he cannot escape duty by ignoring or despising it, but is pledged to do it, and will suffer for its neglect. Hence Christ's injunction to agree with our adversary quickly while we are in the way with him (Matt, v. 25). Vulgate, "He who disparages (*detrahit*) anything binds himself for the future." Septuagint, "He who despises a thing (*πράγματος*, *?τάγματος*, 'a command') shall be despised by it." *Virtus se contemnentem contemnit.* **He that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded** (ch. xi. 31). The Vulgate rendering, "shall live in peace," and that of the Septuagint, "shall be healthful," are not so suitable. The "fearing the commandment" implies obedience to it; and reward is considered as fully pledged to obedience as punishment is to neglect. The Septuagint here adds a distich which Ewald regards as genuine, "Unto a crafty son there shall be nothing good; but to a wise servant all actions shall prosper, and his way shall be guided aright." This is also found in the Vulgate of ch. xiv. 15. The Vulgate here inserts the paragraph found in the Septuagint at ver. 9 (*q.v.*), *Animæ dolosæ errant in peccatis; justi autem misericordes sunt et miserantur.*

Ver. 14.—**The law** (instruction) **of the wise is a fountain of life** (ch. x. 11), which has and imparts life (Ecclus. xxi. 13; Ps. xxxvi. 9). The rules and teaching of wise men are a source of life to those who follow them, **so that they depart from the snares of death** (ch. xiv. 27). Obedience to good teaching saves from many dangers, material and spiritual, especially from the snare of the devil (2 Tim. ii. 26). With "snares of death" we may compare Ps. xviii. 5 and Horace's ('Carm.,' iii. 24. 8)

"Non mortis laqueis expedies caput."

Septuagint, "The fool shall perish by the snare."

Ver. 15.—**Good understanding giveth favour** (ch. iii. 4); makes one acceptable to God and man. We are told of Christ that "he increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke ii. 52). As a good and wise man uses his gifts and graces properly, he wins higher favour from God, and kindles the love and respect of his fellow-men. After this clause the Septuagint introduces that which occurs also in ch. ix. 10, "It belongs to a good understanding (*διανοίας*) to know the Law." **The way of transgressors is hard**; rough and rugged, leading to desolation, not to waters of comfort. Ecclus. xxi. 10, "The way of sinners is made plain with stones, but at the end thereof is the pit of hell." Vulgate, "In the way of scorners is an abyss;" Septuagint, "The ways of scorners end in destruction."

Ver. 16.—**Every prudent man dealeth** (worketh, acteth) **with knowledge**; *i.e.* with thought and deliberation, having previously well considered the bearings and issues of his plans. **But a fool layeth open his folly**; Revised Version, *spreadeth out folly*, as if exposing the wares of his shop (ch. xii. 23; xv. 2). One works; the other talks.

Ver. 17.—**A wicked messenger falleth into mischief**; misfortune, calamity (ch. xvii. 20). A messenger who is false to his employer shall be detected and punished. The LXX., reading *melek* for *malak*, renders, "A rash king shall fall into evils." Such a one adopts inconsiderate measures, makes war unadvisedly, etc. **A faithful ambassador** (literally, *an ambassador of faithfulness*, ch. xxv. 13) **is health.** One who faithfully performs his errand is a source of comfort and satisfaction both to his employer and to those to whom he is sent. Septuagint, "But a wise messenger shall deliver him"—the king.

Ver. 18.—**Poverty and shame** shall be **to him that refuseth instruction**; correction, discipline. Nowack takes the two nouns as predicates: "He that refuseth discipline is poverty and shame," *i.e.* they are his lot. Such a one indulges his own lusts and passions, is headstrong in pursuing his own plans, and thus dissipates his fortune and acquires the contempt of all good men. Septuagint, "Discipline taketh away poverty and disgrace." **He that regardeth reproof shall be honoured.** To listen to rebuke and to profit thereby is a proof of humility and self-knowledge, which wins respect from others. Lesêtre refers to Theodosius's submission to the sentence imposed upon him by St. Ambrose as a real honour and glory to him (comp. ch. xii. 1; xv. 5, 32).

Ver. 19.—**The desire accomplished** (comp. ver. 12). This is usually taken to mean the desire of what is good and honest, when it is fulfilled and realized, is a source of highest joy and comfort to the wise. Septuagint, "The desires of the pious are sweet to the soul." **But it is abomination to fools to depart from evil.** The antithesis is not very obvious, but it may be: it is sweet to a good man to obtain his wish; but for a wicked man to leave, to abandon evil to which he clings so fondly, is a detestable alternative. Or the latter clause may mean that the wicked will not give up the evil which makes the satisfaction of their desire impossible. But it is best to take the first clause as a general statement, viz. the satisfaction of desire is pleasant to all men; then the latter member gives a special case and will signify, "For the sake of this pleasure bad men will not give up their evil wishes and plans; they will pursue what they have set their heart upon because they hate the idea of foregoing their evil designs." Septuagint, "The deeds of sinners are far from knowledge," *i.e.* from practical wisdom, prudence, and piety. The Vulgate introduces quite another thought, "Fools abhor those who flee from evil." Compare the passage in Wisd. ii. concerning the sinner's hatred of the good.

Ver. 20.—**He that walketh with wise** men **shall be wise**; or, according to the Khetib, *walk with wise men, and thou shalt be wise.* Ecclus. vi. 36, "If thou seest a man of understanding, get thee betimes unto him, and let thy foot wear the steps of his door." So the Greek maxim—

Σοφοῖς ὁμιλῶν καὶ τὸς ἐκβήσῃ σοφός.

"With wise conversing thou wilt wise become."

And Eurip., 'Rhesus,' 206—

Σοφοῦ παρ' ἀνδρὸς χρὴ σοφόν τι μανθάνειν.

"A man that's wise will thee true wisdom teach."

**A companion of fools shall be destroyed**; literally, *shall be broken*, shall suffer moral ruin; Revised Version margin, "shall smart for it." But the antithesis is not well brought out by this rendering; and as the word may bear the sense of "doing ill" as well as of "suffering ill," the interpretation of the Vulgate intimates the correct idea of the clause: "The friend of fools shall turn out the same;" "He who associates with fools shall do evil." Septuagint, "He who roams about with fools shall be known." "Tell me your companions, and I will tell you what you are."

"Talis quis esse putatur qualis ei est sodalitas."

A Dutch proverb says, "He that lives with cripples learns to limp;" and the Spanish, "He that goes with wolves learns to howl." We have a homely English proverb, "He that lies down with dogs shall rise up with fleas;" so the Orientals say, "He that takes the raven for his guide shall light upon carrion."

Ver. 21.—**Evil pursueth sinners.** Sinners suffer not only the natural consequences of crime in external evil, injury to body, estate, reputation, etc. (Ps. xi. 6), but also stings of conscience and remorse; even seeming prosperity is often a chastisement, and long impunity is only augmenting the coming retribution. As the shadow attends the substance, so guilt is attached to sin, and brings with it punishment. **To the righteous good shall be repaid**; or, *he, Jehovah, shall repay good* (comp. ch. xii. 14); Revised Version, "The righteous shall be recompensed with good." They shall have the answer of a good conscience, happiness here and hereafter. Septuagint, "Good shall take possession of (or, overtake) the righteous."

Ver. 22.—**A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children.** This would be especially notable where a system of temporal rewards and punishments was expected and generally experienced. **The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.** Property unjustly acquired, or wickedly used, is taken from those who have it, and ultimately finds its way into better hands. They cannot keep it, and consequently cannot leave it to their children.

"De male quæsitis non gaudet tertius hæres."

"Ill-gotten wealth no third descendant holds."

This has often been the fate of property obtained by the sacrilegious seizure of what was dedicated to God's service. For the general view of the clause, comp. ch. xxviii. 8; Job xxvii. 16, 17; Eccles. ii. 26; and the case of Jacob (Gen. xxxi. 9), and the Israelites (Exod. xii. 35, 36), when "the righteous spoiled the ungodly" (Wisd. x. 20).

Ver. 23.—**Much food is in the tillage** (tilled ground) **of the poor** (ch. xii. 11). The word rendered "tillage" (*nir*) means ground worked for the first time, and therefore that on which much labour is bestowed. Hence the Vulgate rightly renders, *novalibus*. It occurs in Jer. iv. 3 and Hos. x. 12, where our version has "fallow ground." The poor, but righteous man, who industriously cultivates his little plot of ground, secures a good return, and is happy in eating the labour of his hands (Ps. cxxviii. 2). Instead of "the poor," the Vulgate has, "the fathers," taking אבות in this sense; so the

the meaning would be that children who properly cultivate their paternal or hereditary fields obtain good crops. But the Authorized Version rendering is doubtless preferable. **There is that is destroyed for want of judgment**; rather, as the Revised Version, *by reason of injustice*. Rich men are often brought to ruin by their disregard of right and justice (*mishpat*). Some (poor men) are amply supplied by honest labour; others (rich) lose all by wrong dealing. Vulgate, "For others it (food) is gathered contrary to justice;" Septuagint, quite astray, "The righteous shall pass many years in wealth; but the unrighteous shall suddenly perish"—which seems to be an explanation or amplification of ver. 22.

Ver. 24.—**He that spareth his rod hateth his son.** Correction of children is a great point with our author (see ch. xix. 18; xxii. 15; xxiii. 13, etc.; xxix. 15, 17). So Ecclus. xxx. 1, "He that loveth his son causeth him oft to feel the rod, that he may have joy of him in the end." Dukes, "Gold must be beaten, and a boy needs blows" ('Rabbin. Blumenlese,' 71). **Chasteneth him betimes**; literally, *early in the morning* (ch. i. 28; viii. 17), which may mean, in the morning of life, ere evil habits have time to grow, or directly after the offence. Or the expression may signify "diligently." Vulgate, *instanter*; Septuagint, ἐπιμελῶς.

Ver. 25.—**The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul** (comp. ch. x. 3; Ps. xxxiv. 10). The good man has always enough to satisfy his wants, because he is temperate, and his substance has the blessing of God. "The chief thing for life," says Siracides (Ecclus. xxix. 21), "is water, and bread, and clothing, and a house to cover shame." **The belly of the wicked shall want.** The wicked are punished by penury and desires never satisfied. These different results are providentially ordered.

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—"*A wise son.*" The young man who considers himself to be exceptionally clever is tempted to idolize his own notions and despise parental correction. We are reminded that such conduct may be a grievous mistake and a proof of essential folly, and that true wisdom will follow a more humble course of filial duty. It is not merely obligatory on the son to submit to his father; it is for his own interest to follow paternal advice, and a mark of wisdom. Of course, this is taken as a general principle. A conscientious son may be cursed with a base-minded parent, whose directions it will be anything but wise to follow. By manly intelligence and with Christian liberty, general maxims can only be applied in view of suitable circumstances. We may take it that on the whole, when the relationship is normal, wisdom will prompt submission to paternal correction.

I. NO ONE CAN TRULY ESTIMATE HIS OWN CONDUCT. We cannot stand off from ourselves and view ourselves in perspective. We make the most egregious mistakes in judging ourselves, because we cannot see ourselves as others see us. The object is also the subject, and subjective feelings colour our objective perceptions of self. It is therefore a great security for a young man to have a guide apart from himself whom he can trust, as he can trust a father.

II. A FATHER CORRECTS IN LOVE. There are brutal parents, whose chastisement implies anything but sound correction. But the true father considers the highest interests of his son. If he expresses disapproval it is because he believes some material wrong has been done. His rebuke is for wholesome improvement.

III. A FATHER HAS LARGER EXPERIENCE THAN HIS SON. His age gives him the advantage of fuller knowledge and riper judgment. It may also bring a certain stiffening of notions and aversion to innovation. But even then it may still be keen to detect real errors and right in warning against them.

IV. A FATHER HAS AUTHORITY OVER HIS SON. This was recognized longer in former times than in the present day, when many sons are over-anxious to emancipate themselves from parental control. Now, there is a certain wisdom in submitting to established authority. Rebellion can only be justified by extreme wrong. Where no plain cause for rebellion exists, it is wise as well as right to submit.

V. THE PARENTAL RELATION ON EARTH IS TYPICAL OF THE RELATION BETWEEN GOD AND HIS PEOPLE. All the arguments which point to the wisdom of a son's submitting to correction from an earthly parent apply with immensely greater force to man's position before God. God regards us with love; he knows everything; he has a right and power to direct and correct us. Whatever modern notions of domestic revolts

may be entertained by any of us, it still remains clear that it is wise to bow before the correction of God, our great and good Father.

Ver. 10.—*Pride and contention.* I. THE REASONS WHY PRIDE PRODUCES CONTENTION. 1. *It is self-assertive.* The proud man claims a large and prominent place for himself. He will not endure a secondary position. He demands his rights not so much because he really wishes to enjoy them, as because they *are* his rights. He will not forego them even when he gains no advantage by the exercise of them. Now, this self-assertiveness threatens the supposed rights of others where the boundary-line is as yet uncertain. It also provokes a similar spirit in a man's neighbours. 2. It is *exacting.* Pride claims its dues. The proud lord will have every ounce of respect from his underlings. Even those who are met on equal terms are narrowly scrutinized to see if they withhold a shadow of the supposed rights from the jealousy of pride. 3. It is *overbearing.* It will not endure opposition; it is intolerant of differences of opinion; it would rather trespass on the rights of others than surrender any of its own claims. Thus it is perpetually challenging all who cross its path.

II. THE REGIONS IN WHICH PRIDE PRODUCES CONTENTION. 1. *Among nations.* It was thought that war sprang from the pride and jealousy of monarchs, and that when the people gained power war would cease. But republics declare war. There is a dangerous form of national pride. It is possible for a whole people to be carried away by unreasoning elation, and to make inordinate claims for itself, or to be unduly sensitive to affront. 2. *In society.* Pride is here one of the chief dangers to the order and peace of cities. The poor would endure the sight of the prosperity of the rich if they were not goaded by the more irritating spectacle of insulting pride. The least that they can do who have more than their share of the good things of life is to hold them with quiet humility. To flaunt their superiority of good fortune in the face of their miserable fellow-citizens, and to make it a ground for scorn and contempt, is to rouse the latent rage of men who are already chafing under what—whether rightly or wrongly—they regard as a grossly unjust social order. 3. *In private life.* Pride is the most direful source of family quarrels. It separates the best friends, and it sets up the most invincible barriers against a speedy reconciliation. When love would hold out the hand of forgiveness, pride hangs back in gloomy resentfulness.

III. THE WAY TO PREVENT PRIDE FROM PRODUCING CONTENTION. There is but one way; pride must be humiliated and cast out. This monster sin is directly aimed at in the preaching of the gospel of the cross. It is found lurking in the breasts of men who are regarded as saints; but it is no part of their saintliness. It is still a sin in the sight of God. Christ cannot endure it, and one who would follow Christ must forsake it. There is no better way of destroying it than by submission to the yoke of him who was "meek and lowly."

Ver. 11.—*Fraudulent gain.* I. THE DELUSIVE APPEARANCE OF FRAUDULENT GAIN. This looks very different from coarse, vulgar robbery. The sleek swindler owns no common brotherhood with the brutal burglar. Fraudulent gain is got in the way of business; it is not at all like the money directly stolen from a man's pocket. The process is so very roundabout that it is difficult to trace the transition from fair dealing to cheating. The decorous thief would be horrified at hearing his true name. He knows his actions are not quite straightforward, but the crookedness of them is almost hidden from himself by neat contrivances. Now, all this makes the pursuit of fraudulent gain the more treacherous and dangerous. A man who follows such a course is lost before he owns himself to be dishonest.

II. THE TEMPTATIONS TO MAKE FRAUDULENT GAIN. They spring from various sources. 1. *Keen competition.* It is so hard to make a living in the fierce contest of business life, when every rival is treated as an enemy, that any extra advantage is eagerly sought after. 2. *Large promises.* As the margin of profits shrink while the requirements of energy and alertness grow, any expedient that promises more speedy and remunerative returns is likely to present a fascinating appearance. 3. *Compromising customs.* Business is not always conducted on perfectly honest grounds, and the dishonesty that is prevalent claims to be sanctioned by usage. Moreover, if *some* departure from absolute right is permitted, a greater degree of dishonesty is but

another step in the same direction. 4. *Hopes of secrecy.* The man of business cannot afford to lose his good name, and therefore plain self-interest holds him back from open theft. But the subtle pursuit of a more refined form of dishonesty appears to be possible without any loss of character. Thus as the pressure of the opinion of society is eluded, the only conscience which some men recognize ceases to operate.

III. THE RUINOUS RESULTS OF MAKING FRAUDULENT GAIN. 1. *It is a great sin.* The delusive appearance of the pursuit blinds people to its true character. But theft cannot be made honest by becoming refined. All the laws of righteousness bristle up in front of the man who pursues dishonesty, and threaten his ruin. Even though social and civil retribution be evaded, there is a higher court of justice than any of man's jurisdiction, and before its awful bar the wealthy, respected thief must ultimately stand condemned. 2. *It is likely to lead to earthly ruin.* The man whose life is one huge lie lives in a frail shell, which may be broken at any moment to expose him to pitiless punishments. Then what has he to fall back upon? He who has laid up treasures in heaven can afford to lose his poor, earthly stores; but one who has sold his prospects of heaven for brief earthly profits loses all when the gains of this life are snatched from him. The way of peace and safety can never be any other than the way of right.

Ver. 12.—*Hope deferred.* I. THE HOPE THAT IS DEFERRED. Most men who live to any purpose live by hope. It is scarcely possible to press forward with energy to a future that is wholly dark. The prospect of some future good is a present inspiration. Thus hope takes a large place in the heart of man. Note some of its forms. 1. *The hope of youth.* It is natural for youth to believe in the future, to treat its possibilities as certainties, and to colour its grey outline with the gorgeous hues of a fresh imagination. 2. *The hope of this world.* Pursuits of business or pleasure allure those who enter them with good promises. 3. *The hope of heaven.* They who have been disappointed in all earthly anticipations may cherish this glorious dream. 4. *The hope that is unselfish.* Hope need not be centred in personal pleasure. We may hope for a great cause, and hope to see some good effected, though by the sacrifice of ourselves. 5. *The hope that is in God.* A sorrowful soul may hope in God with no distinct visions of any possible future advantage, making God himself the Hope. "Christ our Hope."

II. HOW THE HOPE IS DEFERRED. 1. *By disillusion.* From the first the hope may be too sanguine. The mirage is mistaken for the oasis. Or perhaps distance is misjudged. We think that we are near to the future that still lies in the remote distance with leagues of desert between us and it. Experience must dispel such an illusion. 2. *By direct disappointment.* The well-founded hope may be deferred by a change of circumstances, or failure of ability to accomplish it, unfaithfulness to a promise, etc. Thus in life the expected "good time coming" is continually receding as men approach it. Hope may be deferred by trying changes of circumstances, or by a man's own mistakes and failures.

III. WHY THE HEART IS MADE BITTER. To be lifted up and dropped down gives a shock which is not felt if we remain on the low ground. Disappointment is a source of keen pain in any case; but when it is repeated after vague anticipations and uncertainties, it is far more distressing. The hope deferred is not denied. We cannot banish it as a mistake. Such an act would be easier to bear; there would be first a great shock of disappointment, and then the dead hope would be buried out of sight, and the grief of the loss of it would grow lighter with time. But when the hope is deferred, it is continually present, yet as a disappointment. The mind is first on the rack of wondering expectation, and then there follows a sense of unutterable weariness—true heart-sickness. It is said that sea-sickness is produced by the sinking from beneath a person of the support on which he rests. The heart-sickness of a hope long deferred arises from a similar cause in the experience of souls.

IV. HOW THIS BITTERNESS MAY BE CURED. 1. *By the satisfaction of the hope.* Long deferred, it may yet come. When we are most despairing the tide may turn. The heart-sick mother is startled with a sudden joy in the return of her long-lost sailor-lad when she is relinquishing the weary hope of ever seeing him again. 2. *By the rising of a new hope.* If this may not be found in earthly experience, and the very

mention of it sounds like treason to the faithful soul, it may indeed appear in higher regions of life. In the bitterness of earthly disappointment Christ's great hope may be received. 3. *By trusting in God.* "Oh rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him." The earthly hope may be deferred, disappointed, shattered; yet some soul-satisfying answer will be given to the prayer of faith.

Ver. 17.—*A faithful messenger.* In early times, when no public postal arrangements existed, and when reading and writing were not generally cultivated, communications were more often sent by verbal messages and personal messengers. Great mischief would then accrue through unfaithfulness on the part of one of these agents of business or friendship. But important as would be the social effects arising out of this condition of affairs, far more momentous consequences must flow from the action of messengers between God and man. They indeed need to be faithful.

I. THE CHRISTIAN PREACHER IS A MESSENGER. 1. *He carries a message.* He has to declare the truth of God as he has received it. He is the custodian of a gospel. The prophet has to utter the word of inspiration, and the apostle to proclaim the kingdom of heaven, and Christ as its King. Something of the prophet and apostle must be found in every Christian preacher. He is to go forth with the message that God has given him. 2. *He delivers his message in person.* The message is not posted; it is carried personally, and delivered by the mouth of the messenger. It is not enough that God's truth is recorded in the Bible, and that the Bible is circulated throughout the world. The living voice of the living man is needed. The missionary is God's messenger—so also is every true preacher of the gospel.

II. THE MESSENGER IS REQUIRED TO BE FAITHFUL. 1. *He must deliver his message.* The missionary must travel; the preacher at home must work among his people. Jonah was unfaithful in fleeing to Tarshish. Mere silence is unfaithfulness when one is entrusted with a message to deliver. 2. *He must give it intact.* He may neither add to it nor detract from it. Faithfulness in a Christian preacher means not shunning to declare the whole counsel of God, and not adding "vain philosophy" or "traditions of men" thereto. Of course, there is room for thought, reasoning, imagination, adaptation of the truth to the hearer, but not so as to modify the essential message. 3. *He must disregard consequences.* It may seem to him that the message is useless. Men may reject it; they may resent his offer of it; they may turn upon him and rend him. Yet it is just his duty to give the message that is entrusted to him.

III. THE FIDELITY OF THE MESSAGE SECURES HEALTH OF SOUL. Elsewhere we read, "The tongue of the wise is health" (ch. xii. 18). 1. *It is an evidence of honesty and moral courage.* The existence of messengers who are faithful even under the most trying circumstances proves that honour and right are regarded. It is for the health of a community at large that such virile qualities should be found among the leaders of thought. 2. *It secures the presentation of truth to men.* All lies and delusions are noxious poisons. Truth is food and medicine for the soul. A community that is fed on truth, though the truth be tough or bitter, is nourished with wholesome diet. That is indeed a healthy society in which all the citizens are led by honest teachers to unsophisticated truth. 3. *It brings the most needful messages to the world.* The Christian teacher is called upon to preach Christ—to show the need of Christ in the ruin of sin, the grace of Christ to save, and the right of Christ to rule. These are health-giving truths; they constitute the direct antidote to the deadly poison of sin. He who honestly proclaims them makes for the health of his fellow-men.

Ver. 24.—*Sparing the rod.* The primitive rigour of the Book of Proverbs is repudiated by modern manners. Not only in domestic training, but even in criminal law, people reject the old harsh methods, and endeavour to substitute milder means of correction. No doubt there was much that was more than rough, even brutal, in the discipline of our forefathers. The relation between father and child was too often lacking in sympathy through the undue exercise of parental authority, and society generally was hardened rather than purged by pitiless forms of punishment. But now the question is whether we are not erring towards the opposite extreme in showing more tenderness to the criminal than to his victim, and failing to let our children feel the need of some painful discipline. We idolize comfort, and we are in danger of think-

ing pain to be worse than sin. It may be well, therefore, to consider some of the disadvantages of neglecting the old-fashioned methods of chastisement.

I. IT IS A MISTAKE TO SUPPOSE THE ROD TO BE CRUEL BECAUSE IT HURTS. This mistake is made quite as much by the hand that should hold the rod as by the back that should feel it. Pain may be most wholesome. The highest form of punishment is that in which the cure of the offender is aimed at. To think more of the sufferings of the offender than of his sin is to show a failure of conscience, a lack of appreciation of the really evil condition of the sinner. We should learn that it is worse to sin than to suffer.

II. THERE ARE CERTAIN SPECIAL CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH PAINFUL CHASTISEMENT IS THE MOST WHOLESOME FORM OF CORRECTION. 1. *In the offender.* Some natures are redeemed by a process of punishment which will only crush others. A low and cruel nature especially needs painful punishment. 2. *In the offence.* Sins of the morally degrading class are best punished with sharp pains. The treatment which may suit a more spiritual sin, and may well reveal the shame and evil of it, would not touch these coarser forms of wickedness.

III. IT IS A SIGN OF WEAKNESS OR SELFISHNESS TO WITHHOLD NEEDFUL CHASTISEMENT. 1. *Of weakness.* The lawful authority may not have the energy to proceed to an extremity. So serious an action requires strength of purpose. 2. *Of selfishness.* It must be simply agonizing for a kind-hearted father to have to bring pain and disgrace on his son. But to hold back from the exercise of wholesome discipline on this account is really to give way to sinful self-indulgence. The true father will hurt himself in punishing his child. No doubt a certain self-indulgent softness is to be found in the present objection of society to punish criminals with due severity.

IV. GOD'S CHASTISEMENT OF HIS CHILDREN IS FOR THEIR GOOD. He does not hate his sons; therefore, at times, he does not spare his rod (see ch. iii. 12). There is neither weakness in the Almighty nor selfishness in the All-merciful. He must and will chastise sin for the correction of the sinner. We must suffer if we sin, though it is for us to choose whether we are to endure the punishment of the impenitent or the chastisement of the penitent.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—*General truths of health and salvation.* I. DOCILITY AS CONTRASTED WITH STUBBORNNESS. (Ver. 1.) Let us carry this into the distinctly religious sphere. To be wise is to be a good *listener*. In the expressive phrase of the Bible, to "hearken to the voice of Jehovah," to listen to the suggestions of the inward monitor, is the secret of a sober, well-balanced habit of mind, and of every safe line of conduct. All that God teaches, by the voice of inspired teachers, by our own experience, by the inner revelations of the heart, is "a father's instruction." Above all, instruction by means of suffering is God's fatherly way with souls. And we have the great example of Christ to guide us and to sweeten obedience, for he "learned" it by the things which he suffered. On the other hand, the scorner has cast aside all reverential awe in the presence of the Holy One. To refuse the faithful warnings of friends, to be no better for those lessons of experience which are written in personal suffering, is to disown one's filial relation, and to estrange one's self from God.

II. TRUE LIFE-ENJOYMENT AND ITS CONTROL. (Ver. 2.) 1. Enjoyment represented under the figure of eating. As indeed eating is a most significant act, the foundation of life, the pledge of social communism. 2. The foundation of enjoyment is in one's inward state and one's social relations. The more widely we can enter into the life of others, the richer our life-joy. The unsocial life not only dries up the springs of joy, but is positively punished—in extreme cases by law, as in crimes of violence alluded to in the text, always by the alienation of sympathy.

III. THE USE AND ABUSE OF SPEECH. (Ver. 3; see on ch. x. 19, 31; xxi. 23.) How often this lesson recurs! 1. In the lower aspect it is a lesson of prudence. Reserve and caution make the safe man; loquacity and impulsiveness of speech the unsafe man. 2. In a higher point of view, the habit of silence, implying much meditation and self-communion, is good for the soul.

"Sacred silence! thou that art offspring of the deepor heart,
Frost of the mouth and thaw of the mind."

How easy, on the other hand, to injure our souls by talking much about religion or subjects that lie on the circumference of religion, and falling into the delusion that talk may be substituted for life!—*J.*

Vers. 4, 7, 8, 11.—*The value and use of property.* I. THE WORTH OF THIS WORLD'S GOODS IS ASSUMED. It is needless to show that property is a necessary institution of life under present conditions. All the strong things said in the gospel about riches do not dispute their value; it is in the *relation of the spirit* to them that evil arises. Their value as a means to the ends of the spirit is unquestioned, and everywhere assumed.

II. THE VANITY OF RICHES WITHOUT CORRESPONDING ACTION. Wishes are a great force in our nature (compare Mozley's sermon on the 'Power of Wishes'). Still, they have no practical effect unless they are transformed into will and into exertion of means to an end. It is the very characteristic of the fool that his mind evaporates in wishes; he is always desiring, but never at the pains to get anything. He is always idly expecting something to "turn up." This is a sheer superstition, a sort of clinging to the magical belief that the course of nature can be altered for one's private benefit. The lesson is, of course, equally applicable to higher things. "He would fain go to heaven if a morning dream would carry him there." He wishes to be good, to die the death of the righteous, but, at the same time, to continue in a way of life that can lead neither to the one nor to the other. Hell is paved with good intentions.

III. THE SECRET OF PROSPERITY IS DILIGENCE. Here desire is united with exertion, and it is an almost irresistible combination, as the careers of men who have risen constantly show. To conceive a good thing with such is to desire it; to desire it is to begin at once to work for it. This course must bring "rich satisfaction"—the satisfaction, by no means the least, of the pursuit, and the satisfaction in the end of entire or partial fruition. And so in moral and spiritual progress. We cannot overcome our weaknesses and sins by direct resistance, but we may react upon them by filling the mind with profitable matter of thought. The rich satisfaction depends in every case upon the same law; the personal energies must be aroused, and an object must be aimed at. Satisfaction is the complete joy of the mind in closing with and possessing a worthy and desirable object.

IV. THE CONCEIT OF RICHES IS NOT REAL RICHES. (Ver. 7; comp. ch. xii. 9.) The saying may be directed against the foolish pride of birth and ostentation without anything real to back it up. It strikes a common vice of modern times—the aim to keep up appearances, and to pass for something greater in position than one really is. The contrasted example teaches the lesson of preferring the substance to the show, of being willing to appear much less than one is. And so in higher matters; take care to *be* what is sound and good in principle, and the *seeming* may be left for the most part to take care of itself. No appearances deceive God, and nothing that is real escapes him.

V. THE PRACTICAL SERVICE OF RICHES. (Ver. 8.) They may provide a ransom from captivity, from penal judgment, from the hand of robbers. Their power to procure deliverances from the evils of life is much wider in the present day. The poor man, on the contrary, "listens to no rebuke," *i.e.* no threats can extort from him what he has not got. He is helpless for want of means. A lesson not often taught from the pulpit, and perhaps not needed for the majority—prudent regard to the possible advantages of money, stimulating to industry in the quest for it. Still, some *do* need the lesson. And the Bible has no affectation of a false contempt for the means of living. Business men should be encouraged in their pursuit of wealth, and guided in their application of it.

VI. WEALTH ONLY PERMANENT WHEN WELL-GOTTEN. (Ver. 11.) Perhaps the translation to be preferred is, "Swindled wealth becomes small." Hastily gotten generally means hastily spent. And dishonest gain burns the fingers. How often do we see a feverish passion for spending going hand-in-hand with unlawful or unhealthy getting! A healthy acquisition of wealth is *gradual*, and the result of *steady industry*. Rapid fortune-making, or sudden "strokes of luck," are certainly not to be envied in view of the good of the soul.

LESSONS. 1. Wealth is a good in itself. When we speak of it as an evil, we are using a certain figure of speech; for the evil is in the false relation of the soul to this as to other earthly objects. 2. In the desires that relate to wealth, their proper control and direction, the moral discipline probably of the majority must ever lie. 3. Safety is to be found in the religious habit, which sees in earthly objects good only as they can be connected with that which is beyond themselves, and is Divine and eternal.—J.

Ver. 5.—*Purity and impurity of sentiment.* I. AVERSION FROM ALL UNTRUTH A LEADING CHARACTER OF PURITY. This does not imply that the good man never falls into acts or words which are untrue to his nature. But as a child of God, there is in his spiritual or ideal nature a rooted *antipathy* to lies, and a deep *sympathy* with truth in all its forms. 'Tis only truthfulness which can impart *fragrance, charm, delight,* to character.

II. THE CONTRARY DISPOSITION OF THE WICKED IS LOATHSOME AND SHAMEFUL. Antipathy to truth—and, alas! perversion may actually bring men to this—produces upon the pure moral taste an impression akin to that of nausea or deformity upon the physical sensibility. And we *blush* for it as a common odium and disgrace of human nature.—J.

Ver. 6.—*The outward correspondence with the inward.* I. UPRIGHTNESS IS THE DESIGNATION OF BOTH AN INWARD AND AN OUTWARD STATE. 1. As a sensuous image, uprightness suggests *strength, confidence, well-grounded* stability. 2. As a figure of the mind and character, it denotes *moral principle, fixed purpose,* based upon firm faith in God and his moral order. 3. Its consequence is a state of security amidst danger, freedom from evil.

II. WICKEDNESS AND RUIN ARE INTERCHANGEABLE THOUGHTS. 1. The ruin begins in the inward decay of moral principle. 2. It is consummated in outward decay—of reputation, of possessions, of health, of life.—J.

Ver. 9.—*Joy and gloom.* I. LIGHT IS THE SYMBOL OF JOY.

II. HENCE THE CHEERFUL BURNING OF A LIGHT IS THE SYMBOL OF THE GOOD MAN'S HEART. He sits in the centre and enjoys clear day.

III. GLOOM IS THE NATURAL EMBLEM OF SORROW.

IV. THE PUTTING OUT OF A LAMP IN DARKNESS IS THE EMBLEM OF THE EXTINCTION OF JOY, OF HOPE—of all that makes life worth having, and of life itself.—J.

Ver. 10.—*Pride and teachableness.* PRIDE BEGETS CONTROVERSY, WHICH CAN SELDOM BE CARRIED ON LONG WITHOUT DEGENERATING INTO EGOTISM. 1. There is contention for contention's sake, which is ever idle and baneful. 2. There is contention for truth's sake. But in the latter lie many dangers to purity of temper. Whenever we become angry in controversy, as a great man said, we cease to contend for the truth, and begin to contend for ourselves.—J.

Ver. 12.—*The sickness of disappointment and the joy of fruition.* I. HOPE DELAYED. Who has not known that sickness of the heart, that slow-consuming misery of which the text speaks? It is a sorrow of every age. Life itself is by some spent in this still lingering delay. The stern experience of the course of the world teaches us that the sentimental and romantic view of the future, so natural to youth, must give way to realities.

II. HOPE DELAYED IS THE TRIAL OF FAITH. The *duration* of the trial rather than the intensity is painful. So with Abraham in reference to Isaac (Gen. xv. 2, 3).

III. THERE IS A LOVING PROVIDENTIAL MEANING AT THE HEART OF THESE TRIALS. They are essentially *time* trials; they have an end—the "end of the Lord." So the boy named "Laughter" came to Abraham; so the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, and the delivered were like unto them that dream! So Simeon could sing his *Nunc dimittis* on the appearance of the long-expected Saviour; and on his resurrection the disciples "believed not for joy, and wondered."

IV. A CERTAIN FRUITION IS PROMISED TO THE DESIRE OF THE RIGHTEOUS. "Yet a

little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (comp. Rom. viii. 23; 2 Cor. v. 2—4).—J.

Vers. 13—17.—*The value of the Divine Word.* I. REVERENCE AND IRREVERENCE FOR THE DIVINE WORD. The "Word" is any revelation man receives of God, whether through nature, oracles of the prophets, or in his immediate consciousness. The last, in the deepest sense, is the condition of all other revelations. Irreverence is shown either when men are deaf and indifferent to the Divine voice, or when they suffer it to be out-clamoured by other voices—of passion, policy, etc. The *result* is that he who thus sins is "pledged" or forfeited to the Divine Law, here personified or regarded as a superhuman power. Hence appears the truth from this figure, that in disobedience our *freedom* is lost. On the contrary, reverence and obedience receive a certain reward: "Glory, honour, and peace to every man that worketh good" (Rom. ii. 10).

II. THE DOCTRINE OF THE WISE. (Ver. 14.) The teaching that is founded on Divine revelation is a source of life, and a safeguard against the snares of death (comp. ch. x. 11).

III. THERE MUST BE RECEPTIVITY TOWARDS THIS DOCTRINE. The Word must be "mixed with faith in those that hear." The favour of God is free in one sense, *i.e.* is no earned result of our conduct; but it is conditional in another, viz. it depends on our compliance with his will. The contrast to the life in the light of God's favour, watered by vital nourishment from the springs of truth, is the "way of the faithless," which is "barren," dry, as in "a dry and thirsty land where no water is."

IV. PRUDENCE AND GOOD COUNSEL MUST BE ADDED TO REVERENCE. (Ver. 16.) *Thoughtfulness* is needed in studying the evidences, the substance, the applications of religion. And in the practical conduct of life how necessary! for more errors are committed for want of judgment and discrimination as to time, place, and circumstances, than for want of true and right purpose. The man destitute of tact pours folly abroad; temper, vanity, caprice, are exposed in all that he does and says.

V. FAITHFUL AND UNFAITHFUL MINISTRY. (Ver. 17.) The wicked messenger prepares misfortune both for his master and for himself; while the faithful servant will amend even his master's mistakes. Applied to sacred things, every Christian should consider himself a messenger, an *apostle* in however humble a sphere, of God and his truth. And "it is required of stewards that they be found faithful."—J.

Vers. 18—25.—*The blessings of obedience and their counterpart.* I. THE BLESSINGS OF OBEDIENCE. 1. *Honour.* (Ver. 18.) "'Tis a good brooch to wear in a man's hat at all times," says one of our old poets. Love is common to all the creatures, as life and death; honour belongs to men alone; and dishonour must be worse than death. The praise of others is the reflection of virtue, and a good name like fragrant ointment. 2. *Satisfied desire.* (Ver. 19.) And what is sweeter than the attainment of worthy "ends and expectations"? And if we will but have faith, this satisfaction may be ours, by setting our hearts on *internal* blessings, the kingdom of God and his righteousness. 3. *Improving companionship.* (Ver. 20.) Friendship with the wise makes daylight in the understanding out of darkness and confusion of thoughts. Our wits and understanding clarify and break up in communicating and discoursing with one another. "We toss our thoughts more easily, marshal them more soberly; see how they look when turned into words; we wax wiser than ourselves, and that more by an hour's discourse than by a day's meditation" (Lord Bacon). 4. *Unfailing compensations.* All things are double, one against another. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, on the one side; measure for measure, love for love, on the other. "Give, and it shall be given you;" "He that watereth shall be watered himself." "What will you have?" saith God; "pray for it, and take it." "If you serve an ungrateful master, serve him the more. Put God in your debt. Every stroke shall be repaid. The longer the payment is withholden, the better for you; for compound interest on compound interest is the rate and usage of this exchequer." 5. *Hereditary good.* (Ver. 22.) We desire to prolong our blessings, in the view of fancy, beyond our lives; and the desire to leave behind a fortune, or a name and fame, is one of the most common and natural. The thought that all the good our life has produced will be still a germinant power with our descendants after we are gone, is one of the noblest

and most inspiring. 6. *Fruitful poverty.* (Ver. 23.) The image is that of the poor man's field, which becomes rich in produce through the investment of his toil in it. The improvement of the ground is the most natural way of obtaining riches; it is our great mother's blessing, the earth. The blessing of God visibly rests upon the honest labour of the poor. 7. *Wise training of the young.* (Ver. 24.) The rod may stand as a figure for all correction, firm yet kindly discipline, and instruction. The wise father will seek to *anticipate* moral evil by subduing early the passionate temper. He will incessantly follow up his child with prayer, with discipline, with exhortations, that he may not later rue the absence of seasonable warnings. 8. *Temperate enjoyment and sufficient supplies.* (Ver. 25.) The mind governed by religion and wisdom learns to reduce its wants to a small compass; and this is a great secret of content and of true riches. He who wants only what is necessary for the life and free action of the soul may rely with confidence on the infinite bounty of Providence.

II. THE COUNTERPART. 1. *Poverty and shame.* (Ver. 18.) The one an outward misery, patent to all; the other not so patent, but more acute; for contempt, as the Indian proverb says, pierces through the shell of the tortoise. So long ago as old Homer, we find the sentiment, "Shame greatly hurts or greatly helps mankind" ('Iliad,' xxiv. 45; Hesiod, 'Op.,' 316). "Take one of the greatest and most approved courage, who makes nothing to look death and danger in the face, . . . in a base and a shameful action, and the eye of the discoverer, like that of the basilisk, shall strike him dead. So inexpressibly great sometimes are the killing horrors of this passion" (South, vol. ii. ser. vii.). The Bible designates this as a peculiar fruit of sin. 2. *The unquenchable fire of lust.* (Ver. 19.) To this the correct rendering of the second member of the verse appears to point (Jas. i. 14, 15). 'Tis hard to give up the bosom sin, which still in better moments is hated—a loathsome tyranny, yet one which cannot be cast off. 3. *Depraving companionship.* (Ver. 20.) Wicked companions invite to hell. "There are like to be short graces when the devil plays the host." 4. *Haunting troublers.* (Ver. 21.) Much romance has been woven about "haunted houses;" but what haunted house so gruesome as the bad man's heart? His sin draws God's wrath and punishments after it, even as the shadows follow his feet. 5. *Forfeited wealth.* (Ver. 22.) Riches that come from the devil go back to him. Fraud, oppression, and unjust dealing are not really retentive; or wealth obtained by flattering, complying with others' humours, and servility does not prosper. The Proverbs see the outrush of life with great clearness; they do not always explain the *inner connection* of cause and effect, which should be clear to us. 6. *Self-destruction.* (Ver. 23.) Many a man is "carried away by his unrighteousness." "In contrast with the contented, humble condition of the good man, the selfish and profligate 'lovers of themselves without a rival,' are often unfortunate; and whereas they have all their time sacrificed to themselves, they become in the end themselves sacrifices to the inconstancy of fortune, whose wings they thought by their self-wisdom to have pinioned" (Lord Bacon). 7. *Weak indulgence to children.* (Ver. 24.) A most injurious error. It tends to weaken the young minds and foster all the violent passions; just as the opposite extreme tends to debase and incite to deceit. E. Irving, in one of his works, hints that a great proportion of the inmates of lunatic asylums have been only and spoilt children. 8. *Want.* (Ver. 25.) "Great wants," it has been said, "proceed from great wealth; but they are undutiful children, for they sink wealth down to poverty."—J.

Vers. 1, 13, 18.—*The wisdom of docility, etc.: a sermon to the young.* We have the positive and negative, the happy and the sorrowful aspects of the subject brought into view.

I. THE WISDOM OF DOCILITY. The excellency of docility is seen in its results: 1. *In character.* It is a "wise son" who heareth his father's instruction. (1) *Already* he is wise. Apart from all that he will gain by his teachableness, readiness to receive instruction is in itself an admirable feature of character; it is so more particularly in the young. In them it is positively essential to spiritual beauty and worth; and it goes a long way to constitute such worth. It is an attribute of mind which is pleasing to God, and which commends itself greatly to the esteem of man. (2) It has the promise of wisdom further on. For he who is ready to learn, and more especially if he is willing to "regard reproof," is on the high-road to much attainment in knowledge,

and also to heights of virtue and godliness. This habit of his will save him from many snares, and will enrich his soul with pure principles and honourable aspirations and right affections. 2. *In circumstance.* The docile son will "be rewarded," will "be honoured." The path he treads is one which leads to competence, to comfort, to health, to honour, to "a green old age." But there are three things which must be included in this readiness to learn. No one will be "wise," and no one can expect to reap these desirable results, unless he (1) is docile in the home, receiving "his father's (and his mother's) instruction (ver. 1); (2) has respect to the "commandment," the will of God as revealed in his Word (ver. 13); (3) is willing to be corrected when he has gone astray, unless he "regards reproof" (ver. 18). For all of us fall into some error, make some mistakes, go astray in some directions; and we all need the kind hand that will lead us back and replace us in the right road.

II. THE FOLLY AND THE DOOM OF THE UNTEACHABLE. What should we think of the young captain who insisted on setting sail without any chart, trusting to his native cleverness to shun the shoals and rocks, and to make his way to port? We know what to judge concerning him, and what to prophesy concerning his vessel; we are sure that the one is a fool, and that the other will be a wreck. And what shall we think of youth when it resolves to sail forth on the great sea of life, disregarding the experiences of the wise, and trusting to its own sagacity? To take this course is: 1. *To be unwise.* Apart from all consequences which are in the future, it is the indication of a foolish spirit which is in itself deplorable. It shows a very ill-balanced judgment, a very exaggerated conception of one's own ability, a lack of the modesty the presence of which is so great a recommendation, and the absence of which is so serious a drawback. It calls for and it calls forth the pity of the wise; it is well if it does not elicit their contempt. 2. *To move in the direction of disaster.* It is to be in the way which conducts (1) to the loss of much that is very valuable, to "poverty" of more kinds than one (ver. 18); (2) to shame (ver. 18), the forfeiture of good men's regard, and a descent to a condition in which self-respect also is lost; (3) to ultimate destruction (ver. 13). He that feareth not God's commandment, nor regards man's warning, is a candidate for contempt, is a swift traveller on the road to ruin.—C.

Ver. 4.—(See homily on ch. xxvii. 23.)—C.

Ver. 7.—*Wrong views of ourselves, given and received.* One proverb may have many interpretations and many applications. This is such a one. It may well suggest to us two things.

I. THE GUILT OF CONVEYING A FALSE VIEW OF OURSELVES; whether this be done by the merchant in his office, or by the charlatan on the platform, or by the quack in his surgery, or by the preacher in his pulpit, or by the "philanthropist" in the newspaper, or by the man or woman of embellishment in society, or by the artist on canvas, or by the author in his book, or whether done by the common miser or the conscienceless beggar. Here is the double iniquity of: 1. Falsehood, or, at any rate, *falseness.* The man is false to himself, and forgets what is due to himself; consequently, he does that which wrongs and injures himself. 2. Fraud; imposture. A man practises on his neighbours; he deceives them; in the worst cases he induces others to run most serious risks to their health or their fortune.

II. THE MISFORTUNE OF FORMING A WRONG ESTIMATE OF OURSELVES. 1. This is sometimes *an appropriate penalty.* For if a man "makes himself" rich or poor in the eyes of others, it is extremely likely that he will before long imagine himself to be so. It is one of the well-attested facts of human experience, that what men try to persuade their fellows to think, they come in time to believe themselves. And this holds good when the object as well as the subject is the man himself. Try to convince others that you are clever, learned, kind, pious, and before many months have been spent in the endeavour you will actually credit yourself with these qualities. And the result is an entirely mistaken view of yourself. This is a punitive consequence; for there is no moral condition from which we have such urgent need to pray and strive that we may be delivered. Is it not the last stage on the downward road? 2. It is *a grave spiritual peril.* Solemn, indeed, is the warning addressed by the risen Lord to the Church at Laodicea (Rev. iii. 14—19). But no warning can be too serious or too

strong, whether addressed to the Church or the individual, when there is a false estimate of self, a supposition of wealth which is but imaginary, a false confidence which, if not awakened now, will be terribly aroused and shattered further on. 3. But a false estimate of ourselves *may* be, not a penalty, but rather *a pity*. When the heart thinks itself (makes itself) poor and destitute, while it is really "rich toward God," it suffers as it need not suffer, and it lacks the strength for doing good which it need not lack. And this is not unfrequently the case. Men have been misinstructed concerning the kingdom of Christ; and long after they have been within it they have been supposing themselves to stand outside it. Wherefore let those who teach take care how they teach, and let all disciples "take heed how they hear," that they may *not* think themselves wrong when they are right with God, rebels against the Divine Ruler when they are his accepted children.—C.

Ver. 12, with ver. 9 (first part) and ver. 19 (first part).—*Hope and disappointment.* We learn that—

I. HOPE IS PLANTED AS AN INSTINCT IN THE HUMAN HEART. "Thou didst make me nope when I was upon my mother's breasts," says the psalmist (xxii. 9). We start on our course with a precious store of hopefulness in our soul; and it takes much to kill or to exhaust it. It lasts most men through life, though the troublous experiences we pass through weaken it, if they do not wound it unto death.

II. IT IS A SOURCE OF GREAT STRENGTH AND JOY TO US. 1. It is a source of strength to us. It leads us to entertain and to enter upon new ventures. It carries us on during many toils and through many difficulties. It sustains us to the end, when we are weary, and when we are opposed and baffled. "We are saved by hope." 2. It is also a perennial source of joy. Rob life of its anticipations, and you deprive it of a very large proportion of its sweetness and satisfaction.

III. SIN HAS INTRODUCED DISAPPOINTMENT. We must regard this as one part, and one very serious part, of the penalty of sin. Not, of course, that each case of disappointment is the consequence of some particular antecedent wrong-doing; but that it forms a part of that whole burden and trial of life which is the mark and the penalty of human sin. There are *lighter* disappointments which may not count for much, though these put together would make up no small aggregate of evil. But there are *heavier* disappointments which constitute a very large and serious part of our life-sorrow. "Hope deferred" does indeed make the heart sick. The long and weary waiting for the return of the absent; for the manifestation of love ungratefully, and perhaps cruelly, withheld; for the health and strength which no treatment will restore; for the opening which would prove a great opportunity; for the signs of reformation in a beloved relative or friend; for the relenting and reconciliation of one who has been long estranged;—this does fill the soul with an aching such as no other trouble brings. It is one of life's very heaviest burdens. It is sometimes *the* burden and even the blight of a human life.

IV. IT IS THE PART OF CHRISTIAN WISDOM TO AVERT IT. Not that it *can* be wholly averted—that is quite beyond our power. Not that there is any real blessing in the absence or the littleness of expectation. But that: 1. We should discourage and renounce the perilous and injurious habit of idle day-dreams. 2. We should moderate our hopes according to our circumstances, and be contented only to look for that which, in the providence of God, we may reasonably and rightly expect to partake of.

V. IT IS THE PART OF CHRISTIAN SUBMISSION TO ACCEPT IT. We must suffer when our hopes are unfulfilled; but we may find great relief in the thought that it is the will of God that we are submitting to. The feeling that it is our Divine Friend who is letting us pass through the dark shadow of disappointment, and that it is the holy Lord seeking our highest good who is sending us through the refining fires,—this will give balm to our wounded spirit; this will lighten the heavy load we bear.

VI. GOD WILL GIVE HIS PEOPLE SOME GOOD MEASURE OF FULFILMENT. We shall prove by our experience in many ways and in many spheres—particularly in those of (1) our inner life and (2) our work for our Lord—that "the light of the righteous rejoiceth," that "when desire cometh, it is a tree of life," that "desire accomplished is sweet to the soul." If we rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him, he will give us our heart's desires (Ps. xxxvii. 4, 7).

VII. THERE IS ONE SUPREME HOPE which may well sustain us in the darkest trials (1 Pet. i. 3, 4).—C.

Ver. 20.—*Friendship: a sermon to the young.* We have here a topic which comes very close home to us *all*, but especially to the young.

I. GOD HAS GIVEN US GREAT POWER OVER ONE ANOTHER. There are two sources of power we exercise. 1. *That of ideas.* As we speak or write to one another, we impart ideas to the mind; and as thought lies beneath feeling, and feeling beneath character and conduct (see homily on ch. xii. 5), it is clearly of the gravest consequence what ideas we do instil into the mind of another. These ideas include information or knowledge, the presentation of motive and inducement, new aspects in which things are regarded, new views and conceptions of life, etc. 2. *That of influence.* As we associate with one another, we influence one another by (1) the character which commands respect; (2) affectionateness of disposition; (3) charm of manner; (4) strength of will; (5) superiority in age or in social position; (6) facility and force of utterance. All these are elements of influence; they are sometimes united, and in combination they become a great moral force.

II. CLOSENESS OF INTIMACY SHOWS THIS POWER AT ITS HEIGHT. When two "walk together because they are agreed;" when there is a close and intimate union of heart with heart, of mind with mind,—there is an opening for the exertion of a power immeasurably great. Friendship has done more than anything else to enlarge or to warp the mind, to save or to betray the soul, to bless or to corrupt the life. The influence of a beloved friend or of a favourite author is wholly beyond calculation, and is almost beyond exaggeration. We give ourselves to one another; we impress our mind upon one another; we draw one another up or we drag one another down. Hence—

III. IT IS OF SUPREME IMPORTANCE THAT WE CHOOSE OUR FRIENDS WELL. The friendships we form will either make or mar us. We shall certainly be conformed in spirit and in character to those whom we admit to the sanctuary of our soul; our lives will move with theirs toward the same goal; and we shall share their destiny for good or evil. How needful, then, that we bring to this choice our whole intelligence, our greatest care, that we do not let the accidents of locality or family connection or business association decide the intimacies of our life! There is no action on which our future more decisively depends than on this choice we make; let youth and young manhood (womanhood) look well to it. He that walketh with wise men will himself be wise, and he will reap all the fruits of wisdom; but the companion of fools, of those who fear not God and who honour not man, of the irreligious and the immoral, will be destroyed with a terrible, because a spiritual, destruction.

IV. HOW WISE TO WALK THE PATH OF LIFE WITH A DIVINE FRIEND!—with him who himself is "the Wisdom of God;" intimacy with whom will draw our spirit up toward all that is worthiest and noblest; whose presence will ensure guardianship from all serious evil, and enrichment with every true blessing, and will gladden with all pure and lasting joy.—C.

Ver. 21.—*Penalty pursuing sin.* These are striking words, and they give us a graphic picture of penalty in pursuit of the guilt which is seeking and hoping to escape, but which is certain to be overtaken.

I. SIN AND SUFFERING ARE INSEPARABLY ASSOCIATED IN THOUGHT. In our judgment and in our feeling they go together; they belong to one another. There is no need to go beyond this point; it is ultimate. If we sin, we deserve to suffer, and must expect to suffer. It is right that we should, and the hand that brings it about is a righteous hand.

II. THEY OFTEN SEEM TO BE DIVIDED IN FACT. As we observe human life, we see that the murderer sometimes escapes the reach of law, that the swindler sometimes flourishes upon the losses of his victims, that the tyrant sometimes reigns long over the nation he has defrauded of its freedom, that sometimes the man who lives in the practice of vice continues to enjoy health for many years, that the dishonest author may reap a considerable reputation and may long remain unexposed, etc. But in this case—

III. PENALTY IS PURSUING SIN AND WILL OVERTAKE IT. "Evil pursueth sinners." Justice is on the track, and sooner or later will lay its hand upon its victim. 1. *It will most likely do so here.* Very frequently, indeed almost always, *some* penalty immediately overtakes guilt; if not in bodily loss or suffering, yet in spiritual injury. And if not at once, penalty soon follows crime, vice, wrong-doing. Or if not soon, yet after many years, the "evil" comes and lays its stern hand upon the shoulder. The man may not, probably does not, see or even believe in its approach. Its step is silent, and it may be slow, but it is constant and certain. The "evil" may be *physical*, and very often it is so; or it may be *mental*, intellectual; or it may be *circumstantial*; or it may be *in reputation*; or it may be *in character*, and this last, though least seen and often least regarded, is in truth the saddest and the most serious of all, for it affects the man himself—he "loses his own soul." Thus, "though leaden-footed," penalty is "iron-handed." 2. *It will surely do so hereafter.* (See Matt. xxv. 31, 32; 2 Cor. v. 10, etc.) Yet not inconsistent with all this—

IV. THERE IS ONE MERCIFUL INTERCEPTION. If we truly repent of our sin, we shall be freely and abundantly forgiven. 1. God will change his condemnation into acceptance and parental favour, so that we shall walk thenceforward in the light of his countenance. 2. He will avert the heavier consequences of our sin by introducing into our heart and life all the remedial and restorative influences of righteousness. And there must be considered—

V. THE CONVERSE BENEFICENT LAW AFFECTING THE RIGHTEOUS. "To the righteous good shall be repaid." 1. All right acts are immediately followed by an inner and spiritual blessing; we must be something the better in soul for every really right thing we do. 2. All right actions, done in a reverent and filial spirit, will bring God's blessing down further on. He is "not unrighteous to forget our work of faith and our labour of love." Such blessings come in many forms, and at various intervals; but they *do come*; they are following the upright, and they will overtake them and crown them. 3. The reward of integrity and faithfulness only comes in part below; God holds great things in reserve for us (Matt. xxv. 21; 1 Cor. iv. 5).—C.

Ver. 24.—*Parental correction.* Few proverbs "come home" to us like those which affect the daily government of our household. They make their appeal to the human heart, to universal experience.

I. THE PARENTAL INSTINCT. 1. This is, to let the child have his way; to give him the gratification he desires, to find a present pleasure in his momentary happiness. 2. This is, to spare him suffering. No parent can hear his child cry without suffering himself (herself). Our instinct is to save our children from every trouble, small and great, from which we can exempt them. And it "goes against the grain" to inflict punishment, to cause pain, to deprive of some known enjoyment. But we dare not be bliud to—

II. THE LESSON OF EXPERIENCE. Universal experience proves that to act on mere parental instinct is nothing less than selfish cruelty. It is to act as if we positively hated our children. For it is the one sure way to spoil them for life, to ruin their character. The undisciplined child becomes the wayward boy, the dissipated young man, the wreck of manhood. He becomes self-centred, incapable of controlling his spirit, exacting in all his relations, disregardful of all law and of all claims. It is to withhold the one condition under which alone we can expect any one to attain to an admirable and honourable manhood. It is to deny to our own children the most essential element of education. Experience proves that he who spares the rod acts as if he positively *hated* his son.

III. THE PRACTICE OF WISDOM. This is the well-moderated correction of love. This correction should be: 1. Carefully proportioned to the offence; the lighter ones, such as carelessness or inaptitude, being followed by the lighter rebuke, and the graver ones, such as falsehood or cruelty, being visited with severer measures. 2. Administered, not in the heat of temper, but in the calmness of conviction, and with the manifest sorrow of true affection. 3. As free as possible from physical violence. The "rod" need not be made of wood or iron. A look of reproach (Luke xxii. 61), a just rebuke or remonstrance, a wisely chosen exclusion from some appreciated privilege, may do much more good than any blows upon the body. 4. Strictly just, with a leaning to charitable

construction. For one unjust infliction will do more harm than many just ones will do good. 5. Occasional and of brief duration. Nothing defeats its own purpose more certainly than perpetual fault-finding, or constantly repeated punishment, or penalty that is unrighteously severe. It behoves us always to remember that as our heavenly Father does not "deal with us after our sins" with rigorous penalties, and is not "strict to mark iniquity" with unfailing chastisement, so it becomes us, as parents, in the treatment of our children, to let pity and charity have a very large, modifying influence on our correction. He that loveth chastens "betimes;" he is not always chastening. He takes care to let his children know *and feel* that beneath and above and throughout his fatherly righteousness is his parental love.—C.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XIV.

Ver. 1.—**Every wise woman buildeth her house.** Wise women order well their household matters and their families; they have an important influence, and exercise it beneficially.

Γυναικὸς ἐσθλῆς ἐστι σώζειν οἰκίαν.

"A good wife is the saving of a house."

The versions render as above. A different pointing of the word translated "wise" (*chakhmoth*) will give "wisdom" (*chokhmoth*), which it seems best to read here, as the parallel to the abstract term "folly" in the second member. So we have, "Wisdom hath builded her house" (ch. ix. 1; comp. ch. i. 20). Thus: "The wisdom of women buildeth their house" (ch. xii. 4; xxiv. 3). **But the foolish plucketh it down with her hands**; "but Folly plucketh it down with her own hands;" of course, the folly of women is intended.

Γυνὴ γὰρ οἴκῳ πῆμα καὶ σωτηρία.

"Bane or salvation to a house is woman."

Foolish, unprincipled women, by their bad management or their evil doings, ruin their families materially and morally. "The husband should labour," says a Servian proverb; "the wife should save."

Ver. 2.—**He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the Lord.** So the Septuagint. He who lives an upright life does so because he fears the Lord; and his holy conversation is an evidence that he is influenced by religious motives. The outward conduct shows the inward feeling. So he that is **perverse in his ways despiseth him**—the Lord. A man is evil in his actions because he has cast off the fear of God; and such wickedness is a proof that he has lost all reverence for God and care to please him. Delitzsch renders, "He walketh in his uprightness who feareth Jahve, and perverse in his ways is he that despiseth him;" *i.e.* the conduct of the two shows the way in which they severally regard God and religion, the former acting conscientiously and uprightly, the latter following his own lusts, which lead him astray. Either interpretation is admissible. Septuagint, "He that walketh in crooked ways (σκολιάζων ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ) shall be dishonoured." The Vulgate gives quite a different turn to the sentence, "He who walketh in the right way and feareth the Lord is despised by him who pursueth the path of shame." This intimates the hatred which sinners feel for the godly (comp. Job xii. 4; and especially Wisd. ii. 10—20; and our Lord's warning, John xv. 18—21).

Ver. 3.—**In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride.** חֹטֶר (*choter*), "rod," or "shoot," is found also in Isa. xi. 1. From the mouth of the arrogant fool proceeds a growth of vaunting and conceit, accompanied with insolence towards others, for which he is often chastised. So the tongue is compared to a sword (*e.g.* Ps. lvii. 4; lxiv. 3; Jer. xviii. 18; Rev. i. 16). St. Gregory ('Mor. in Job.,' xxiv.) applies this sentence to haughty preachers, who are anxious to appear superior to other people, and study more to chide and reprove than to encourage; "they know how to smite sharply, but not to sympathize with humility." Septuagint, "From the mouth of fools cometh a staff of insolence." **The lips of the wise shall preserve them**—the wise (ch. xiii. 3). These do not abuse speech to insult and injure others; and their words tend to conciliate others, and promote peace and good will (comp. ch. xii. 6, 18).

Ver. 4.—**Where no oxen (*cattle*) are, the crib is clean.** This does not mean, as some take it, that labour has its rough, disagreeable side, yet in the end brings profit; but rather that without bullocks to labour in the fields, or cows to supply milk—that is, without toil and industry, and necessary instruments—the crib is empty, there is nothing to put in the granary, there are no beasts to fatten. The means must be adapted to the end. **Much increase is by the strength of the ox.** This, again, is not an exhortation to kindness towards animals, which makes no antithesis to the first clause; but it is parallel with ch. xii. 11, and means that

where agricultural works are diligently carried on (the "ploughing ox" being taken as the type of industry), large returns are secured. Septuagint, "Where fruits are plentiful the strength of the ox is manifest."

Ver. 5.—A repetition of ch. xii. 17 (see also ch. vi. 19). **A faithful witness** cannot be induced to swerve from the truth by threat or bribe. **Will utter**; Hebrew, *breatheth forth*. A false witness with no compulsion, as it were naturally, puts forth lies (comp. ver. 25; ch. xix. 5). Septuagint, "An unrighteous witness kindleth (ἐκκαίει) falsehood."

Ver. 6.—**A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not**; literally, *it is not—there is none* (ch. xiii. 7). A scorner may affect to be seeking wisdom, but he can never attain to it, because it is given only to him who is meek and fears the Lord (Ps. xxv. 9). Wisd. i. 4, "Into a malicious soul wisdom shall not enter; nor dwell in the body that is pledged to sin" (comp. Ps. cxi. 10). True wisdom is not to be won by those who are too conceited to receive instruction, and presume to depend upon their own judgment, and to weigh everything by their own standard. This is especially true of the knowledge of Divine things, which "scorners" never really acquire. Septuagint, "Thou shalt seek wisdom among the wicked, but thou shalt find it not." **Knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth**; "that hath understanding," *i.e.* to the man who realizes that the fear of God is a necessary condition to the acquiring of wisdom, and who seeks it as a boon at his hands. This acquisition, as it is difficult, nay, impossible for the scorner, is comparatively easy for the humble believer who seeks it with the right temper and in the right way. "Mysteries are revealed unto the meek" (Ecclus. iii. 19, in some manuscripts).

Ver. 7.—**Go from the presence of a foolish man.** There is some doubt about the rendering of this passage. The Vulgate gives, *vade contra stultum*, which is probably to be taken in the sense of the Authorized Version. The Revised Version has, "Go into the presence of a foolish man." The Hebrew מִנֶּגֶד (*minneged*) may mean "from before," "over against," "in the presence of." Hence arises an ambiguity. The Authorized Version considers the sentence to be an injunction to turn away from a stupid man when you perceive that you can do him no good. The Revised Version is equivalent to "if you go into the presence," etc. **When thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge**; Revised Version, *and thou shalt not perceive in him*, etc., which embodies a truism with no special point. The whole sentence is better translated, *Go forth from the presence of a foolish man, and thou hast not known the lips of knowledge*; i.e., as Nowack explains, "Leave the presence of a fool, and you carry nothing away with you; after all your intercourse with him, you quit his presence without having gained any advance in true knowledge" (see on ch. xx. 15). The LXX. presents a very different version: "All things are adverse to a foolish man; but wise lips are the arms of knowledge (*αἰσθήσεως*)." A foolish man, by his inconsiderate, slanderous, or bitter words, makes every one his enemy; a wise man uses his knowledge to good purposes; his words are the instruments by which he shows what he is.

Ver. 8.—**The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way.** The wisdom of the prudent is shown by his considering whither his actions lead, the motives from which they spring, the results that attend them. As the apostle enjoins (Eph. v. 15), "See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." Or the clause may be taken as enjoining a wise choice in life, a selection of such a calling or occupation as best suits one's capabilities, station, and opportunities. **The folly of fools is deceit.** This is not self-deceit, which the word does not denote, but deceit of others. Stupid persons show their folly in trying to cheat others, though they are sure to be detected, and their fraud recoils on themselves. In the case of fools, what they would call wisdom is folly; hence the wording of the sentence.

Ver. 9.—**Fools make a mock at sin.** So the Vulgate (comp. ch. x. 23). Fools, wicked men, commit sin lightly and cheerfully, give specious names to grievous transgressions, pass over rebuke with a joke, encourage others in crime by their easy way of viewing it. But in the original the verb is in the singular number, while the noun is plural, and the clause could be translated as in the Authorized Version only with the notion that the number of the verb is altered in order to individualize the application of the maxim ('Speaker's Commentary'). But there is no necessity for such a violent anomaly. The subject is doubtless the word rendered "sin" (*asham*) which means both "sin" and "sin offering." So we may render, "Sin mocks fools," *i.e.* deceives and disappoints them of the enjoyment which they expected. Or better, as most in harmony with the following member, "The sin offering of fools mocks them" (ch. xv. 8). Thus Aquila and Theodotion, *ἄφρονας χλευάζει πλημμέλεια*, where *πλημμέλεια* may signify "sin offering" (Ecclus. vii. 31). It is vain for such to seek to win God's favour by ceremonial observances; offerings from them are useless expenditure of cost and trouble (ch. xxi. 27). The Son of Sirach has well expressed this truth: "He that

sacrificeth of a thing unlawfully gotten, his offering is mockery (*μεμωκημένη*), and the mockeries of unjust men are not well-pleasing. The Most High is not pleased with the offerings of the godless, neither is he propitiated for sin by the multitude of sacrifices" (Ecclus. xxxi. 18, 19). It is always the disposition of the heart that conditions the acceptableness of worship. **Among the righteous** there is **favour**—the favour and good will of God, which are bestowed upon them because their heart is right. The word *ratson* might equally refer to the good will of man, which the righteous gain by their kindness to sinners and ready sympathy; but in that case the antithesis would be less marked. Septuagint, "The houses of transgressors owe purification (*ὀφειλήσουσι καθαρισμόν*); but the houses of the just are acceptable." This is explained to signify that sinners refuse to offer the sacrifice which they need for their legal purification; but the righteous, while they have no necessity for a sin offering, are acceptable when they present their free-will vows and thanksgivings.

Ver. 10.—**The heart knoweth its own bitterness**; literally, *the heart* (*leb*) *knoweth the bitterness of his soul* (*nephesh*). Neither our joys nor our sorrows can be wholly shared with another; no person stands in such intimate relation to us, or can put himself so entirely in our place, as to feel that which we feel. There is many a dark spot, many a grief, of which our best friend knows nothing; the skeleton is locked in the cupboard, and no one has the key but ourselves. But *we* can turn with confidence to the God-Man, Jesus, who knows our frame, who wept human tears, and bore our sorrows, and was in all points tempted like as we are, and who has taken his human experience with him into heaven. **A stranger doth not intermeddle with its joy.** The contrast is between the heart's sorrow and its joy; both alike in their entirety are beyond the ken of strangers. St. Gregory remarks on this passage ('Moral.,' vi. 23), "The human mind 'knoweth its own soul's bitterness' when, inflamed with aspirations after the eternal land, it learns by weeping the sorrowfulness of its pilgrimage. But 'the stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy,' in that he, that is now a stranger to the grief of compunction, is not then a partaker in the joy of consolation." A homely proverb says, "No one knows where the shoe pinches so well as he that wears it;" and an Italian maxim runs, "Ad ognuno par più grave la croce sua"—"To every one his own cross seems heaviest." Septuagint, "The heart of man is sensitive (*αἰσθητική*), his soul is sorrowful; but when it rejoices, it has no intermingling of insolence;" *i.e.* when a man's mind is sensitive it is easily depressed by grief; but when it is elated by joy, it should receive its pleasure and relief without arrogance and ribaldry.

Ver. 11.—**The house . . . the tabernacle.** The house of the wicked, which they build and beautify and love, and which they look upon as a lasting home, shall perish; the hope which they founded upon it shall come to a speedy end (ch. xii. 7); but the righteous rear only a tent on earth, as becomes those who are strangers and pilgrims; and yet this abode is more secure, the hopes founded upon it are more lasting, for it continues unto everlasting life. The text in its first sense probably means that sinners take great pains to increase their material prosperity, and to leave heirs to carry on their name and family, but Providence defeats their efforts; good men do their duty in their state of life, try to please God and benefit their neighbour, leaving anxious care for the future, and God prospers them beyond all that they thought or wished (comp. ch. iii. 33). **Shall flourish.** The word applies metaphorically to the growth, vigour, and increase of a family under the blessing of God. Septuagint, "The tents of the upright shall stand." There is a cognate proverb at ch. xii. 7.

Ver. 12.—This verse occurs again in ch. xvi. 25. **There is a way which seemeth right unto a man.** This may refer to the blinding effects of passion and self-will; for these make a man think his own way best and most desirable. But it seems better to take it as a warning against following a perverted or uninstructed conscience. Conscience needs to be informed by God's Word and ruled by God's will to make it a safe guide. When properly regulated, it is able to pronounce a verdict upon contemplated action, and its verdict must always be obeyed. But warped by prejudice, weakened by disuse and disobedience, judicially blinded in punishment and in consequence of sin, it loses all power of moral judgment, and becomes inoperative of good; and then, as to the way that seemed at the moment right, **the end thereof are the ways of death** (ch. v. 5). The man is following a false light, and is led astray, and goes headlong to destruction (comp. Rom. i. 28; 1 Tim. iv. 2; see on ver. 13). St. Gregory ('Moral.,' v. 12) has some words on this subject: "There are times when we are ignorant whether the very things which we believe we do aright, are rightly done in the strict Judge's eye. For it often happens that an action of ours, which is cause for our condemnation, passes with us for the aggrandizement of virtue. Often by the same act whereby we think to appease the Judge, he is urged to anger when favourable.

Hence, while holy men are getting the mastery over their evil habits, their very good practices even become an object of dread to them, lest, when they desire to do a good action, they be decoyed by a semblance of the thing, lest the baleful canker of corruption lurk under the fair appearance of a goodly colour. For they know that they are still charged with the burden of corruption, and cannot exactly discern the things that be good" (Oxford transl.).

Ver. 13.—**Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful** (comp. ver. 10). This recalls Lucretius's lines (iv. 1129)—

"Medio de fonte leporum
Surgit amari aliquid, quod in ipsis floribus angat."

The text is scarcely to be taken as universally true, but either as specially applicable to those mentioned in the preceding verse, or as teaching that the outward mirth often cloaks hidden sorrow (comp. Virgil, 'Æneid,' i. 208, etc.). **And the end of that joy is bitterness**; it has in it no element of endurance, and when it is past, the real grief that it masked comes into prominence. In this mortal life also joy and sorrow are strangely intermingled; sorrow follows closely on the steps of joy; as some one somewhere says, "The sweetest waters at length find their way to the sea, and are embittered there." Lesètre refers to Pascal, 'Pensées,' ii. 1: "Tous se plaignent . . . de tout pays, de tout temps, de tous âges, et de toutes conditions. Une preuve si longue, si continuelle et si uniforme, devrait bien nous convaincre de l'impuissance où nous sommes d'arriver au bien par nos efforts: mais l'exemple ne nous intruit point . . . Le présent ne nous satisfaisant jamais, l'espérance nous pipe, et, de malheur en malheur, nous mène jusqu'à la mort, qui en est le comble éternel. C'est une chose étrange, qu'il n'y a rien dans la nature qui n'ait été capable de tenir la place de la fin et du bonheur de l'homme. . . . L'homme étant déchu de son état naturel, il n'y a rien à quoi il n'ait été capable de se porter. Depuis qu'il a perdu le vrai bien, tout également peut lui paraitre tel, jusqu'à sa destruction propre, toute contraire qu'elle est à la raison et à la nature tout ensemble." This illustrates also ver. 12. Proverbs like "There is no rose without a thorn" are common enough in all languages. The Latins said, "Ubi uber, ibi tuber;" and "Ubi mel, ibi fel." Greek experience produced the gnome—

Ἀρ' ἐστὶ συγγενές τι λύπη καὶ βίος.

"Sorrow and life are very near of kin."

The Christian learns another lesson, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Matt. v. 4). The LXX. has introduced a negative, which gives a sense exactly contrary to the Hebrew and to all the other versions: "In joys there is no admixture of sorrow, but the final joy cometh unto grief." The negative has doubtless crept inadvertently into the text; if it were genuine, the sentence might be explained of the sinner's joy, which he finds for a time and exults in, but which does not last, and is felt to be a delusion as life closes.

Ver. 14.—**The backslider in heart**—he who turns away from God (Ps. xliv. 18)—**shall be filled with his own ways**, shall reap the fruits of his evil-doings (ch. i. 31; xii. 14). Matt. vi. 2, "Verily I say unto you, they have their reward." **And a good man** shall be satisfied **from himself**. There is no verb expressed in this clause, "shall be satisfied" being supplied by our translators. Delitzsch and others read, "and a good man from his own deeds." It is simpler to repeat the verb from the former clause: "A good man shall be filled with that which belongs to him;" *i.e.* the holy thoughts and righteous actions in which he delights. Isa. iii. 10, "Say ye of the righteous that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings." The Vulgate, neglecting the prefix, translates, "And over him shall be the good man;" Septuagint, "And a good man from his thoughts," the produce of his heart and mind.

Ver. 15.—**The simple believeth every word.** "Simple" (*pethi*), the credulous person, open to all influences (ch. i. 22). The Vulgate has *innocens*, and the Septuagint ἄκακος; but the word is best taken in an unfavourable sense. The credulous fool believes all that he hears without proof or examination; having no fixed principles of his own, he is at the mercy of any adviser, and is easily led astray. Ecclus. xix. 4, "He that is hasty to give credit is light-minded, and he that sinneth (thus) shall offend against his own soul." It is often remarked how credulous are unbelievers in supernaturalism. They who refuse to credit the most assured facts of Christ's history will pin their faith on some philosophical theory or insufficiently supported opinion, and will bluster and contend in maintenance of a notion to-day which to-morrow will prove untenable and absurd. Many who despise the miraculous teaching of the Bible accept the follies and frauds of spiritualism (comp. John v. 43). Hesiod, Ἔργ., 372—

Πίστεις δ' ἄρ τοι δμῶς καὶ ἀπιστίαι ὤλεσαν ἄνδρας.

"Belief and unbelief alike are fatal."

Cato, 'Dist.,' ii. 20—

"Noli tu quædam referenti credere semper;
Exigua his tribuenda fides qui multa loquuntur."

**The prudent man looketh well to his going** (ver. 8); Vulgate, *Astutus considerat gressus suos.* The prudent man considers whither the advice given will lead him, always acts with deliberation. This maxim is attributed to Pythagoras—

"Let none persuade thee by his word or deed
To say or do what is not really good;
And before action well deliberate,
Lest thou do foolishly."
(Χρυσ. Ἔπη, 25, *sqq.*)

Septuagint, "The clever man (*πανοῦργος*) cometh unto repentance [or, 'afterthought'] (*μετάνοιαν*);" *i.e.* if he, like the simpleton, is too credulous, he will smart for it. Μετάνοια, so common in the New Testament, is not found elsewhere in the Greek Version of the canonical Scriptures, though it occurs in Ecclus. xliv. 16; Wisd. xi. 23, etc. The Vulgate here introduces the Septuagint addition in ch. xiii. 13.

Ver. 16.—**A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil** (ch. xxii. 3). In ch. iii. 7 we had, "Fear the Lord, and depart from evil;" but here the idea is different. A wise man fears the evil that lurks in everything, and examines and ponders actions by the standard of religion, and is thus saved from many evils which arise from hastiness and inadvertence. **The fool rageth, and is confident** (ch. xxi. 24; xxviii. 26). The fool easily falls into a rage, and has no control over himself, and is confident in his own wisdom, in contrast to the wise man, who has trust in God, and is calm and thoughtful (Isa. xxx. 15). Revised Version, "beareth himself insolently, and is confident;" but, as Nowack remarks, the word (*mithabber*), where it occurs elsewhere, means, "to be excited," "to be in a passion" (comp. ch. xxi. 24; xxvi. 17; Ps. lxxviii. 21, 59, 62), and this usual signification gives a good meaning here. Vulgate, *transilit*, "he overleaps" all laws and restrictions. The LXX., by transposition of the letters, reads *mithareh*, and translates *μίγνυται*, "The fool trusting to himself mixes himself up with sinners."

Ver. 17.—**He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly.** The contrast to the irascible, passionate man is seen in the man slow to anger (ver. 29; ch. xv. 18). Such a one, in his haste and passion, does things which in calmer moments he must see are foolish and ridiculous. Says Euripides ('Hyp.,' Fragm.)—

Ἔξω γὰρ ὀργῆς πᾶς ἀνὴρ σοφώτερος.
"Wisor is every man from passion freed."

"Be not angry," says the Talmud, "and you will not sin." Cato, 'Dist.,' i. 37—

"Ipse tibi moderare tuis ut parcere possis."

**And a man of wicked devices is hated.** The contrast is not between the different ways in which the two characters are regarded, as that one is despised and ridiculed, and the other hated; but two kinds of evil are set forth in contradistinction, viz. hasty anger and deliberate plotting against others. Septuagint, "The irascible man (*ὀξύθυμος*) acts without deliberation, but the prudent man endureth much." The Hebrew term, "man of devices," being ambiguous, the LXX. takes it in a favourable sense, *φρόνιμος*; and they have a different reading of the verb.

Ver. 18.—**The simple inherit folly.** The credulous simpleton naturally falls into possession of folly, feeds upon it, and enjoys it. The LXX. regards the simple as communicating their folly to others, and translates, "Fools will divide malice." **But the prudent are crowned with knowledge;** put on knowledge as a crown of glory, in accordance with the Stoic saying, quoted in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' "The wise is the only king." Nowack thinks the above translation and the idea alike belong to later times, and prefers to render, "The prudent embrace knowledge," which is parallel to the sentiment of ver. 6. The word is found only in Ps. cxlii. 8, where it is translated either "shall compass me about" or "crown themselves through me." The Vulgate has *expectabunt*, i.e. "wait for it patiently," as the fruit of labour and perseverance. Septuagint, "The wise shall get possession of (*κρατήσουσιν*) knowledge."

Ver. 19.—**The evil bow before the good; and the wicked stand at the gates of the righteous** (ch. viii. 34). The final victory of good over evil is here set forth. However triumphant for a time and apparently prosperous the wicked may be, their success is not lasting; they shall in the end succumb to the righteous, even as the Canaanite kings crouched before Joshua's captains (Josh. x. 24), and, hurled from their high estate, they shall stand humbly at the good man's door, begging for bread to support their life (1 Sam. ii. 36). The contrast here indicated is seen in our Lord's parable of Dives and Lazarus, when the beggar is comforted and the rich man is tormented, and when the latter urgently sues for the help of the once despised outcast to mitigate the agony which he is suffering (comp. Wisd. v).

Ver. 20.—**The poor is hated even of his own neighbour** (ch. xix. 4, 7). This sad experience of selfishness (comp. Ecclus. vi. 8, etc.; xii. 8) is corrected by the following

verse, which must be taken in connection with this; at the same time, it is a truth which has been expressed in various ways by many moralists and satirists. Says the Greek Theognis—

Πᾶς τις πλούσιον ἄνδρα τίει, ἀτίει δὲ πενιχρόν.

"The rich all honour, but the poor man slight."

Says Ovid, 'Trist.,' i. 9. 6—

"Donec eris felix, multos numerabis amicos;
Tempora si fuerint nubila, solus eris."

"Prosperous, you many friends will own;
In cloudy days you stand alone."

In the Talmud we find (Dukes, 'Rabb. Blum.'), "At the door of the tavern there are many brethren and friends, at the poor man's gate not one." The rich hath many friends. Says Theognis again—

Εὖ μεν ἔχοντος ἐμοῦ πολλοὶ φίλοι· ἢν δέ τι δεινὸν
Συγκύρσῃ, παῦροι πιστὸν ἔχουσι νόον.

And again, a distich which might have been written to-day—

Πλήθει δ' ἀνθρώπων ἀρετὴ μία γίγνεται ἥδε,
Πλουτεῖν· τῶν δ' ἄλλων οὐδὲν ἄρ' ἦν ὄφελος.

"One only virtue you must needs possess
(As say the most of men), and that is wealth;
All others are of small account."

Ver. 21.—**He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth.** Taken in connection with the preceding verse, this teaches that it is a sin to despise and shun a man because he is poor or of low estate; such a one has a claim for love and pity, and it is a crime to withhold them from him for selfish considerations. The Christian view is taught by the parable of the good Samaritan. **But he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he**; hail to him! (ch. xvi. 20). Contempt is contrasted with mercy, sin with blessing. "Blessed are the merciful," said Christ (Matt. v. 7): "for they shall obtain mercy;" and St. Paul preserves another precious word, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts xx. 35). The merciful disposition, which shows itself in works of mercy, is a proof that the soul is in union with God, whose mercy is over all his works, whose mercy endureth for ever, and therefore such a soul is blessed. "The poor," wrote James Howell, "are God's receivers, and the angels are his auditors" ('Five Hundred New Sayings'). The Vulgate here appends a line absent from the Hebrew and the other versions, "He who believeth in the Lord loveth mercy." The true believer is charitable and bountiful, knowing that he will not hereby impoverish himself, but lay up a rich store of blessing: he acts thus not from mere philanthropy, but from higher motives; he has the grace of charity which springs from and rests upon his faith in God.

Ver. 22.—**Do they not err that devise evil?** or, *Will they not go astray?* The question is an emphatic mode of asserting the truth. They who meditate and practise evil (ch. iii. 29; vi. 14) go astray from the right way—the way of life; their views are distorted, and they no longer see their proper course. Thus the remorseful voluptuary bemoans himself, "We have erred from the way of truth, and the light of righteousness hath not shined unto us. . . . We wearied ourselves in the way of wickedness and destruction; yea, we have gone through deserts, where there lay no way; but as for the way of the Lord, we have not known it" (Wisd. v. 6, etc.). **Mercy and truth** shall be to them that devise good. God's blessing will rest upon them. The combination of "mercy and truth" is found in Ps. lxi. 7; in Wisd. iii. 9 and iv. 15, and in 1 Tim. i. 2 we have "grace and mercy" (see note on ch. iii. 3, where the two words occur in connection; and comp. ch. xvi. 6; xx. 28). The two graces in the text signify the love and mercy which God bestows on the righteous, and the truth and fidelity with which he keeps the promises which he has made. The Vulgate makes the two graces human, not Divine: "Mercy and truth procure blessings." The Septuagint renders, "The good devise mercy and truth." It adds a paraphrase not found in the Hebrew, "The devisers of evil know not mercy and faith; but alms and faith are with the devisers of good."

Ver. 23.—**In all labour there is profit.** All honest industry has a reward, and all care and pain borne for a good object bring comfort and content (comp. ch. x. 22). So the Greek distich says—

Ἅπαντα τὰ καλὰ τοῦ πονοῦντος γίγνεται.

"To him who labours all fair things belong."

In contrast to the diligent are those who talk much and do nothing. **But the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury** (ch. xxi. 5). Those who work much get profit; those who talk much and do little come to want. So in spiritual matters Christ teaches that they who think that prayer is heard for much speaking are mistaken; and he adds, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. vi. 7; vii. 21). Septuagint, "In every one who taketh thought (*μεριμνῶντι*) there is abundance; he who liveth pleasantly and without pain shall be in want." Cato, 'Dist.,' i. 10—

"Contra verbosos noli contendere verbis;
Sermo datus cunctis, animi sapientia paucis."

"Against the wordy strive not thou in words;
Converse with all, but to the favoured few
Impart thy heart's deep wisdom."

Oriental proverbs: "Sweet words, empty hands;" "To speak of honey will not make the mouth sweet;" "We do not cook rice by babbling" (Lane). Turkish, "The language of actions is more eloquent than the language of words."

Ver. 24.—**The crown of the wise is their riches.** This is taken by some ('Speaker's Commentary') to mean the glory of the wise man, the fame and splendour which surround him, constitute his wealth; but it is better to interpret it thus: Riches are an ornament to a wise man; they enhance and set off his wisdom in the eyes of others, enable him to use it to advantage, and are not the snare which they might be because they are employed religiously and profitably for the good of others. Eccles. vii. 11, "Wisdom is good together with an inheritance, and profitable to them that see the sun." The Septuagint has, "The crown of the wise is the clever man (*πανοῦργος*)," for which has been substituted by some editors, in agreement with the present Hebrew text, *πλοῦτος αὐτῶν*, "their wealth." The Greek translators, according to their reading, denote that one eminently clever man is a glory to the whole body of wise men. But **the folly of fools** is only **folly**; that is, even though it were accompanied with riches. Decorate folly as you may, trick it out in gaud and ornament, it is still nothing but folly, and is discerned as such, and *that* all the more for being made conspicuous. Schultens, followed by Wordsworth, finds a play of words here. The words rendered "fool" and "folly" imply "fatness," like the Greek *παχὺς* and the Latin *crassus*, which have also this double meaning. So the sentence reads, "Riches are a crown to the wise; but the abundant fatness of fools is only fatness." The last clause is translated by the LXX., "But the fools' way of life (*διατριβὴ*) is evil." St. Gregory ('Moral.,' xxii. 8) comments on this verse thus: "It was these riches of wisdom that Solomon having before his eyes, saith, 'The crown of the wise is their riches.' Which same person, because it is not metals of earth, but understanding, that he calls by the name of riches, thereupon adds by way of a contrary, 'But the foolishness of fools is imprudence.' For if he called earthly riches the crown of the wise, surely he would own the senselessness of fools to be poverty rather than imprudence. But whereas he added, 'the foolishness of fools is imprudence,' he made it plain that he called prudence 'the riches of the wise'" (Oxford transl.).

Ver. 25.—**A true witness delivereth souls** (ver. 5; ch. xii. 17). A true witness saves persons who are in danger owing to false accusation or calumny; saves lives; "saves from evils," says the Septuagint. **But a deceitful witness speaketh lies**, and therewith endangers lives. Literally, *He who breatheth out lies is deceit;* he is a personification of fraud, dominated and informed by it; it has become his very nature. "Falsehood is the devil's daughter, and speaks her father's tongue." Septuagint, "But a deceitful witness kindles (*ἐκκαίει*) lies."

Ver. 26.—**In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence.** The fear of God casts out all fear of man, all despairing anticipations of possible evil, and makes the believer confident and bold. St. Gregory ('Moral.,' v. 33), "As in the way of the world fear gives rise to weakness, so in the way of God fear produces strength. In truth, our mind so much the more valorously sets at naught all the terrors of temporal vicissitudes, the more thoroughly that it submits itself in fear to the Author of those same temporal things. And being stablished in the fear of the Lord, it encounters nothing without it to fill it with alarm, in that whereas it is united to the Creator of all things by a righteous fear, it is by a certain powerful influence raised high above them all." Comp. Ps. xxvii. 1 and St. Paul's words, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. viii. 31). Septuagint, "In the fear of the Lord is hope of strength." **And his children shall have a place of refuge** (Ps. xlvi. 1). There is an ambiguity as to whose children are meant. The LXX. renders, "And to his children he will leave a support." Thus many refer the pronoun to the Lord named in the first clause—God's children, those who love and trust him, and look up to him as a Father, an expression used more specially in the New Testament than in the Old. But see Ps. lxxiii. 15, and passages (*e.g.* Hos. xi. 1) where God calls Israel his son, a type of all who are brought unto him by adoption and grace. Others, again, refer the pronoun to "the fear of the Lord," "its children," which would be quite in conformity with Hebrew idiom; as we have "sons of wisdom," "children of obedience," equivalent to "wise," "obedient," etc. But most modern commentators explain it of the children of the God-fearing man, comparing Exod. xx. 6 and Ps. ciii. 17. Such a one shall confer lasting benefits upon his posterity (ch. xiii. 22; xx. 7). So God blessed the descendants of Abraham and David; so he shows mercy unto thousands,

*i.e.* the thousandth generation of them that love him and keep his commandments (see Gen. xvii. 7, etc.; Exod. xxxiv. 7; 1 Kings xi. 12, etc.; Jer. xxxiii. 20, etc.).

Ver. 27.—A repetition of ch. xiii. 14, substituting **the fear of the Lord** for "the law of the wise." The fear of the Lord can be called **a fountain of life**, because, showing itself in obedience, it nourishes the flowers and fruits of faith, produces graces and virtues, and prepares the soul for immortality. Septuagint, "The commandment of the Lord is a fountain of life, and makes one decline from the snare of death."

Ver. 28.—**In the multitude of people is the king's honour** (glory); **but in the want of people is the destruction of the prince**; or, *of the principality*. This maxim is not in accordance with the views of Oriental conquerors and despots, who in their selfish lust of aggrandizement cared not what suffering they inflicted or what blood they shed; who made a wilderness and called it peace. The reign of Solomon, the peaceful, gave an intimation that war and conquest were not a monarch's highest glory; that a happy and numerous people, dwelling securely and increasing in numbers, was a better honour for a king and more to be desired (1 Kings iv. 20). Increase of population is not, as some political economists would teach, in itself an evil; it is rather a sign of prosperity, and is in agreement with the primeval blessing, "Increase and multiply;" and though it may be hard to maintain the exact equilibrium between production and consumers, yet wise legislation can foresee and remedy the difficulty, the abundance in one part can supply the scarcity in another, the providence of God watching over all.

Ver. 29.—**He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding.** The Hebrew expression for what the Septuagint calls *μακρόθυμος*, "long-suffering," and the Vulgate, *patiens*, is "long in nostrils" (ch. xv. 18), as the contrary temper, which we had in ver. 17, is "short in nostrils." That organ, into which was breathed the breath of life (Gen. ii. 7), is taken as the seat of the inward spirit, and as showing by exterior signs the dominant feeling. The original is very terse, "long in nostrils, great in understanding." A man's prudence and wisdom are displayed by his being slow to take offence and being patient under injury. **He that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly**; *i.e.* flaunts it in the eyes of all men, makes plain exposure of it. Septuagint, "He who is short in temper is a mighty fool." "Passion," says an old saw, "makes fools of the wise, and shows the folly of the foolish" (comp. ch. xii. 23; xiii. 16). The word rendered "exalteth," מְרִים (*marim*), occurs in ch. iii. 35, and is taken by Delitzsch and Nowack in the sense of "carries away" as the assured result. "By anger," says St. Gregory ('Moral.,' v. 78), "wisdom is parted with, so that we are left wholly in ignorance what to do, and in what order to do it. . . . Anger withdraws the light of understanding, while by agitating it troubles the mind."

Ver. 30.—**A sound heart is the life of the flesh.** The heart that is healthy, morally and physically, spreads its beneficent influence over the whole body in all its functions and relations; this is expressed by the word for "flesh" (*besarim*), being in the plural number, as the Vulgate renders, *vita carnium*. But the contrast is better developed by taking מַרְפֵּא in its other signification of "calm," "gentle," "meek," as Eccles. x. 4. Thus the Septuagint, "The man of gentle mind (*πραΰθυμος*) is the physician of the heart." The tranquil, well-controlled heart gives health and vigour to the whole frame (see on ch. xv. 4). **But envy is the rottenness of the bones** (ch. xii. 4). Envy, like a canker, eats away a man's life and strength; it tells on his physical as well as his moral condition. We have parallel expressions in classical authors. Thus Horace, 'Epist.,' i. 257—

"Invidus alterius macrescit rebus opimis."

Martial, 'Epigr.,' v. 28—

"Rubiginosis cuncta dentibus rodit;
Hominem malignum forsan esse tu credas,
Ego esse miserum credo, cui placet nemo."

Bengal proverb, "In seeing another's wealth it is not good to have the eyes smart." Arabic, "Envy is a raging fever, and has no rest" (Lane). "O invidia," cries St. Jerome ('Epist.,' 45), "primum mordax tui." "When the foul sore of envy corrupts the vanquished heart," says St. Gregory ('Moral.,' v. 85), "the very exterior itself shows how forcibly the mind is urged by madness. For paleness seizes the complexion, the eyes are weighed down, the spirit is inflamed, while the limbs are chilled, there is frenzy in the heart, there is gnashing with the teeth, and while the growing hate is buried in the depths of the heart, the pent wound works into the conscience with a blind grief." Septuagint, "A sensitive heart (*καρδία αἰσθητική*) is a worm (*σής*) in the bones." A heart that feels too acutely and is easily affected by external circumstances, prepares for itself constant vexation and grief.

Ver. 31.—**He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker**, even God, who hath placed men in their several conditions (ch. xvii. 5; xxii. 2). "The poor shall never cease out of the land" (Deut. xv. 11); "The

poor ye have always with you," said Christ (Matt. xxvi. 11); therefore to harass and oppress the poor because he is in this lowly condition, is virtually to arraign the providence of God, who is the Father of all, and has made all men brothers, however differing in worldly position. Christ puts the duty of aiding the poor on the high ground of his solidarity with his people (Matt. xxv. 40, 45), how that in ministering unto the least of these his brethren men are ministering unto him. "Prosperity and adversity, life and death, poverty and riches, come of the Lord" (Ecclus. xi. 14). Even the heathen could say—

Αἰεὶ νομίζονθ' οἱ πένητες τῶν Θεῶν.

"Deem ever that the poor are God's own gift."

Septuagint, "He that calumniates (*συκοφαντῶν*; *calumniatur*, Vulgate) the poor angers him who made him." This version refers to oppression of the poor by means of calumny or false and frivolous accusation. **But he that honoureth him**—the Lord—**hath mercy on the poor**; or, better, *he that hath mercy upon the poor honoureth him;* for he shows that he has proper regard to God's ordinance, acts on high motives, and is not led astray by worldly considerations. Christ himself has consecrated poverty by coming in low estate (2 Cor. viii. 9), and they who love and honour him are glad to minister to his brethren in their poverty and distress (comp. Jas. i. 27).

Ver. 32.—**The wicked is driven away in his wickedness.** So the Greek and Latin Versions. In his very act of sin, *flagrante delicto*, the wicked is defeated, driven from hope and life; as the Revised Version renders, "The wicked is thrust down in his evil-doing;" *i.e.* there is some element of weakness in an evil deed which occasions its discovery and punishment sooner or later. Thus "murder will out," we say. But the contrast is better emphasized by taking *ra* in its other sense of "calamity," "misfortune," thus: "In his calamity the wicked is cast down" (ch. xxiv. 16). When misfortune comes upon him, he has no defence, no hope; he collapses utterly; all his friends forsake him; there is none to comfort or uphold him (comp. Matt. vii. 26, 27). **But the righteous hath hope in his death** (comp. Ecclus. i. 13). Primarily, the clause means that even in the greatest danger the good man loses not his trust in God. It is like Job's word (if our reading is correct, Job xiii. 15), "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him;" and the psalmist, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" (Ps. xxiii. 4). Thus the Christian martyrs went joyfully to the stake, and gentle women and little children smiled on the sword which sent them home. It is natural to see in this clause a belief in a future life, and a state of rewards and punishments; and some commentators, holding that this doctrine was not known in pre-exilian days, have taken occasion from its plain enunciation in this paragraph to affix a very late date to our book. There are two answers to be made to this assertion. First, it is capable of proof that the belief in the immortality of the soul, with its consequences in another state, was held, however vaguely, by the Jews long before Solomon's time (see note, ch. xii. 28); secondly, the present passage is by some read differently, whence is obtained another rendering, which removes from it all trace of the doctrine in question. Thus Ewald and others would read the clause in this way: "The righteous hath hope, or taketh refuge, from his own deeds." There can be no reasonable doubt that the usual reading and translation are correct; but the above considerations show that no argument as to the date of the Proverbs can be safely founded on this verse. The LXX. has a different reading for בְּמוֹתוֹ, "in his death," and translates, "But he who trusteth in his own holiness is just"—which looks like a travesty of Scripture, but probably refers to the consciousness of having a heart right with God and obedient to the requirements of the Divine Law.

Ver. 33.—**Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding.** The wise man is not always blurting out and making a display of his wisdom; he lets it lie still and hidden till there is occasion to use it with effect (ch. x. 14; xii. 23). **But that which is in the midst of fools is made known**; literally and better, *but in the midst of fools it*, wisdom, *maketh itself known.* That is, in contrast to the folly of fools, wisdom is seen to great advantage; or, it may be, the conceited display of the fool's so-called wisdom is contrasted with the modesty and reticence of the really intelligent man. "A fool's heart is ever dancing on his lips," says a proverb. So Ecclus. xxi. 26, "The heart of fools is in their mouth; but the mouth of the wise is in their heart." Theognis, 1163—

Ὀφθαλμοὶ καὶ γλῶσσα καὶ οὔατα καὶ νόος ἀνδρῶν
Ἐν μέσσῳ στηθέων ἐν συνετοῖς φύεται.

"The eyes, and tongue, and ears, and mind alike
Are centred in the bosom of the wise."

Vulgate, "In the heart of the prudent resteth wisdom, and it will teach all the unlearned." Wisdom sits enshrined in the intelligent

man's mind, and thence disseminates instruction and light around to all who need it. The Septuagint, with which agree the Syriac, Aquila, and Theodotion, inserts a negative in the second clause, thus: "In the good heart of a man shall rest wisdom, but in the heart of fools it is not discerned" (Wisd. i. 4).

Ver. 34.—**Righteousness exalteth a nation.** "Righteousness" (ch. x. 2) is the rendering to all their due, whether to God or man. We are taught the salutary lesson that a nation's real greatness consists not in its conquests, magnificence, military or artistic skill, but in its observance of the requirements of justice and religion. Hesiod, Ἔργ. 223—

> Οἱ δὲ δίκας ξείνοισι καὶ ἐνδήμοισι διδοῦσιν
> Ἰθείας καὶ μή τι παρεκβαίνουσι δικαίου,
> Τοῖσι τέθηλε πόλις, λαοὶ δ' ἀνθεῦσιν ἐν αὐτῇ.

**But sin is a reproach to any people;** *to peoples.* The words for "nation" (*goi*) and "peoples" (*leummim*) are usually applied to foreign nations rather than to the Hebrews; and Wordsworth sees here a statement *à fortiori*: if righteousness exalts and sin degrades heathen nations, how much more must this be the case with God's own people, who have clearer revelations and heavier responsibilities! חֶסֶד (*chesed*) occurs in the sense of "reproach," in Lev. xx. 17, and with a different punctuation in ch. xxv. 10 of this book. Its more usual meaning is "mercy" or "piety;" hence some have explained the clause: "The piety of the peoples, *i.e.* the worship of the heathen, is sin;" and others, taking "sin" as put metonymically for "sin offering," render: "Piety is an atonement for the peoples." But there is no doubt that the Authorized Version is correct (comp. ch. xi. 11). Thus Symmachus renders it by ὄνειδος, "shame;" and in the same sense the Chaldee Paraphrase. The Vulgate and Septuagint, owing to the common confusion of the letters *daleth* and *resh*, have read *cheser* instead of *chesed*, and render thus: Vulgate, "Sin makes peoples miserable;" Septuagint, "Sins diminish tribes." The sin of nations contrasted with the righteousness in the first clause must be injustice, impiety, and violence. See a grand passage in the fifth book of St. Augustine's 'De Civitate Dei,' ch. xii.

Ver. 35.—**The king's favour is toward a wise servant;** *servant that dealeth wisely* (Revised Version). Thus Joseph was advanced to the highest post in Egypt, owing to the wisdom which he displayed; so, too, in the case of Daniel (comp. Matt. xxiv. 45, 47). **But his wrath is against him that causeth shame;** literally, *he that doeth shamefully shall be* (the object of) *his wrath.* The Vulgate translates, *Iracundiam ejus inutilis sustinebit;* the Septuagint makes the second clause parallel to the first, "An intelligent servant is acceptable to the king, and by his expertness (εὐστροφία) he removeth disgrace." Then is added, before the first verse of the next chapter, a paragraph which looks like an explanation of the present clause, or an introduction to ver. 1 of ch. xv.: "Anger destroyeth even the prudent."

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 10.—*Incommunicable experience.* I. THE DEEPEST EXPERIENCE IS SOLITARY. This applies both to sorrows and to joys. There are profound sorrows which must lie buried in the hearts of the sufferers, and lofty joys which cannot be breathed to another soul. Sorrow has her shrine, which no intruder can enter without desecrating it; and joy her sweet silence, to break which is to shatter the delight. 1. *Each soul lives a separate life.* We are like planets, moving in our own spheres. Though we mingle in social intercourse, we do not touch in our most vital being. The "abysmal depths of personality" are utterly solitary. 2. *No two natures are just alike.* In common we share many pleasures and pains. But when we come to what is most characteristic, we reach a line of demarcation which the most sympathetic can never cross. We cannot enter into experiences quite unlike our own. We have not the key to unlock the mystery of a lonely sorrow or a rare joy. 3. *The deepest experience is shy and reserved.* Those who feel most do not cry out the loudest. It is the silent grief that eats out a man's heart. Though yearning for sympathy, he feels that he cannot breathe a word of his awful trouble. On the other hand, there are pure and lofty joys of soul that would be sullied with a breath.

II. FORCED SYMPATHY IS HURTFUL. We ought to be able to "rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep" (Rom. xii. 15). When sympathy can be real, it may be most helpful. But there is no opposition between this thought and that of our text. For just as real sympathy helps, unreal sympathy hurts. Now, sympathy may be unreal without being hypocritical, and even when it is well-meant

and heartfelt; if we do not understand a person's feelings, we cannot sympathize with him. We may feel kindly towards him, and may desire to show compassion. But it will be all in vain, we shall not touch the fringe of the trouble, or, if we do penetrate further, we shall jar and wound the sensitive soul by blundering incompetence. It will be like a surgeon trying to dress a wound in the dark. Thus Macduff, when robbed of all his children at one cruel stroke, is only vexed by the kindly but impotent condolence of Malcom, and cries, "He has no children."

III. GOD'S SYMPATHY PENETRATES TO THE DEEPEST EXPERIENCE. 1. *He knows all.* We have not to explain our case to him, and then be misunderstood and misjudged after all, as often happens in the attempt to open out the heart to a fellow-man. For God reads our most secret thoughts, and the feelings that we will not even confess to ourselves are perfectly known to him. 2. *He feels with his children.* He is not like the scientific vivisectionist, who handles quivering nerves without a spark of compunction. God tenderly pities his children in their sorrows, and graciously smiles on their innocent joys. 3. *He can touch us with sympathy.* This sympathy of God is not a distant heavenly experience hidden in the bosom of God. It is shed abroad over his children for their consolation in sorrow and their blessedness in joy. 4. *We should confide in the sympathy of God.* It is not wholesome for the soul to be buried in the seclusion of its own feelings. There is healing in the sympathizing touch of God and a consecrating benediction in his smile. Christ is the incarnation of God's human sympathy, and Christ's sympathy can reach and save and bless us all.

Ver. 12.—*The way that seemeth right.* I. ITS ATTRACTIVE APPEARANCE. This way does not only seem pleasant; it seems to be right. This is a course of life which a man is tempted to follow because it flatters him with fair promises. 1. *It promises good.* We are greatly tempted to judge of the means by the end, and, if we think that the thing to be attained is good, to condone the questionable conduct that secures it. Thus men have justified (1) war, (2) persecution, (3) the deceit of "pious fraud," (4) business irregularities. 2. *It flatters self-will.* Men believe in their own way, just because it is the way they have chosen. The statesman makes the best of the politics of his party. In private life what accords with our desire is warped into the semblance of right. 3. *It is followed by others.* Fashion condones folly. The conduct of the multitude creates a social conscience. Men measure by the standard of the average rather than by the gauge of absolute rectitude. 4. *No evil is apparent.* At present the path is easy, pleasant, flowery, and to all appearances quite safe. Short-sighted men judge of it by so much as is in view, as though the end of a road could be known by the character of its beginning.

II. ITS DELUSIVE CHARACTER. 1. It is only right *in appearance.* It "seemeth right." But "things are not what they seem." A flame seems good to a moth; thin ice, safe to a heedless child; the undermined road, sound to the hoodwinked general; the sparkling water, refreshing to one who knows not that the well from which it is drawn has been poisoned. The bad social custom appears to be innocent to the slave of fashion. The way of sin "seemeth right" to the blunt conscience. 2. It is only right *in the eye of man.* It is "to man" that this doubtful way "seemeth right." But man is not the highest surveyor of life, and the map that he draws is not the supreme authority. Man is prejudiced, confused, ignorant, self-deceiving. There is a higher Judge than man, and it may be that the way which "seemeth right to man" is seen to be wrong by God.

III. ITS FATAL END. This pleasant, inviting path is a tributary to a high-road. Innocent as it looks in itself, it leads into other ways, and those the ways of death. It is like a winding lane between green hedgerows and flower-strewn banks, that brings the traveller out at length into a very different road from that he supposed he was nearing. There are questionable courses that do not seem to be evil in themselves, but they lead to evil. There are amusements that seem to be innocent enough, yet they are paths towards more dangerous things, and in the end they bring the unwary to the very gates of hell. Now, the chief question to ask about any road is—Whither does it lead? If it will bring us to a treacherous bog, a homeless waste, a dark and dangerous forest, or a perilous precipice, it matters little that its early course is harmless. Whither does the way tend? If it is the path of sin, it must lead to death (Rom. vi. 23).

IV. THE NEED OF WARNING. 1. *The preacher must warn the heedless.* There is danger of self-deception, and the end may be ruin. Then men should not be indignant if they are invited to examine their ways. 2. *Each man should consider his own ways.* We live too much by appearances. But "life is real." Let us turn from the picture that "seemeth" to the fact that is. 3. *We need Divine guidance.* He who knows all ways, and can see the end from the beginning, is the only safe Guide into the way of life.

Ver. 13.—*The sadness that lies behind laughter.* This verse reads like one of the melancholy reflections of the pessimist preacher in Ecclesiastes. Yet there is a profound truth in it, as all thoughtful minds must recognize. Physically, intense laughter produces acute pangs. Laughter "holds his sides" with pain. Shelley sang truly—

> "Our sincerest laughter
> With some pain is fraught."

A long laugh naturally fills the eyes with tears and dies away in a sigh of weariness. Further, a season of undue elation is usually followed by one of depression. The mind rebounds from glee to gloom by natural reaction. But there is a deeper experience than all this. Without taking a dark view of life, we must acknowledge the existence of a very common background of sorrow behind many of the sunniest scenes of life. We may trace the causes of this experience both to the facts and nature of sorrow, and to the quality and limitation of laughter.

I. THE FACTS AND NATURE OF SORROW. 1. *Sorrow is common.* Man is born to trouble. There may not be a skeleton in the cupboard of every house, but there are few homes in which there is no chamber of sad memories. We mistake the common nature of mankind if we suppose that the merry soul has not its griefs. The roaring clown may be acting with a broken heart. Wit that spreads a ripple of laughter in all directions may even be inspired by a very bitterness of soul. 2. *Sorrow is enduring.* We cannot divide our lives mechanically into days of pain and days of pleasure. The great sorrow that once visits us never utterly forsakes us. It makes a home in the soul. It may be toned and softened by time, and driven from the front windows to dark back chambers. Still, there it lurks, and sometimes it makes its presence sorely felt even when we would fain forget it. The very contrast of present delight may rouse its restless pains. Even when it is not thought of it lingers as a sad undertone in our songs of gladness.

II. THE QUALITY AND LIMITATIONS OF LAUGHTER. 1. *Laughter is superficial.* Even while it is rippling over the surface of life, grief may lie beneath in sullen darkness, unmoved by the feeble gaiety. This does not condemn laughter as an evil thing, for while "the laughter of fools" is contemptible, and that of scorners sinful, the mirth of the innocent is harmless and even healthful. Cæsar rightly suspected the sour visage of Cinna. The monkish notion that Christ never laughed finds no countenance in the Bible. But while sinless laughter is good and wholesome, it is never able to reach the deepest troubles. Some foolish fears and fancies may best be laughed away, but not the great soul-agonies. 2. *Laughter is temporary.* Inordinate laughter is not good; too much laughter is a sign of frivolity; and no man can laugh eternally. If a man drown care in laughter, this can be but for a season, and afterwards the dreary trouble will rise again in pitiless persistence.

The remedy for trouble must be found in the peace of God. When that is in the soul, a man is happier than if he were only hiding an unhealed sore behind the hollow mask of laughter. When Christ has cured the soul's greatest trouble, there is a possibility of the laughter of a new joy, with no tears to follow.

Ver. 15.—*Credulity.* It is the constant habit of religious teachers to encourage faith, and to regard scepticism and unbelief as evil things. Are we, then, to suppose that credulity is meritorious, and that all doubt, inquiry, suspense of mind, and rejection of bold assertions are bad? According to this view, truth would be of no importance. It would be as well to believe error as truth, and to swallow superstition wholesale would be a mark of superior piety. There are not wanting critics who scornfully ascribe habits of this character to Christians—identifying faith with credulity, and

charging the believer with folly. No doubt the extravagant utterances of some Christian people have given much excuse for this libel; *e.g.* the assertion of Anselm, "Credo quia non intelligo." But such utterances are not justified by Scripture or Christian wisdom.

I. OBSERVE THE NATURE OF CREDULITY. When a person is too hasty in believing without sufficient reason, and especially when he accepts statements on slight authority in opposition to a rational view, we call him credulous. Credulity is just a disposition to believe without sufficient ground. 1. *It springs from mental weakness.* It is a mark of childishness, while faith is a sign of childlikeness. The feeble mind is credulous. Faith is virile, credulity anile. 2. *It is favoured by prejudice.* The credulous person is unduly ready to believe according to his desires. So men say, "The wish is father to the thought." 3. *It is increased by fear*, which paralyzes the reasoning faculties and inclines people to believe in the most absurd impossibility. The terrors of superstition ensnare the credulous.

II. CONSIDER THE EVIL OF CREDULITY. 1. *It dishonours truth.* When a person shows indifference to the vital question as to whether what he believes is true or false, he displays a fatal disloyalty to truth. For truth will not endure an admixture of falsehoods. Therefore those very people who vainly imagine themselves to be the loyal and humble servants of the whole round of truths are the very persons who undermine the sanctity of truth itself. 2. *It tempts to fatal acts.* Men act according to their beliefs. If they believe lies, they will have the practical side of their lives flung into confusion. Truth is a beacon-light; error sheds a false glare, like that of a wrecker's lamp on a rock-bound coast. It is dangerous to accept delusions of superstition with fatuous credulity. Life is real and earnest, and men need true lights to guide them safely.

III. NOTE THE REMEDY OF CREDULITY. 1. *This is not to be found in unlimited scepticism.* The sceptic is often the slave of foolish fancies. Escaping from Christian faith, perhaps he falls into spiritualism or some other equally wild delusion. 2. *Unbelief is not the remedy*; for unbelief is but the reverse of faith. Indeed, it is negative faith. It is believing the negative of those propositions concerning which faith believes the affirmative. 3. *Agnosticism is not the remedy*; for agnosticism is more than a confession of ignorance; it is an assertion that knowledge in certain regions is unattainable. Thus it is dogmatic and possibly credulous. 4. *The remedy lies in well-grounded faith.* We must learn lessons of patience, and be willing at first to creep along step by step. We need not wait to say, with Abelard, "Credo quia intelligo," for we may accept mysteries which we cannot explain. But we need to be satisfied that we have good ground for doing so. Fundamentally, a wise Christian faith is trust in Christ, resting on an intelligent ground of assurance—that he is trustworthy.

Ver. 30.—*A quiet spirit.* Translate the first clause of the verse thus: "The life of the body is a quiet spirit."

I. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A QUIET SPIRIT. The habit and disposition of quietness need not be accompanied by torpor. There is, indeed, a quietness of sleep, as there is also a silence of the grave. But in the passage before us the quiet spirit is directly connected with life. The body may be busy while the spirit is quiet; nay, the mind may be nimble and alert, even full of activity, while yet the spirit is at rest. Observe, then, the marks of a quiet spirit. 1. *Peace.* There is peace within the soul, and therefore quiet. The turbulent spirit is like a mutinous crew that may make tumult on board the ship while the sea is as still as glass, and the peaceful spirit is like a well-conducted crew that works in quiet while the sea is torn with tempest. 2. *Patience.* The quiet spirit does not complain under chastisement, nor does it angrily resent unkindness. The psalmist was "dumb" under calamity. Christ was led as a lamb to the slaughter (Isa. liii. 7). 3. *Unostentatiousness.* Some give more show than service, and make more noise than profit. Eager to attract attention, they "sound a trumpet before them" (Matt. vi. 2). Not so the quiet in spirit, who labour in silence, content to be obscure so long as they know they are not living in vain.

II. THE BLESSEDNESS OF A QUIET SPIRIT. It is here set forth as a source of life. No doubt fretful restlessness wears out the life of the bad. Placidity makes for health. Moreover, the life that is dissipated in noise produces no good, and therefore does not collect the means of its own support. The quiet in spirit best make a livelihood.

Further, certain special advantages of this quietness may be noted. 1. *Depth.* "Still waters run deep." We can look far into the quiet lake, while only the surface-waves of one that is fretted with cross-winds can be seen. The calm, brooding soul knows depths of thought and secret experience that are unfathomable to the foolish, restless, noisy soul. 2. *Strength.* The silent forest grows strong. The mind is made vigorous by patient endurance. One who is calm is master of the situation, while another who is fretted and flurried feels lost and helpless. 3. *Fruitfulness.* The calm, strong, silent soul, vigorous and yet unostentatious, ripens best the fruits of experience. Such a one does most real work. 4. *Beneficence.* Noise vexes the world, and a restless, complaining spirit is a weariness to men. The quiet spirit breathes a perpetual benediction. Its very presence is soothing and healing.

III. THE ATTAINMENT OF A QUIET SPIRIT. No doubt there are great constitutional differences in this respect, and while some are naturally or by ill health restless, irritable, demonstrative, others are naturally quiet, self-possessed, even reserved. Due allowance must be made for these differences before we attempt to judge our brethren. Still, there is a measure of quietness attainable by the use of the right means, viz.: 1. *Self-mastery.* When a man has conquered himself, the tumult of civil war in his breast ceases. 2. *Faith.* To trust God, to know that he is doing all well, to seek and obtain the help of his Holy Spirit, are to find the secret of peace and quietness of soul. 3. *Love.* Selfishness makes us restless. "A heart at leisure from itself" can learn to be patient and calm.

Ver. 34.—*National righteousness.* I. RIGHTEOUSNESS IS REQUIRED IN A NATION. Morality has not yet been sufficiently applied to politics. It is forgotten that the ten commandments relate to communities as well as to individuals, because they are based on the eternal and all-embracing principles of righteousness. Men have yet to learn that that which is wrong in the individual is wrong in the society. Nations make war on one another for reasons which would never justify individual men in fighting a duel. Yet if it is wrong for a man to steal a field, it must be wrong for a nation to steal a province; and if an individual man may not cut his neighbour's throat out of revenge without being punished as a criminal, there is nothing to justify a whole community in shooting down thousands of people for no better motive. If selfishness even is sinful in one man, selfishness cannot be virtuous in thirty millions of people. The reign of righteousness must govern public and national movements if the will of God is to be respected.

II. RIGHTEOUSNESS IS A BLESSING TO A NATION. To the cynical politician such "counsels of perfection" as command conscience in government, and especially in international action, appear to be simply quixotic. He holds the application of it to be wholly impracticable; he imagines that it must involve nothing but national ruin. Hence, it is maintained, there is no right but might, because there is no international tribunal and no general authority over the nations. The two points must be kept distinct—the internal life of the nation and its foreign policy. 1. *Internal life.* There are national sins in the sense of sins committed by a great part of a nation—sins that shamefully characterize it. Thus drunkenness is to a large extent an English national sin. The oppression of one class by another, a general prevalence of business dishonesty, a frivolous pleasure-seeking fashion, all affect the nation's life when they are largely extended among any people. These things eat out the very heart of a nation. For a nation's sin the punishment is on earth, because the nation goes on while individuals die, and so there is time for the deadly fruit of sin to ripen. So was it with Israel, Babylon, Rome, etc. 2. *Foreign policy.* Wars of aggression may aggrandize the victorious people for a time. But they rouse the hatred of their victims. A high-handed policy thus multiplies a nation's enemies. It is dangerous to be an outlaw among the nations. Above all, there is a just Ruler, who will put down the tyrant and punish the guilty nation.

III. RIGHTEOUSNESS MAY BE OBTAINED IN A NATION BY FOLLOWING THE RULE OF CHRIST. It is difficult to make an unchristian nation behave in a Christian manner. The sermon on the mount was addressed to disciples of Christ (Matt. v. 1). National righteousness will follow national submission to the will of Christ. The reason why the nations snarl at one another like wild beasts is just that the inhabitants of the

nations do not yet follow Christ. He came to set up the kingdom of heaven on earth, and when this kingdom is established in the hearts of the citizens, the nations, which are but the aggregates of citizens, will learn to follow righteousness.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—7.—*Traits of wisdom and folly.* I. FEMININE WISDOM. (Ver. 1.) 1. Its peculiar scope is the home. Women are *physically* and *morally* constructed with a view to the stationary life and settled pursuits of home. Its comfort, the strength of the race, the well-being of society, are rooted, more than in any other human means, in the character, the principle, the love and truth of the wife and mother. 2. The absence of it is one of the commonest causes of domestic misery. The *fact* is but too well known to all who are acquainted with the homes of the poor, and indeed of all classes. The *cause* is not far to seek. The word "home" has hardly a meaning without the presence of a virtuous woman; and a home has seldom been wrecked while a virtuous woman remained in it.

II. THE STRICT CONNECTION OF RELIGION AND MORALITY. (Ver. 2.) 1. *Fear of Jehovah* includes reverence for what is *eternal*, faith in what is *constant*, obedience to what is unchanging law. 2. *Contempt for Jehovah* means the neglect of all this; and the preference of passion to principle, immediate interest to abiding good; what is selfish and corruptible to what is pure and durable and Divine.

III. SPEECH A SCOURGE OR A SHIELD. (Ver. 3.) The word of *haste*, which is at the same time the word of *passion* and of inconsiderateness, recoils upon the speaker. As an old proverb says, "Curses come home to roost." And what can put a stronger armour about a man, or cover him more securely as a shield, than the good words he has thrown forth, or in general the *expression* of his spirit in all that is wise and loving? The successive accretions of substance from year to year in the trunk of the oak tree may typify the strength coincident with growth in the good man's life.

IV. THE CONNECTION OF MEANS AND ENDS. (Ver. 4.) Such seems to be the point of the saying. "Nothing costs nothing." If you keep no oxen, you have no manger to supply. But at the same time, nothing brings nothing in. The larger income is secured by the keeping of oxen. This is, in fact, the sense of the old saw, "Penny wise and pound foolish." In short, it is part of the science of life to know the limits of thrift and of expense. "A man often pays dear for a small frugality." "Cheapest," says the prudent, "is the dearest labour." In the more immediate interests of the soul, how true is it that only first expense of thought, time, love, upon others is the truest condition of our own blessedness!

V. TRUTH AND LIES. (Ver. 5.) Again and again we strike upon this primary stratum of character. We cannot define the truthful or untruthful man. We can *feel* them. The reason is as "simple as gravity. Truth is the summit of being; justice is the application of it to affairs. The natural force is no more to be withstood than any other force. We can drive a stone upwards for a moment into the air, but it is yet true that all stones will fall; and whatever instances may be quoted of unpunished theft, or of a lie which somebody credited, justice must prevail, and it is the privilege of truth to make itself believed."

VI. THE UNWISDOM OF THE SCOFFER. (Ver. 6.) He places himself in a false relation to truth; would measure it by his small mind, and weigh it in his imperfect scales. He has one principle only to apply to everything, and that the limited perception of his faculty or the narrow light of his experience. The description well applies to the free-thinkers, the *illuminati* so called of the last century in England, France, and Germany, and their successors in the present day. There is the *air* of superior intelligence and zeal for truth, frequently concealing some passion of a very different order. Or, again, there is the shallow assumption that absolute truth is to be found by the human intellect, which has led philosophers into many aberrations. The end is some fallacy and glaring self-contradiction. How different the spirit of him whom the teacher describes as "intelligent" in this place! It is "easy" for him to be wise. It is like opening his lungs to the bountiful and all-embracing air, or expatiating on the boundless shore, like great Newton. Wisdom springs from the sense that truth in its

infinity is ever beyond us. But the reference here is more to practical wisdom, the science of living from day to day. And good sense is the main requisite for its acquirement, the very opposite of which is the supercilious temper which disdains to learn from any and all.

VII. THE EVIL OF FOOLISH COMPANY. (Ver. 7.) And of all its conversation, its atmosphere, its temper. "Cast not pearls before swine." "Avoid the mixture of an irreverent commonness of speaking of holy things indifferently in all companies" (Leighton). "Do not overrate your strength, nor be blind to the personal risks that may be incurred in imprudent efforts to do good" (Bridges). "Better retreat from cavillers' (ibid.).—J.

Vers. 8—19.—*The understanding of one's way.* I. THE GENERAL PRINCIPLE. (Ver. 8.) To note, to observe, to take heed to one's way, is the characteristic of the man who is prudent for time and wise for eternity. And, on the contrary, the very principle of folly is self-deception—to be followed in turn by a terrible awakening to sobriety and recognition of the truth (comp. Ps. vii. 15; Job iv. 8). The right way is illustrated both positively and negatively.

II. SOME PARTICULAR ILLUSTRATIONS. (Ver. 9, *sqq.*) 1. *The vanity of mere ritualism.* (Ver. 9.) According to the probably correct translation, "the guilt offering scorns the fools;" in other words, his worship is useless, missing its aim, failing of God's favour, while the righteous who has washed and made himself clean, and put away iniquity (see Isa. i.), comes with acceptance before Jehovah. 2. *Respect for others' sorrows.* (Ver. 10.) Acute distress isolates a man; he cannot communicate what he feels. And it is an unkind thing to force counsel on others at a time when they know they *cannot* be understood, when the sympathy of silence is best. To sit by our friend, to clasp his hand with loving pressure, to mingle our tears with his, will be far more delicate and soothing than to attempt to "charm ache with airs, and agony with words." 3. *Consideration of the end.* (Vers. 11—13.) The old reminder recurs, *Respice finem.* Perhaps a contrast is intended between the "house of the wicked" as seeming firmer, nevertheless doomed to overthrow, and the "tent of the righteous," seeming more frail, yet destined to "sprout," to flourish, and extend. Again, resuming the image of the way, the seeming right way is not ever the right nor the safe way. It may be broad at first and well travelled, but may narrow by-and-by, and end in the pathless forest, or the desert waste, or the fatal precipice. To be safe we must still consider the *end;* and the *beginning*, which *predicts* and virtually *contains* the end. Various are the illusions to which we are subject. One example of this is that the smiling face may hide the aching heart, and the opposite (Eccles. vii. 4) may also obtain. Boisterous and immoderate mirth is no good symptom; it foretells a sad reaction, or conceals a deep-seated gloom. Human faces and appearances are masks, which hide the real countenance of things from us. 4. *Consideration of the sources of enjoyment.* (Ver. 14.) First the vicious source. The man who has fallen away from God seeks satisfaction out of God, in something practically *atheistic*, in the fruit of godless, sinful deeds (ch. xii. 14; xiii. 2; xxviii. 19). But in the matters of the spirit that which is out of God is nothing, emptiness and vanity. He is feasting upon wind. The genuine source of enjoyment is in the spirit itself, in the consciousness, where God is known and realized and loved; in the sense of union and reconciliation of thought and affection with the Divine Object thought of and believed. The kingdom of God is within us, and is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." 5. *Credulity and caution.* (Ver. 15.) Credulity is a weakness, and certainly, like every weakness, may become a sin. It is the opposite of genuine faith; it is confidence placed where we have no right to place it. God, who has set up and kindled a light in each breast, requires us to use it, each for himself. To forsake it for any other is a desertion of our trust. Would that we might ever take heed to the light that is within us, and so steer our way! There is no true faith possible which does not begin with this. Again (ver. 16), wisdom is seen in a certain self-distrust in presence of evil. To use an expressive phrase, we should know when to "fight shy" of certain persons or associations. So powerful a passion as fear was not given us for nothing, nor should we be ashamed of a timidity which leads us to give a wide berth to danger, to keep out of the lion's path. Over-confidence springs from the want of a true estimate of our proper

strength and weakness, and the security it begets is false. 6. *Passionateness and trickiness.* (Ver. 17.) The former precipitates men into all follies. Seneca saith well that "anger is like rain, which breaks itself upon that whereon it falls." Anger is certainly a kind of baseness; as it appears well in the weakness of those subjects in whom it reigns—children, women, old folks, sick folks. Bitter, unforgivable words, the revelation of secrets, the breaking off of business,—such are among the follies which anger constantly perpetrates. But the tricky intriguing man is both foolish and odious. Listen to one of the greatest of Englishmen, when he bears testimony that "the ablest men that ever were born all had an openness and frankness of dealing, and a name of certainty and veracity." There is a fine line between the wisdom of reserve and the vicious cunning of concealment; nothing but the loving and true purpose of the heart can redeem any habit of secrecy from odium. 7. *Life a progress in folly or wisdom.* (Ver. 18.) We are ever *gaining*, according to the image of the text. The mind has its accretions like those of the tree. A man becomes a greater fool the older he grows, or becomes of deeper sagacity, richer and wider views. All depends on how we start. Admit an error into thought, keep it there after it is proved an error, close the mind in any quarter to the light and keep it closed, and ensure a bigoted and foolish age. Let God into the mind from the first, open daily every window of the soul to the light, and grow old "learning something fresh every day." 8. The *ascendancy of goodness.* (Ver. 19.) The picture is presented of the envoy of a conquered people who kneels at the palace-gate of the conqueror and waits on his commands (compare on the thought, ch. xiii. 9, 22; Ps. xxxvii. 25). There is a might in goodness; may we not say the only true might is that of goodness, for it has omnipotence at its back? It is victorious, irresistible, in the end. It is content to be acknowledged in the end by all, the evil as well as the good. Hypocrisy is the homage paid by vice to goodness.—J.

Vers. 20—27.—*Causes and effects.* To grasp this principle—there is nothing causeless and unaccountable in life—and to apply it is one of the main principles of wisdom. Let us note some of its applications—

I. To SOCIAL RELATIONS. 1. *Poverty an object of dislike, and riches magnetic of good will.* (Ver. 20.) Widespread parallels may be found in ancient literature to this saying. Its truth is equally obvious to-day. It is a truth of human nature, and has its bad and its good side. We are apt to be impatient of those who are always needing help, and are disposed to serve those who need nothing. It is a lower illustration of the law that "to him that hath it shall be given." Independence of any kind which implies power and self-help is attractive to all; and we should seek it by all legitimate means. If a man is shunned by others, it may be because they instinctively feel there is nothing but dejection to be found in his company, while they need cheerful confidence and helpfulness. The good man should strive after competence that he may secure good will, and have free scope for the cultivation of virtue and the exercise of his powers. Another indirect lesson is that friendship thrives best in equal conditions of life. 2. *The sources of contempt and of compassion.* (Ver. 21.) This seems to correct what might appear harsh in the former saying. Contempt for anything but what is evil in life, or petty and trivial in thought and sentiment, springs from a bad state of the heart. There are things we ought all to *despise—i.e.* look down upon—but certainly the mere poverty of our neighbour or friend is not one of them. Compassion upon those who are in trouble is, on the other hand, a feeling truly Divine. It extorts the blessing of men; it receives the approval of God, the All-compassionate One. 3. *The sources of social security.* (Ver. 25.) "Souls are saved," human life is preserved, the bonds of intercourse are held together, by the truthful man. Hearts are betrayed, covenants are broken, the integrity of life is shattered, by the deceiver, the hypocrite, and the slanderer.

II. To PERSONAL BLESSINGS AND THE REVERSE. 1. *The sources of perplexity or of peace are in the man's own mind.* (Ver. 22.) His errors come from the falsity and malice of his own counsels, as the effect from the cause. And equally the blessed sense of the Divine presence and the Divine favour is conditioned by the seeking of it in the mind, the heart, the life. To imagine that we can enjoy good without being good is a sort of superstition. 2. *Causes of gain and want.* (Ver. 23.) One of the most valuable of Carlyle's teachings was to this effect—the reward that we all receive

and of which we are perfectly certain, if we have deserved it, consists in *having done our work*, or at least having taken pains to do our work, for that is of itself a great blessing, and one is inclined to say that, properly speaking, there is no other reward in this world. And men bring themselves to want by neglecting their proper work, by idle talk, and waste of time and daylight. "Work while it is called to-day." 3. Hence, *well-gotten wealth is a testimonial to the earner of it.* (Ver. 24.) It is an ornament, a decoration in which he may feel a juster pride than in stars, or garters, or patents of nobility, which carry no such significance. On the other hand, the folly of the fool is and remains folly, however he may plume himself, however by means of wealth or factitious advantages he may seek to pass for somebody before the world. 4. But deeper than these are the specifically religious blessings. (Ver. 26.) Security springs from religion; and religion is the constant habit of regard for God, his will in loving obedience, his favour as the most precious possession. God himself is a Refuge to his children, and they will not fear. The very source of life itself is religion, and nothing but the fear of God in the heart can preserve from the deathful snares which attend our way.—J.

Vers. 28—35.—*Life-contrasts.* I. IN PUBLIC LIFE. 1. *Fulness and scantiness of population.* (Ver. 28.) The Hebrew had a deep sense of the value of fruitfulness in the wedded life, and of increase in the nation. The majesty of the monarch is the reflection of the greatness of his people, and the decay must represent itself in his feebleness for action. It is our duty as Christian men to study with intelligence political questions, and to support all measures which tend to freedom of commerce and abundance of food. 2. *National exaltation and shame.* (Ver. 34.) The common ideas of national glory and shame are false. There is no glory in victory over feeble foes, no shame in seeking peace in the interests of humanity. Too often these popular ideas of glory represent the bully and the coward in the nation, rather than its wisdom and honour. There is *no other* real secret of a nation's exaltation than, in the widest sense, its right dealing, and no other shame for a nation than its vices—such as drunkenness, selfishness, lust for territory. Could Englishmen see the national character in the light in which it often appears to foreigners, it would be a humbling view. 3. *Royal favour or disfavour is an index of worth.* (Ver. 35.) Not, of course, the only or the truest index; and yet how seldom it happens that a man rises to high position in the service of his sovereign and country without eminent worth of some description or other! Here, again, moral law is exemplified. There is nothing accidental. If it be mere prudence which gains promotion, still prudence is of immense value to the state, and moral law is confirmed by its advancement.

II. IN PRIVATE LIFE. 1. *Patience and haste of temper.* (Ver. 29.) They are branded respectively with the mark of sense and of folly. "The Scripture exhorteth us to possess our souls in patience; whosoever is out of patience is out of possession of his soul." 2. *The calm and the seething heart.* (Ver. 30.) The first member seems more correctly rendered, "life of the body is a gentle or tranquil mind." Zeal, on the other hand, or envy, is a constant ferment within the soul. Men's minds must either feed upon their own good or others' evil. Inquisitive people are commonly envious; it is a "gadding passion," and an old proverb says that "Envy keeps no holidays." Lord Bacon says it is the vilest passion and the most depraved. Christian humility and love can only sweeten the heart, and dilute or wash away its natural bitterness. 3. *The violent death and the peaceful end.* (Ver. 32.) A sudden death was viewed as a visitation from God (Ps. xxxvi. 13; lxii. 4). It was thought that the wicked could hardly come to any other end. But the righteous has confidence in his death. Considering the great silence of the Old Testament on the future life, it can hardly be honest exegesis to force the meaning of hope of a future life into this passage. Nor is it necessary. It is the consciousness that all is well, the soul being in God's hands, that the future may be left with him who has revealed himself in the past, which sheds peace into the dying soul. 4. *Silent wisdom and noisy pretence.* (Ver. 33.) The still and quiet wisdom of the sensible man (ch. x. 14; xii. 16, 23) is contrasted with the eager and noisy utterances of what the fool supposes to be wisdom, but in reality is the exposure of his folly. "There is no decaying merchant or inward beggar hath so many tricks to uphold the credit of their wealth as those empty persons have

to maintain the credit of their sufficiency." Wisdom and piety are felt and fragrant, like the violet in the hedge, from humble places and silent lives. Let us aim to *be*, not to *seem*.—J.

Ver. 1.—*Woman as a builder.* Where the light of revelation has shone, woman has had a position and a power, an honour and a happiness, such as she has not enjoyed elsewhere. Under the teaching of Christian truth she has been, or is being, rapidly raised to her rightful place, and is becoming all that the Creator intended her to be. We cannot forecast the future, but we may predict that her own especial province, the sphere where she will always shine, will be, as it is now, *the home*. It is "her house" that she will either build up or pluck down "with her own hands." Whether she will do the one or the other depends on the question whether she shows—

I. GOODNESS (moral worth) or GUILT.

II. IMPARTIALITY or an unwise and unrighteous preference of one child to another.

III. DILIGENCE in the discharge of her household duties, or NEGLIGENCE.

IV. KINDNESS or ASPERITY in her bearing toward all the members of the home.

V. PATIENCE or IMPATIENCE in the government of her family and her servants.

And since the upbuilding or the down-plucking of "the house," the promotion or the ruin of domestic harmony and happiness, depends in so large a degree on the wisdom or the folly of the woman who is the wife and the mother, therefore: 1. Let every wise man think many times before he makes his choice. 2. Let every woman who is entering on this estate go forth to occupy it in (1) humility, (2) prayerfulness, (3) wise and holy resolution.—C.

Ver. 4.—*Daintiness and usefulness.* It is a very great thing to prefer the greater to the smaller, the more serious to the less serious, in the regulation of our life. It makes all the difference between success and failure, between wisdom and folly.

I. A SERIOUS MISTAKE, to prefer nicety or daintiness to fruitfulness or usefulness. This grave mistake is made by the *farmer* who would rather have a clean crib than a quantity of valuable manure; by the *housewife* who cares more for the elegance of the furniture than the comfort of the family; by the *minister* who spends more strength on the wording than on the doctrine of his discourse; by the *teacher* who lays more stress on the composition of classical verses than on the history of his country or than on the strengthening of the mind; by the *poet* who takes infinite pains with his rhymes and gives little thought to his subject or his imagery; by the *statesman* who is particular about the draughting of his bills, and has no objection to introduce retrograde and dishonouring measures; by the *doctor* who insists much on his medicine, and lets his patient go on neglecting all the laws of hygiene; etc.

II. THE WISDOM OF THE WISE. This is found in subordinating the trivial to the important; in being willing to submit to the temporarily disagreeable if we can attain to the permanently good; in being content to endure the sight and the smell of the unclean crib if there is a prospect of a fruitful field. The great thing is *increase*, fruitfulness, the reward of honest toil and patient waiting and believing prayer. This increase is to be sought and found in five fields in particular. 1. Bodily health and strength. 2. Knowledge, in all its various directions. 3. Material wealth, that ministers to the comfort and thus to the well-being of the families of man. 4. Wisdom; that noble quality of the soul which distinguishes between the true and the false, the pure and the impure, the imperishable and the ephemeral, the estimable and the unworthy, and which not only distinguishes but determinately chooses the former and rejects the latter. 5. Spiritual fruitfulness; the increase of our own piety and virtue, and also the growth of the kingdom of our Lord.—C.

Ver. 8.—*Understanding our way.* A man may be "prudent," he may be clever, learned, astute; yet he may miss his way, he may lose his life, he may prove to be a failure. *The wisdom* of the prudent, that which makes prudence or ability really valuable, that which constitutes its virtue, is the *practical understanding of life*, the knowledge which enables a man to take the right path and keep it, the discretion which chooses the line of a true success and maintains it to the end. It is to perceive and to pursue the way that is—

I. FINANCIALLY SOUND; avoiding that which leads to embarrassment and ruin; shunning those which conduct either to a sordid parsimony in one direction or to a wasteful extravagance on the other hand; choosing that which leads to competence and generosity.

II. EDUCATIONALLY WISE; forming the habits which strengthen and develop the faculties of the mind, instead of those which dwarf, or narrow, or demoralize them.

III. SOCIALLY SATISFACTORY; not going the way of an unwise and unsatisfactory ambition which ends in disappointment and chagrin; seeking the society which is suitable, elevating, honourable.

IV. IN ACCORDANCE WITH INDIVIDUAL ENDOWMENT; so that we do not expend all our time and all our powers in a way which cuts against all our individual inclinations, but in one which gives room for our particular aptitudes, and develops the special faculty with which our Creator has endowed our spirit.

V. MORALLY SAFE. It is a very great part of "the wisdom of the prudent" for a man to know what he may allow himself to do and where to go; what, on the other hand, he must not permit, and whither he must not wend his way. The path of safety to one man is the road to ruin with another. "Happy is he who condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth" (Rom. xiv. 22). Wise is it in those, and well is it for them, who have discerned and who have decided upon those habits of life which are establishing in their hearts all Christian virtues and making to shine in their lives all Christian graces.

VI. THE WAY OF HOLY SERVICE. The way of sacred service is so essentially *the* way of wisdom, that any "prudence" or cleverness that misses it makes the supreme mistake. On the other hand, the wisdom that leads to it and that preserves the soul in it is *the* wisdom to attain unto. This way, which is the end of our being and the crown of our life, includes (1) the service of Christ, and (2) the service of man.—C.

Ver. 9.—*The sadness of sin.* It is foolish enough to use the words "sin" and "sinner" in the light and flippant way in which they are frequently employed. But to "make a mock at sin" itself, to treat otherwise than seriously the fact and forces of sin, is folly indeed. For sin is—

I. THE SADDEST AND STERNEST FACT IN ALL THE UNIVERSE OF GOD. It is the ultimate cause of all the disorder, misery, ruin, and death that are to be found beneath any sky. There is no curse or calamity that has befallen our race that is not due to its disastrous power.

II. THE DARKEST EXPERIENCE WE HAVE IN REVIEW. We may look back on many dark passages in our life-history, but none can be so black as the experiences for which we have to reproach ourselves, as those wherein we broke some plain precept of God or left undischarged some weighty obligation.

III. A POWERFUL, HOSTILE FORCE STILL CONFRONTING US. Sin "easily besets us." 1. It is exceedingly *deceptive*, alluring, undermining, betraying. 2. It is a *very present* enemy, near at hand when least suspected, entering into all the scenes and spheres of life. 3. It *strikes deep*, going down into the innermost places of the soul. 4. It is *very extensive* in its range, covering all the particulars of life. 5. It *stretches* far into the future, crossing even the dividing-line of death, and reaching into eternity. 6. It is *fatal* in its results, leading the soul down into the dark shadows of spiritual death.

The only wise course we can take in view of such a force as this is (1) to realize its heinousness; (2) to confess its guiltiness; (3) to strive with patient strenuousness against its power; (4) to seek the aid of the Holy and Mighty Spirit that it may be uprooted from the heart and life.—C.

Vers. 10—13.—*Loneliness and laughter.* The tenth verse suggests to us the serious and solemnizing fact of—

I. THE ELEMENT OF LONELINESS IN HUMAN LIFE. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness," etc. In one aspect our life-path is thronged. It is becoming more and more difficult to be alone. Hours that were once sacred to solitude are now invaded by society. And yet it remains true that "in the central depths of our nature we are alone." There is a point at which, as he goes inward, our nearest neighbour, our most intimate friend, must stop; there *is* a sanctuary of the soul into which no foot

intrudes. It is there where we make our ultimate decision for good or evil; it is there where we experience our truest joys and our profoundest griefs; it is there where we live our truest life. We may so crowd our life with duties and with pleasures that we may reduce to its smallest radius this innermost circle; but some time must we spend there, and the great decisive experiences must we there go through. There we taste our very sweetest satisfactions, and there we bear our very heaviest burdens. And no one but the Father of spirits can enter into that secret place of the soul. So true is it that

> "Not e'en the dearest heart, and nearest to our own,
> Knows half the reasons why we smile or sigh."

It is well for us to remember that there is more, both of happiness and of sorrow, than we can see; well, that we may not be overburdened with the weight of the manifold and multiplied evils we are facing; well, that we may realize how strong is the reason that, when our cup of prosperity is full, we may have "the heart at leisure from itself, to soothe and sympathize" with those who, beneath a smiling countenance, may carry a very heavy heart. For we have to consider—

II. THE SUPERFICIAL ELEMENT IN MUCH HUMAN GLADNESS. "Even in laughter," etc. A man may smile and smile, and be most melancholy. To wear a smile upon our countenance, or to conclude our sentences with laughter, is often only a mere trick of style, a mere habit of life, cultivated with little difficulty. A true smile, an honest laugh, that comes not from the lips or from the lungs, but from the heart, is a very acceptable and a very admirable thing. But a false smile and a forced laugh bespeak a double-minded soul and a doubtful character. Surely the angels of God weep almost as much over the laughter as over the tears of mankind. For beneath its sound they may hear all too much that is hollow and unreal, and not a little that is vain and guilty. But, on the other hand, to smile with the glad and to laugh with the merry is a sympathetic grace not to be despised (Rom. xii. 15, first clause).

III. THE ISSUE OF FALSE SATISFACTIONS. "The end of that mirth is heaviness." How often is heaviness the end of mirth! All enjoyment that does not carry with it the approval of the conscience, all that is disregardful of the Divine Law, all that is a violation of the laws of our physical or our spiritual nature, *must* end and *does* end, sooner or later, in heaviness—in depression of spirit, in decline of power. It is a sorry thing for a man to accustom himself to momentary mirth, to present pleasure at the expense of future joy, of well-being in later years.

LESSONS. 1. Let the necessary solitariness of life lead us to choose the *very best* friendships we can form; that we may have those who can go far and often with us into the recesses of our spirit, and accompany us, as far as man can, in the larger and deeper experiences of our life. 2. Let the superficiality of much happiness lead us to inquire of ourselves whether we have planted in our soul the deeper roots of joy; those which will survive every test and trial of life, and which will be in us when we have left time and sense altogether behind us. 3. Let the perilous nature of some gratifications impose on us the duty of a wise watchfulness; that we may banish for ever from heart and life all injurious delights which "war against the soul," and rob us of our true heritage here and in the heavenly country.—C.

Ver. 13.—(See homily on ch. xvi. 25.)—C.

Vers. 17, 29.—(See homily on ch. xvi. 32.)—C.

Ver. 21.—*The sin of contempt.* We are in danger of despising our neighbours. The rich despise the poor, the learned despise the ignorant, the strong and healthy despise the weak and ailing, the devout despise the irreverent. But we are wrong in doing this. There is, indeed, one thing which may draw down a strong and even intense reprobation—moral baseness, meanness, a cruel and heartless selfishness, or a slavish abandonment to vice. But even there we may not wholly despise our neighbour; unmitigated contempt is always wrong, always a mistake. For—

I. WE ARE ALL THE CHILDREN OF GOD. Are we not all *his* offspring, the creatures of one Creator, the children of one Father? Does it become us to despise our own

brethren, our own sisters? Inasmuch as we are "members one of another," of one family, we are bound to let another feeling than that of contempt take the deepest place in our heart when we think of men and women, whoever they may be, whatever they may have been.

II. SELF-GLORIFICATION IS EXCLUDED. What makes us to differ from others? Whence came our superiority in wealth, in knowledge, in strength, in virtue? Did it not come, ultimately, from God? Trace things to their source, and we find that all "boasting is excluded." It is by the favour and the grace of God that we are who and what we are. Not a haughty contemptuousness, but a humble thankfulness, becomes us, if we stand higher than our neighbour.

III. NO MAN IS WHOLLY DESPICABLE. He may have some things about his character which we deplore and which we condemn, on account of which we do well to remonstrate with him and to make him feel that we have withdrawn our regard and confidence. But no man is wholly to be despised. 1. Much of what is bad or sad about him may be the consequence of misfortune. What did he inherit? Who were his earliest counsellors? What were his adverse influences? Against what hurtful and damaging forces has he had to contend? How few and how weak have been his privileges? how many his privations? 2. There is the germ of goodness in him. There is no man, even among the most depraved, who has not in him that on which wisdom and love may lay their merciful hold, and by which the man himself may be redeemed. Many marvellous and most cheering facts *prove* that the worst among the bad may be recovered—the most profane, besotted, impure, dishonest. The Christian thought and faith is that all men are within the reach both of the mercy and the redeeming love of God. Let Divine truth be spoken to them as it may be spoken; let Divine and human love embrace them and lay its fatherly or brotherly hand upon them; let the Divine Spirit breathe upon them, and from the lowest depths of guilt and shame they may rise to noble heights of purity and honour.—C.

Ver. 23.—*Talking and toiling.* These words contain solid and valuable truth; that truth does not, however, exclude the facts—

I. THAT MUCH LABOUR IS WORSE THAN USELESS. All that which is conceived and carried out for the purpose of destruction, or of fraud, or of vice, or of impiety. Only too often men give themselves infinite trouble which is worse than thrown away, the putting forth of which is sin, the end of which is evil—misery or even ruin and death.

II. THAT MUCH SPEAKING TENDS TO ENRICHMENT. There *is* a "talk of the lips" which is worthy of taking rank with the most profitable toil. 1. It may cost the speaker much care and effort and expenditure of vital force. 2. It may be a great power for good in the minds of men and even in the histories of peoples—

> "Like Luther's in the days of old,
> Half-battles for the free."

3. It may bring light to the darkened mind, comfort to the wounded heart, rest to the weary soul, strength and inspiration to the spirit that needs revival. But, on the other hand, the truth which the proverb is intended to impress upon us is this—

III. THAT MUCH VERBIAGE IS VERY PROFITLESS AND VAIN. There is a "talk of the lips" that does indeed tend to poverty. 1. That which does nothing more than consume time. This is pure waste; and in

> "An age (like this) when every hour
> Must sweat her sixty minutes to the death,"

this can by no means be afforded. 2. That which gives false ideas of life; which encourages men to trust to chance, or to despise honest toil, or to hope for the success which is the fruit of chicanery and dishonesty, or to find a heritage, not in the consciousness of duty and of the favour of God, but in superficial and short-lived delights.

IV. THAT CONSCIENTIOUS LABOUR IS THE ONE FRUITFUL THING. "In all labour there is profit." 1. Physical labour not only cultivates the field and builds the house and clothes the naked, but it gives strength to the muscles and health to the whole body.

2. Mental labour not only designs the painting, or the sculpture, or the oratorio, and writes the poem or the history, but it invigorates the mind and braces all the mental faculties. 3. Moral struggle not only saves from vice and crime, but makes the soul strong for noble and honourable achievement. 4. Spiritual endeavour not only refines the highest faculties of our nature, prepares us for the companionship of the holiest, and accomplishes the highest purposes of the Redeemer, but brings us into the favour and leads us into the likeness of God himself.—C.

Ver. 33.—(See homily on ch. xxix. 11.)—C.

Ver. 34.—*The strength and the reproach of nations.* I. SIN THE NATION'S SHAME. 1. *A sinful nation* in the sight of God. This is a nation of which the people have gone astray from him; do not approach him in worship; do not consult his will as revealed in his Word; have no ear to lend to those that speak in his Name; lose all sense of sacred duty in the pursuit of gain and pleasure. 2. *The flagrant guilt* to which such godlessness leads down. (1) It is *probable*, in a high degree, that impiety will lead to iniquity, that the absence of all religious restraint will end in abandonment to evil in all its forms. (2) History assures us that it does so. The denial, or the defiance, or the entire disregard of God and of his will, conducts to and ends in vice, in crime, in violence, in despotism, in the dissolution of old and honourable bonds, in the prevalence of despair and suicide, in utter demoralization. 3. This is *the reproach* to a people. A country may lose its population, or its wealth, or its pre-eminent influence, without being the object of reproach; but to fall into general impiety, and to live in the practice of wrong-doing,—this is a disgrace; it brings a nation down in the estimate of all the wise; its name is clothed with shame; its fame has become infamy.

II. RIGHTEOUSNESS A NATION'S STRENGTH. National righteousness does not consist in any public professions of piety, nor in the existence of great religious organizations, nor in the presence of a multitude of ecclesiastical edifices and officers; nations have had all these before now, and they have been destitute of real righteousness. That consists in the possession of a reverent *spirit* and an estimable *character*, and the *practice* of purity, justice, and kindness on the part of the people themselves (see Isa. lviii.; Micah vi. 6—8). In this is a nation's strength and exaltation, for it will surely issue in: 1. *Physical well-being.* Virtue is the secret of health and strength, of the multiplication and continuance of life and power. 2. *Material prosperity;* for righteousness is the foundation of educated intelligence, of intellectual energy and vigour, of commercial and agricultural enterprise, of maritime intrepidity and success. 3. *Moral and spiritual* advancement. 4. *Estimation and influence* among surrounding nations. 5. The *abiding favour of God* (Ps. lxxxi. 13—16). We may learn from the text (1) that no measure of brilliancy in statesmanship will compensate for debauching the minds of the people, for introducing ideas or sanctioning habits which are morally unsound and corrupting; (2) that the humblest citizen whose life tends to establish righteousness amongst his neighbours is a true patriot, however narrow his sphere may be.—C.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XV.

Ver. 1.—**A soft answer turneth away wrath.** Two things are here to be observed: an answer should be given—the injured person should not wrap himself in sullen silence; and that answer should be gentle and conciliatory. This is tersely put in a mediæval rhyme—

"Frangitur ira gravis
Quando est responsio suavis."

"Anger, however great,
Is checked by answer sweet."

Septuagint, "A submissive (ὑποπίπτουσα) answer averteth wrath." Thus Abigail quelled the excessive anger of David by her judicious submission (1 Sam. xxv. 24, etc.). **But grievous words stir up anger.** A word that causes vexation makes anger rise the higher.

Ὀργῆς ματαλας εἰσὶν αἴτιοι λόγοι.

"Of empty anger words are oft the cause."

Ver. 2.—**The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright.** This means either, brings it forth opportunely, at the right

time and place, or illustrates it, makes it beautiful and pleasant, as ver. 13. The wise man not only has knowledge, but can give it appropriate expression (comp. ch. xvi. 23). Vulgate, "The tongue of the wise adorneth wisdom." The wise man, by producing his sentiments and opinions in appropriate language and on proper occasions, commends wisdom, and renders it acceptable to his hearers. Septuagint, "The tongue of the wise knoweth what is fair (*καλά*)." **But the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness** (ver. 28). A fool cannot open his mouth without exposing his folly; he speaks without due consideration or discretion; as the Vulgate terms it, *ebullit*, "he bubbles over," like a boiling pot, which emits its contents inopportunely and uselessly. Septuagint, "The mouth of fools proclaimeth evil."

Ver. 3.—**The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding**—keeping watch on—**the evil and the good.** The omnipresence and omniscience of Jehovah, the covenant God, is strongly insisted upon, and the sacred name recurs continually in this and the next chapter, and indeed throughout this Book of the Proverbs (see Wordsworth, *in loc.*). The LXX. renders the verb *σκοπεύουσι*, "are watching," as from a tower or high place. To the usual references we may add Ecclus. xv. 18, 19; xxiii. 19, 20. Corn. à Lapide quotes Prudentius's hymn, used in the Latin Church at Thursday Lauds—

> "Speculator adstat desuper,
> Qui nos diebus omnibus
> Actusque nostros prospicit
> A luce prima in vesperum."

> "For God our Maker, ever nigh,
> Surveys us with a watchful eye;
> Our every thought and act he knows,
> From early dawn to daylight's close."

Ver. 4.—**A wholesome tongue is a tree of life**; a tongue that brings healing, that soothes by its words. Septuagint, "the healing of the tongue." But the Vulgate rendering is better, *lingua placabilis*, "the gentle, mild tongue" (see on ch. xiv. 30). Speech from such a source refreshes and vivifies all who come under its influence, like the wholesome fruit of a prolific tree (comp. ch. iii. 18; xi. 30).

*Ψυχῆς νοσούσης ἐστὶ φάρμακον λόγος.*

"The sick soul by a healing word is cured."

**But perverseness therein**—in the tongue—**is a breach in the spirit.** The perverseness intended must be falsehood, perversion of the truth. This is ruin and vexation (Isa. lxv. 14, where the same word is used) in the spirit, both in the liar himself, whose higher nature is thus terribly marred and spoiled, and in the case of his neighbour, who is injured by his slander and falsehood to the very core. The LXX., with a different reading, translates, "But he who keepeth it [the tongue] shall be filled with the spirit."

Ver. 5.—**A fool despiseth his father's instruction** (ch. x. 1): **but he that regardeth reproof is prudent** (ch. xix. 25). The son who attends to his father's reproof dealeth prudently, or becomes wiser. *Astutior fiet*, Vulgate; *πανουργότερος*, Septuagint. The Vulgate has here a distich which is not in the Hebrew, but a similar paragraph is found in the Septuagint. Thus Vulgate, "In the abundance of righteousness virtue is greatest; but the imaginations of the wicked shall be rooted up;" Septuagint, "In the abundance of righteousness is much strength; but the impious shall be destroyed from the very root." The addition seems to have been an explanation of the following verse, which has been foisted into the text here.

Ver. 6.—**In the house of the righteous is much treasure** (*chosen;* see on ch. xxvii. 24). The good man's store is not wasted or wrongly used, and is blest by God; and therefore, whether absolutely much or little, it is safe, and it is sufficient. In a spiritual sense, the soul of the righteous is filled with graces and adorned with good works. Septuagint, "In the houses of the righteous is much strength;" *plurima fortitudo*, Vulgate. **But in the revenues of the wicked is trouble.** Great revenues acquired by wrong or expended badly bring only trouble, vexation, and ruin upon a man and his family. Septuagint, "The fruits of the wicked shall perish." Spiritually, the works of the wicked cause misery to themselves and others.

Ver. 7.—**The lips of the wise disperse knowledge** (ver. 2; ch. x. 31). The LXX. takes the verb זָרָה in its other signification of "binding" or "embracing," and translates, "The lips of the wise are bound (*δέδεται*) with knowledge;" *i.e.* knowledge is always on them and controls their movements. The wise know when to speak, when to be silent, and what to say. **But the heart of the foolish doeth not so**; *i.e.* doth not disperse knowledge. Vulgate, *cor stultorum dissimile erit*, "will be unlike," which probably means the same as the Authorized Version. (Compare a similar use of the words *lo-ken* in Gen. xlviii. 18; Exod. x. 11.) But the contrast is stated rather weakly by this rendering, lips and heart having the same office to perform; hence it is better, with Delitzsch, Ewald, and others, to take כֵּן (*ken*) as an adjective in the sense of "right" or "trustworthy," and either to supply the former verb, "disperseth that which is not right," or to render, "The heart of the fool

is not directed right;" the fool goes astray, and leads himself and others into error. Septuagint, "The hearts of fools are not safe (ἀσφαλεῖς)."

Ver. 8.—**The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord.** The costly sacrifice of the wicked is contrasted with **the prayer**, unaccompanied with sacrifice, **of the upright.** The first clause occurs again in ch. xxi. 27, and virtually in ch. xxviii. 9. But in the latter passage the prayer of the wicked is denounced as abomination. Sacrifice, as legal and ceremonial, would be more naturally open to the charge of deadness and unreality; while prayer, as spontaneous and not legally enjoined, might be deemed less liable to formalism; all the more hateful, therefore, it is if not offered from the heart. The worthlessness of external worship without obedience and devotion of the heart is often urged by the prophets (see 1 Sam. xv. 22; Isa. i. 11, etc.; Jer. vi. 20; Hos. v. 6; Amos v. 22; see also Ecclus. xxxi. 18, etc.). The lesson was needed that the value of sacrifice depended upon the mind and disposition of the offerer, the tendency being to rest in the *opus operatum*, as if the external action was all that was necessary to make the worshipper accepted. This text was wrested by the Donatists to support their notion of the inefficacy of heretical baptism. St. Augustine replied that the validity of the sacrament depended not on the spiritual condition of the minister, but on the appointment of Christ. The text has also been applied to confirm the opinion that all the acts of unjustified man are sin. The truer view is that God's grace does act beyond the limits of his visible Church, and that the inspiration of the Holy Spirit concurs with the free-will of man before he is formally justified. The second clause recurs virtually in ver. 29.

Ver. 9.—This verse gives the reason for the treatment specified in the preceding verse (comp. ch. xi. 20; xii. 22). **Followeth after**; *chaseth*, implying effort and perseverance, as in the pursuit of game (ch. xi. 19; xxi. 21).

Ver. 10.—**Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way.** The verse is climacteric, and the first clause is better translated, *There is a grievous correction for him that forsaketh the way;* then the second clause denotes what that correction is: **he that hateth reproof**—*i.e.* he that forsaketh the way—**shall die.** "The way" is the path of goodness and righteousness (ch. ii. 13). "The way of life," the Vulgate calls it; so ch. x. 17. Ecclus. xxi. 6, "He that hateth reproof is in the way of sinners." The Authorized Version is quite allowable, and is supported in some degree by the Vulgate, *Doctrina mala deserenti viam vitæ.* The sinner is annoyed by discipline, correction, or true teaching, because they curb the indulgence of his passions, make him uneasy in conscience, and force him to look to future issues. Septuagint, "The instruction of the guileless (ἀκάκου) is known by passers-by; but they who hate reproofs die shamefully." The Syriac adopts the same rendering; but it is a question whether the word ought not to be κακοῦ. Menander says—

> Ὁ μὴ δαρεὶς ἄνθρωπος οὐ παιδεύεται.
>
> "Man unchastised learns naught."

Ver. 11.—**Hell and destruction are before the Lord.** The two words rendered "hell" and "destruction" are respectively *Sheol* and *Abaddon*, *Infernus* and *Perditio*, Ἅιδης and ἀπώλεια (comp. ch. xxvii. 20). The former is used generally as the place to which the souls of the dead are consigned—the receptacle of all departed spirits, whether good or bad. Abaddon is the lowest depth of hell, the "abyss" of Luke viii. 31; Rev. ix. 2, etc.; xx. 1, etc. The clause means that God's eye penetrates even the most secret corners of the unseen world. As Job (xxvi. 6) says, "Sheol is naked before him, and Abaddon hath no covering" (comp. Ps. cxxxix. 7, etc.). **How much more then the hearts of the children of men?** (For the form of the expression, comp. ch. xi. 31 and xix. 7; and for the import, ch. xvi. 2; xxi. 2; Jer. xvii. 10.) If God knows the secrets of the world beyond the grave, much more does he know the secret thoughts of men on earth. The heart is the source of action (see Matt. xv. 19, etc.).

Ver. 12.—**A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him** (ch. ix. 8; Amos v. 10). For "scorner" the Vulgate has *pestilens*, and the Septuagint ἀπαίδευτος, "undisciplined." "Scorners" are spoken of elsewhere, as ch. i. 22 (where see note); they are conceited, arrogant persons, free-thinkers, indifferent to or sceptical of religion, and too self-opinionated to be open to advice or reproof. **Neither will he go unto the wise,** who would correct and teach him (ch. xiii. 20). Septuagint, "He will not converse (ὁμιλήσει) with the wise." He does not believe the maxim—

> Σοφοῦ παρ' ἀνδρὸς χρὴ σοφόν τι μανθάνειν.
>
> "From a wise man you must some wisdom learn."

A Latin adage runs—

> "Argue consultum, te diliget; argue stultum,
> Avertet vultum, nec te dimittet inultum."

Ver. 13.—**A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance.** The face is the index of the condition of the mind.

"In the forehead and the eye
The lecture of the mind doth lie."

And, again, "A blithe heart makes a blooming visage" (comp. Ecclus. xiii. 25, etc.). Septuagint, "When the heart is glad, the face bloometh (θάλλει)." **But by sorrow of heart the spirit is broken** (ch. xii. 25). Happiness is shown in the outward look, but sorrow has a deeper and more abiding influence; it touches the inner life, destroys the natural elasticity, creates despondency and despair (comp. ch. xvi. 24; xvii. 22). Corn. à Lapide quotes St. Gregory Nazianzen's definition—

"Lætitia quidnam? Mentis est diffusio.
Tristitia? Cordis morsus et turbatio."

Hitzig and others translate the second clause, "But in sorrow of heart is the breath oppressed." It is doubtful if the words can be so rendered, and certainly the parallelism is not improved thereby.

Ver. 14.—**The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge** (ch. xviii. 15). The wise man knows that he knows nothing, and is always seeking to learn more.

Σοφία γάρ ἐστι καὶ μαθεῖν ὃ μὴ νοεῖς.

"To learn what thou hast never thought is wisdom."

**The mouth of fools.** Another reading, is "the face of fools;" but the former is more suitable to what follows. **Feedeth on foolishness.** So the Vulgate and Septuagint, "The mouth of the undisciplined knoweth evil." The fool is always gaping and devouring every silly, or slanderous, or wicked word that comes in his way, and in his turn utters and disseminates it.

Ver. 15.—**All the days of the afflicted are evil.** "The days of the poor are evil," says the Talmud ('Dukes,' 73); but in our verse the contrasted clause restricts the sense of "the afflicted" to mental, not material, evil. The Vulgate *pauperis* gives a wrong impression. The persons intended are such as take a gloomy view of things, who are always in low spirits, and cannot rise superior to present circumstances. These never have a happy moment; they are always taking anxious thought (Matt. vi. 25), and forecasting evil. The LXX., reading רעי for רע, translates, "At all times the eyes of the evil expect evil." **But he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast.** The cheerful man's condition is a banquet unceasingly, a fixed state of joy and contentment. Septuagint, "But the righteous are at peace always;" Vulgate, "A secure mind is like a perpetual feast." "For," says St. Gregory ('Moral.,' xii. 44), "the mere repose of security is like the continuance of refreshment. Whereas, on the other hand, the evil mind is always set in pains and labours, since it is either contriving mischiefs that it may bring down, or fearing lest these be brought down upon it by others." Our own proverb says, "A contented mind is a continual feast."

Ver. 16.—**Better is little with the fear of the Lord.** The good man's little store, which bears upon it the blessing of the Lord, is better **than great treasure and trouble therewith,** *i.e.* with the treasure (ch. xvi. 8; Ps. xxxvii. 16). The trouble intended is the care and labour and anxiety attending the pursuit and preservation of wealth. "Much coin, much care" (comp. Eccles. vi. 4). It was good advice of the old moralist, "Sis pauper honeste potius quam dives male; Namque hoc fert crimen, illud misericordiam." Vulgate, *thesauri magni et insatiabiles*, "treasures which satisfy not;" Septuagint, "Great treasures without fear (of the Lord)." Christ's maxim is, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. vi. 33).

Ver. 17.—**Better is a dinner** (portion) **of herbs where love is.** A dish of vegetables would be the common meal, whereas flesh would be reserved for festive occasions. Where love presides, the simplest food is cheerfully received, and contentment and happiness abound (ch. xvii. 1). Lesètre quotes Horace's invitation to his friend Torquatus ('Epist.,' i. 5. 1)—

"Si potes Archiacis conviva recumbere lectis,
Nec modica cenare times olus omne patella,
Supremo te sole domi, Torquate, manebo."

"If, dear Torquatus, you can rest your head
On couches such as homely Archias made,
Nor on a dish of simple pot-herbs frown,
I shall expect you as the sun goes down."
(Howes.)

So the old jingle—

"Cum dat oluscula mensa minuscula pace quieta,
Ne pete grandia lautaque prandia lite repleta."

**A stalled ox** is one taken up out of the pasture and fatted for the table. Thus we read (1 Kings iv. 23) that part of Solomon's provision for one day was ten fat oxen and twenty oxen out of the pastures; and the prophets speak of "calves of the stall" (Amos vi. 4; Mal. iv. 2; comp. Luke xv. 23). The fat beef implies a sumptuous and magnificent entertainment; but such a feast is little worth if accompanied with feelings of hatred, jealousy, and ill will. This and the preceding verse emphasize and explain ver. 15.

Ver. 18.—**A wrathful man stirreth up strife** (*contention*). This clause recurs almost identically in ch. xxix. 22 (comp. also ch. xxvi. 21 and xxviii. 25). He that is **slow to anger appeaseth strife** (ch. xiv. 29). In the former clause the word for "contention" is *madon*, in the latter "strife" is *rib*, which often means "law dispute." It requires two to make a quarrel, and where one keeps his temper and will not be provoked, anger must subside. Vulgate, "He who is patient soothes aroused quarrels (*suscitatas*)." Septuagint, "A long-suffering man appeases even a coming battle."

"Regina rerum omnium patientia."

The LXX. here introduces a second rendering of the verse: "A long-suffering man will quench suits; but the impious rather awaketh them."

Ver. 19.—**The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns.** The indolent sluggard is always finding or imagining difficulties and hindrances in his path, which serve as excuses for his laziness. The word for "thorn" here is *chedek*. It occurs elsewhere only in Micah vii. 4, where the Authorized Version has "briar;" but the particular plant intended is not ascertained. Most writers consider it to be some spinous specimen of the *solanum*. The word refers, it is thought, to a class of plants the name of one of which, at least, the miscalled "apple of Sodom," is well known in poetry, and is a proverbial expression for anything which promises fair but utterly disappoints on trial. "This plant, which is really a kind of potato, grows everywhere in the warmer parts of Palestine, rising to a widely branching shrub from three to five feet high; the wood thickly set with spines; the flower like that of the potato, and the fruit, which is larger than the potato apple, perfectly round, and changing from yellow to bright red as it ripens. . . . The *osher* of the Arab is the true apple of Sodom. A very tropical-looking plant, its fruit is like a large smooth apple or orange, and hangs in clusters of three or four together. When ripe, it is yellow, and looks fair and attractive, and is soft to the touch, but if pressed, it bursts with a crack, and only the broken shell and a row of small seeds in a half-open pod, with a few dry filaments, remain in the hand" (Geikie, 'Holy Land and Bible,' ii. 74, 117). Cato, 'Dist.,' liv. 3. 5—

"Segnitiem fugito, quæ vitæ ignavia fertur;
Nam quum animus languet, consumit inertia corpus."

To the sluggard is opposed the righteous in the second member, because indolence is a grievous sin, and the greatest contrast to the active industry of the man who fears God and does his duty. **The way of the righteous is made plain**; "is a raised causeway;" *selulah*, as ch. xvi. 17; Isa. xl. 3; xlix. 11. The upright man, who treads the path appointed for him resolutely and trustfully, finds all difficulties vanish; before him the thorns yield a passage; and that which the sluggard regarded as dangerous and impassable becomes to him as the king's highway. Vulgate, "The path of the just is without impediment;" Septuagint, "The roads of the manly (ἀνδρείων) are well beaten." St. Gregory ('Moral.,' xxx. 51), "Whatever adversity may have fallen in their way of life, the righteous stumble not against it. Because with the bound of eternal hope, and of eternal contemplation, they leap over the obstacles of temporal adversity" (comp. Ps. xviii. 29).

Ver. 20—ch. xix. 25.—Third section of this collection.

Ver. 20.—(For this verse, see ch. x. 1.) **A foolish man despiseth his mother**, and therefore is "heaviness" to her. Or the verb may mean "shameth." "A foolish man" is literally "a fool of a man."

Ver. 21.—**Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom**; literally, *void of heart*; i.e. of understanding (ch. x. 23). The perverse, self-willed fool finds pleasure in going on his evil way, and exposing the fatuity which he takes for wisdom. Septuagint, "The ways of the senseless are wanting in intelligence." **A man of understanding walketh uprightly**; goes the right way. It is implied that the fool goes the wrong way.

Ver. 22.—**Without counsel**—where no counsel is—**purposes are disappointed** (ch. xi. 14); there can be no concerted action, or the means used are not the best that could be devised. Hesiod, Ἔργ., 293—

Ἐσθλὸς δ' αὖ κἀκεῖνος ὃς εὖ εἰπόντι πίθηται·
Ὃς δὲ κε μήτ' αὐτὸς νοέῃ μήτ' ἄλλον ἀκούων
Ἐν θυμῷ βάλληται, ὁ δ' αὖτ' ἀχρήιος ἀνήρ.

(Comp. ch. xx. 18.) **In the multitude of counsellors they are established** (ch. xxiv. 6). We read of "counsellors" as almost regular officials in the Hebrew court, as in modern kingdoms (see 1 Chron. xxvii. 32; Isa. i. 26; Micah iv. 9; comp. Ezra vii. 28). There is, of course, the danger of secrets being divulged where counsellors are many; and there is Terence's maxim to fear, "Quot homines, tot sententiæ;" but, properly guarded and discreetly used, good counsel is above all price. Septuagint, "They who honour not councils (συνέδρια) lay aside (ὑπερτίθενται) conclusions (*i.e.* put off coming to any definite decision); but in the hearts of those who consult counsel abideth" (compare the parallel clause, ch. xix. 21).

Ver. 23.—**A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth.** The idea of the preceding verse concerning counsel is maintained. A counsellor gives wise and skilful advice, or makes a timely speech; and, knowing how much harm is done by rash or evil words, he naturally rejoices that he has been able to be useful, and has avoided the errors which the tongue is liable to incur. **A word spoken in due season,** *sermo opportunus*, is advice given at the right moment and in the most suitable manner, when the occasion and the interests at stake demand it (comp. ch. xxv. 11). The LXX. connects this verse with the preceding, and renders, "The evil man will not hearken to it (counsel), nor will he say aught in season or for the public good."

Ver. 24.—**The way of life is above to the wise**; Revised Version, *to the wise the way of life goeth upward.* The writer means primarily that the wise and good lead such a life as to preserve them from death (ch. xiv. 32). The path may be steep and painful, but at any rate it has this compensation—it leads away from destruction. It is obvious to read into the passage higher teaching. The good man's path leads heavenward, to a high life here, to happiness hereafter; his conversation is in heaven (Phil. iii. 20), his affections are set on things above (Col. iii. 2). Such an upward life tends to material and spiritual health, as it is added, **that he may depart from hell** (*Sheol*) **beneath.** Primarily, a long and happy life is promised to the man who fears the Lord, as in ch. iii. 16; secondarily, such a one avoids that downward course which ends in the darkness of hell. Vulgate, "The path of life is above to the instructed man, to make him avoid the nethermost (*novissimo*) hell;" Septuagint, "The thoughts of the prudent man are the ways of life, that turning from Hades he may be safe."

Ver. 25.—**The Lord will destroy the house of the proud** (ch. xii. 7; xiv. 11; xvi. 18). The proud, self-confident man, with his family and household and wealth, shall be rooted up. The heathen saw how retribution overtook the arrogant. Thus Euripides says ('Heracl.,' 387)—

Τῶν φρονημάτων
Ὁ Ζεὺς κολαστὴς τῶν ἄγαν ὑπερφρόνων.

"Zeus, the chastiser of too-haughty thoughts."

**But he will establish the border of the widow.** He will take the widow under his protection, and see that her landmark is not removed, and that her little portion is secured to her. The widow is taken as the type of weakness and desolation, as often in Scripture (comp. Deut. x. 18; Ps. cxlvi. 9). In a country where property was defined by landmarks—stones or some such objects—nothing was easier than to remove these altogether, or to alter their position. That this was a common form of fraud and oppression we gather from the stringency of the enactments against the offence (see Deut. xix. 14; xxvii. 17; and comp. Job xxiv. 2; ch. xxii. 28). In the Babylonian and Assyrian inscriptions which have been preserved, there are many invoking curses, curious and multifarious, against the disturbers of boundaries. Such marks were considered sacred and inviolable by the Greeks and Romans (see Plato, 'De Leg.,' viii. 842, 843; Ovid, 'Fast.,' ii. 639, etc.).

Ver. 26.—**The thoughts of the wicked** (or, *evil devices*) **are an abomination to the Lord.** Although the Decalogue, by forbidding coveting, showed that God's Law touched the thought of the heart as well as the outward action, the idea here refers to wicked plans or designs, rather than emphatically to the secret movements of the mind. These have been noticed in ver. 11. **But the words of the pure are pleasant words**; literally, *pure are words of pleasantness*; i.e. words of soothing, comforting tone are, not an abomination to the Lord, as are the devices of the wicked, but they are pure in a ceremonial sense, as it were, a pure and acceptable offering. Revised Version, *pleasant words are pure.* Vulgate, "Speech pure and pleasant is approved by him"—which is a pharaphrase of the clause. Septuagint, "The words of the pure are honoured (σεμναί)."

Ver. 27.—**He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house** (ch. xi. 29). The special reference is doubtless to venal judges, who wrested judgment for lucre. Such malefactors were often reproved by the prophets (see Isa. i. 23; x. 1, etc.; Micah iii. 11; vii. 3). But all ill-gotten gain brings sure retribution. The Greeks have many maxims to this effect. Thus—

Κέρδη πονηρὰ ζημίαν ἀεὶ φέρει.

And again—

Τὰ δ' αἰσχρὰ κέρδη συμφορὰς ἐργάζεται.

"Riches ill won bring ruin in their train."

An avaricious man troubles his house in another sense. He harasses his family by niggardly economies and his domestics by overwork and under-feeding, deprives his household of all comfort, and loses the blessing of God upon a righteous use of earthly wealth. The word "troubleth" (*akar*, "to trouble") reminds one of the story of Achan, who, in his greed, appropriated some of the spoil of the banned city Jericho, and brought destruction upon himself and his family, when, in punishment of the crime, he and all his were stoned in

the Valley of Achor (Josh. vii. 25). So the covetousness of Gehazi caused the infliction of the penalty of leprosy upon himself and his children (2 Kings v. 27). Professor Plumptre ('Speaker's Commentary,' *in loc.*) notes that the Chaldee Targum paraphrases this clause, referring especially to lucre gained by unrighteous judgments, thus: "He who gathers the mammon of unrighteousness destroys his house;" and he suggests that Christ's use of that phrase (Luke xvi. 9) may have had some connection with this proverb through the version then popularly used in the Palestinian synagogues. **He that hateth gifts shall live** (comp. Eccles. vii. 7). Primarily this refers to the judge or magistrate who is incorruptible, and gives just judgment, and dispenses his patronage without fear or favour; he shall "prolong his days" (ch. xxviii. 16). And in all cases a man free from covetousness, who takes no bribes to blind his eyes withal, who makes no unjust gains, shall pass a long and happy life undisturbed by care. We see here a hope of immortality, to which integrity leads. The LXX., with the view of making the two clauses more marked in antithesis, restricts the application thus: "The receiver of gifts destroyeth himself; but he who hateth the receiving of gifts liveth." The Vulgate and Septuagint, after this verse, introduce a distich which recurs in ch. xvi. 6. The Septuagint transposes many of the verses at the end of this chapter and the beginning of the next.

Ver. 28.—**The heart of the righteous studieth to answer.** The good man deliberates before he speaks, takes time to consider his answer, lest he should say anything false, or inexpedient, or injurious to his neighbour. A Latin adage runs—

"Qui bene vult fari debet bene præmeditari."

Says Theognis—

Βουλεύου δὶς καὶ τρὶς, ὅ τοί κ' ἐπὶ τὸν νόον ἔλθῃ·
Ἄτηρὸς γὰρ ἀεὶ λάβρος ἀνὴρ τελέθει.

"Whate'er comes in your mind, deliberate;
A hasty man but rushes on his fate."

Septuagint, "The heart of the prudent will meditate πίστεις," which may mean "truth," "fidelity," or "proofs." The Vulgate has "obedience," implying attention to the inward warnings of conscience and grace, before the mouth speaks. **Poureth out** (ver. 2). The wicked man never considers; evil is always on his lips and running over from his mouth. Septuagint, "The mouth of the ungodly answereth evil things." The LXX. here inserts ch. xvi. 7.

Ver. 29.—**The Lord is far from the wicked.** The maxim is similar to that in ver. 8 and John ix. 31, "We know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and do his will, him he heareth." God is said to be "far" in the sense of not listening, not regarding with favour (comp. Ps. x. 1). His attention to the righteous is seen in Ps. cxlv. 18, 19. The LXX. introduces here ch. xvi. 8, 9.

Ver. 30.—**The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart** (ch. xvi. 15). The beaming glance that shows a pure, happy mind and a friendly disposition, rejoices the heart of him on whom it is turned. There is something infectious in the guileless, joyful look of a happy man or child, which has a cheering effect upon those who observe it. The LXX. makes the sentiment altogether personal: "The eye that seeth what is good rejoiceth the heart." **A good report** (good tidings) **maketh the bones fat**; strengthens them and gives them health (comp. ch. iii. 8; xvi. 24). Sight and hearing are compared in the two clauses, "bones" in the latter taking the place of "heart" in the former. The happy look and good news alike cause joy of heart.

Ver. 31.—**The ear that heareth** (hearkeneth to) **the reproof of life abideth among the wise** (ch. vi. 23). The reproof, or instruction, of life is that which teaches the true way of pleasing God, which is indeed the only life worth living. The ear, by synecdoche, is put for the person. One who attends to and profits by such admonition may be reckoned among the wise, and rejoices to be conversant with them. Wordsworth finds a more recondite sense here: the ear of the wise dwells, lodges, passes the night (ch. xix. 23) in their heart, whereas the heart of fools is in their mouth (ch. xiv. 33). This verse is omitted in the Septuagint, though it is found in the other Greek versions and the Latin Vulgate.

Ver. 32.—This verse carries on and puts the climax to the lesson of the preceding. **He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul**; "hateth himself," Septuagint; commits moral suicide, because he does not follow the path of life. He is like a sick man who thrusts away (ἀπωθεῖται, Septuagint) the wholesome medicine which is his only hope of cure. **He that heareth** (listeneth to) **reproof getteth understanding**; literally, *possesseth a heart*, and therefore does not despise his soul, but "loves it" (ch. xix. 8), as the LXX. renders.

Ver. 33.—**The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom**; that which leads to and gives wisdom (see ch. i. 3, 7, etc.; ix. 10). 'Pirke Aboth,' iii. 26, "No wisdom, no fear of God; no fear of God, no wisdom. No knowledge, no discernment; no discernment, no knowledge." **Before honour is humility** (ch. xviii. 12). A man who fears

God must be humble, and as the fear of God leads to wisdom, it may be said that humility leads to the honour and glory of being wise and reckoned among the wise (ver. 31). A man with a lowly opinion of himself will hearken to the teaching of the wise, and scrupulously obey the Law of God, and will be blessed in his ways. For "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (Jas. iv. 6; comp. Luke i. 52). The maxim in the second clause has a general application. "He that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Matt. xxiii. 12; comp. Luke xiv. 11; Jas. iv. 6). It is sanctioned by the example of Christ himself, the Spirit itself testifying beforehand his sufferings that were to precede his glory (1 Pet. i. 11; see also Phil. ii. 5, etc.). Septuagint, "The fear of the Lord is discipline and wisdom, and the beginning of glory shall answer to it." Another reading adds, "Glory goeth before the humble," which is explained to mean that the humble set before their eyes the reward that awaits their humility, and patiently endure, like Christ, "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. xii. 2).

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*A soft answer and a bitter word.* Both of these are regarded as replies to angry words. They represent the wise and the foolish ways of treating such words. They give us a bright and a dark picture. Let us look at each.

I. THE BRIGHT PICTURE. 1. *The answer.* A soft answer need not be a weak one; nor should it imply any compromise of truth, nor any yielding of righteousness. It may be firm in substance, though soft in language and spirit. Very often the most effective reply is given in the mildest tone. It is impossible to resent it, yet it is equally impossible to answer it. But often we may go further. When no vital interest of truth or righteousness is at stake, it may be well to yield a point of our own will and pleasure in order to secure peace. 2. *Its inspiration.* Such an answer might well be prompted by wisdom, for it is suggested on the ground of prudence in "Proverbs." Yet there is a higher motive for softness in reply to wrath. Christian love will inspire the kinder method, for love is more desirous of peace and good feeling than of securing all that might be justly demanded. To stand on one's rights and resent the slightest intrusion upon them is to act from self-interest, or at best from a sense of self-regarding duty. A higher feeling enters and a larger view follows when we are considering our brother's feelings, the sorrow of a quarrel and the blessedness of peace. 3. *Its results.* It is successful—not, perhaps, in gaining one's own way, but in allaying wrath. It turns away wrath. The angry opponent is silenced. For very shame he can say no more; or his wrath dies out for want of fuel; or he is won to a better feeling by the generous treatment. At the worst he can find little pleasure in fighting an unarmed and unresisting opponent.

II. THE DARK PICTURE. The ugly contrast of this second picture is necessary in order to emphasize the beauty of the former one. But however interesting they may be in art, Rembrandtesque effects are terrible in real life; for here they represent agonies and tragedies—hatred, cruelty, and misery. Yet they need to be considered if only that they may be abolished. 1. *The bitter answer.* This is more than an angry retort. Bitterness is more pungent than wrath. While rage thunders, bitterness stabs. It contains a poisonous element of malice, and it means more ill will than the hot but perhaps hasty words that provoke it. 2. *The root of its bitterness.* No doubt this springs from a feeling of injury. The angry man has wronged his companion, or, at least, wounded him, and the retort is provoked by pain. But pain alone would not engender bitterness. A new element, a virus of ill will, is stirred when the bitter word is flung back, and it is the outflow of this ill will that gives bitterness to the answer. 3. *The anger that it rouses.* This new anger is worse than that which commenced the quarrel. Each reply is more hot, more furious, more cruel. Thus a great wrath is roused and a great fire kindled by a very little spark that has been fanned into a flame when it should have been quenched at the outset.

There is no question as to which of these two pictures best accords with Christian principle. The gospel of Christ is God's soft answer to man's rebellious wrath.

Ver. 3.—"*The eyes of the Lord.*" I. GOD HAS EYES. We must always describe the Infinite and Invisible One in figurative language. But just as we speak of the arms and hands of God when thinking of his power and activity, so we cannot better conceive of his wonderful observing faculty than by saying that he has eyes. God can see; he can watch his creatures. It would be an awful thing if the universe were governed by a blind power. Yet that is the condition imagined by those who regard force, unconscious energy, as the highest existence in the universe and the cause of all things. We could but tremble before a blind god. What awful confusion, what terrible disasters, would result from the almighty energy of such a being crashing through all the complicated and delicate machinery of the world's life!

II. GOD USES HIS EYES. He is not a sleeping deity. He never slumbers, never closes his eyes. Day and night are alike to him. There is never a moment when he ceases to observe the world and all that is in it. There are men of whom we can say, "Eyes have they, but they see not;" unobservant people, who pass by the most obvious facts without noticing them; dreamers, who live in a world of their own fancies, and fail to see the things that are really happening about them. God is not thus self-contained. He has an outer life in the universe, and he neither scorns nor fails to observe all that is happening. We have to do with an ever-watchful, keenly observant God.

III. GOD'S EYES ARE EVERYWHERE. We can only see clearly what is near to us. All but the largest objects are lost in distance, and the horizon melts into obscurity. Not so with God. 1. He sees *the distant.* Indeed, nothing is distant from him. He is everywhere, so that what we should regard as the most remote objects are under his close ken. No Siberian solitude, no far-off deserted planet, no star lost to the rest of the universe and rushing off into the awful waste of space, can be far from God's presence and observation. 2. He sees *the obscure.* No fog dims his vision; no night blots out the objects he is ever gazing upon; no hiding in secret chambers, deep cellars, black mines of the earth, can remove anything from God's sight. 3. He sees *the unattractive.* Our vision is selective. Many objects pass close before our eyes, yet we never see them, because we are not interested in them. God is interested in all things. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without his notice.

IV. GOD'S EYES SEE THE EVIL. Though he is merciful, he is too true to refuse to see the sin of his children. 1. *The sinner cannot escape by secrecy.* If God does not strike at once, this is not because he does not know. Meanwhile the deluded sinner is but "treasuring up wrath." 2. *God is long-suffering.* If he forbears to strike at once and yet knows all, it must be that he waits to give us an opportunity to repent. His gospel is offered in full view of our sin. There is nothing to be discovered later on that may turn God's mercy from us. He knows the worst when he offers grace.

V. GOD'S EYES SEE THE GOOD. 1. *He observes his children's secret devotion.* Unnoticed by men, they are not unheeded by God. Misunderstood and misjudged on earth, they are quite understood by him. Should it not be enough to know that God knows all, and will recognize faithful service? 2. *He observes his children's need.* Prayer is necessary to express our faith, etc., but not to give information to God. He knows our condition better than we do. Therefore, though he seems to neglect us, it cannot be so really. No mother ever watched over her sick infant as God watches over his poor children.

Ver. 13.—*A joyous heart or a broken spirit.* These are the two extremes. The less we have of the one the more we tend towards the other. The first is encouraged that it may save us from the disasters of the second condition.

I. THE CONDITION OF THE HEART IS OF VITAL IMPORTANCE. "Out of it are the issues of life" (ch. iv. 23). The first essential for one whose life has been wrong is the creation of "a clean heart" (Ps. li. 10). According as we think and feel in our hearts, so do we truly live. Now, it is the merit of Christianity that it works directly on the heart, and only touches the outer life through this primary inward operation. We must set little store on the external signs of prosperity if the heart is wrong. When that is right the rest is likely to follow satisfactorily.

II. THE JOY OR SORROW OF THE HEART ARE NOT MATTERS OF INDIFFERENCE. The religion of the Bible is not Stoicism. It is nowhere represented to us in this book

that it matters not whether men grieve or are joyous. On the contrary, the Bible contains valuable recipes against heart-pangs. God's pity for his children would lead to his concerning himself with such matters. Christ's human sympathy, which led to his being frequently "moved with compassion," made him alleviate suffering and seek to give his joy to his disciples. The special mission of sorrow and the large healing and strengthening influence of the highest kind of joy make these experiences to be of real interest to the spiritual life.

III. THE OUTER LIFE IS BRIGHTENED BY JOY OF HEART. It is possible for the actor to assume a smiling countenance when his heart is bursting with agony, but that is just because he is an actor. It is not intended by Providence that the face should be a mask to hide the soul. In the long run the set expression of the countenance must correspond to the prevalent condition of the spirit within. The sad heart will be revealed by a clouded countenance, the heart of care by the fretted lines of a worn face, the peaceful heart by a serene expression, and the glad heart by unconscious smiles. Thus we shed gloom or sunshine by our very presence. "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. viii. 10). With the brightened countenance there comes revived energy. Moreover, the cheerful expression of a Christian is a winning invitation to others. It makes the gospel attractive.

IV. THE SPIRIT IS BROKEN BY SORROW OF HEART. It must be coufessed that we have here only a partial view of sorrow. The richer revelation which the New Testament makes of the Divine gospel of sorrow gives it a new meaning and a higher blessedness. Since Christ suffered, suffering has been sanctified, and the Viâ Dolorosa has become the road to victory. Nevertheless, mere sorrow is still trying, wearing, grinding to the soul. To bear the cross for Christ's sake is to render noble service, but simply to groan under the load of pain is not to be inspired with strength. Jesus was not only "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" he could speak of his joy just before feeling his deepest agony. A life of utter sorrow must be one of utter weariness. 1. Therefore we should seek the grace of Christ to conquer sorrow in our own hearts. There is no virtue in yielding to it with self-made martyrdom. 2. It is a good work to lessen the world's sorrow.

Vers. 16, 17.—*The better things.* Earthly good is comparative. Many things regarded by themselves appear to be eminently attractive; but if they exclude more desirable things they must be rejected. We need not make the worst of this world in order to make the best of the higher world. Taking earth at its brightest, it is still outshone by the glories of heaven. But earth is not always at its brightest; and we must make our comparison with the actual facts of life, not with ideal possibilities.

I. GODLY POVERTY IS BETTER THAN TROUBLED WEALTH. 1. *Wealth is disappointing.* It might be shown that wealth at its best cannot satisfy the soul; for (1) it is only external, and (2) it is but a means of obtaining other ends. But plain experience shows that the advantages of wealth are very commonly neutralized by trouble. (1) For wealth will not prevent trouble. Rich men suffer from disease, disappointment, discontent, the unkindness of friends, etc. The child of affluence may die. (2) Wealth may bring trouble. It has its own anxieties. Antonio, who has ships at sea, is distressed at the storms that do not trouble the poor man. Many interests lead to conflicting claims, and the cares of riches are often as great as those of poverty. (3) Wealth cannot compensate for trouble. The small vexations of life may be smoothed away by money, and of course certain specific troubles—such as hunger, cold, nakedness—may be quite prevented. But the greater troubles remain. Gold will not heal a broken heart. 2. *Godliness is satisfying.* It may be found with wealth. Then it will correct the evils and supply the defects. But it may be seen with poverty, and in this case it will prove itself the true riches which will give what money can never supply. Indeed, in presence of this real good the question as to whether even great earthly treasure is to be added need not be raised. It is lost in the infinitely greater possession. The ocean will not be concerned to know whether the trickling streamlet that flows into its abundant waters be full or failing. Further, it is to be noted that God satisfies the soul directly, while at best riches can only pretend to do so indirectly. Riches seek to buy happiness. Inward religion directly confers blessedness. To have God is to be at rest.

II. LOVE WITH PRIVATIONS IS BETTER THAN HATRED WITH SUPERFLUITY. 1. *Hatred neutralizes superfluity.* What is the use of the ox in the stall if hatred makes a hell of the home? How often is it seen that the comforts of affluence only mock the wretchedness of their master, because the more essential joys of affection have been shattered! A household of discord must be one of misery. Family feuds cannot but bring unhappiness to all concerned in them. Hatred in the house leads to wretchedness in proportion to the blessedness that love would have conferred. We are more touched by our relations with persons than by our relations with things. Therefore, if those closer relations are marred, no prosperity of external affairs can bring peace. 2. *Love can neutralize privations.* The dinner of herbs may not be hurtful in itself. Daniel and his companions throve on it (Dan. i. 15). If it is not attractive and appetizing, other considerations may withdraw our attention from it and fill the heart with joy. Love is more than meat. Nay, even bitter herbs may be not unpalatable when seasoned with affection, while an alderman's feast will be insipid to a guest who is preoccupied with vexatious thoughts.

Ver. 23.—*The word in season.* I. WHAT IT IS. The word in season is the right word spoken at the right time. It may not be the word that is sought and asked for. It may even be an unwelcome word, a startling word, a word of rebuke. What can be more seasonable than to cry, "Halt!" to one who is nearing the precipice in the dark? Yet he neither expects the word, nor for the moment accepts it with favour. The great requisite is that the word should be suitable for the occasion. This has a special bearing on the word of highest wisdom, the gospel of Jesus Christ. We should be on the look out for suitable moments—*e.g.* in sorrow, when the heart is softened; in leisure hours, when the mind is open; at new departures, when special guidance is needed; after mistakes have been made, to correct and save; when doubts have been expressed, to remove their paralyzing influence; when Christ has been dishonoured, to vindicate his holy Name. These are all times for speech, but not for uttering the same words. The occasion must determine the character of the word.

II. WHY IT IS GOOD. 1. *The soil must be in a right condition*, or the seed that is flung upon it will be wasted. It is useless to cast bushels of the best wheat by the wayside, and foolish to cast pearls before swine. Men do not sow seed in the heat of August nor during a January frost. Our business is to sow beside all waters, and yet to watch for the rising of the waters and make a right use of the seasons. There is a time to speak and a time to keep silence, not because these epochs are fixed by some Divine almanack of destiny, but just because silence is golden when mind and heart need rest and privacy, and speech is precious when sympathy is craved, or when wise words can be received with thoughtful attention. There are "words that help and heal." 2. *The special condition of the hearer determines what he will best receive.* We should not preach consolation to a merry child, nor talk of the difficulties of religion before a person who has never been troubled with them. On the other hand, it is useless simply to exhort the soul perplexed with diverse thoughts to "believe and be saved." Indeed, in private conversation the peculiar characteristics of each individual will require a different mode of approach. We cannot discuss theology with an uneducated man as we may have to discuss it with a young graduate.

III. HOW IT MAY BE SPOKEN. It is not easy to find the word in season, and certain conditions are absolutely essential to the production of it. 1. *Sympathy.* This is the primary condition. It may be almost affirmed that where this is strong the rest will follow. We cannot speak wisely to a fellow-man until we have learnt to put ourselves in his place. 2. *Thought.* Great considerateness is necessary that we choose the right word, and then speak it just at the right moment. If a man blurts out the first thought that comes into his mind, he may do infinite harm, though he be acting with the best intention. 3. *Courage.* Those who are most fitted by sympathy and thoughtfulness are often most backward to utter the word in season. To such it seems easier to preach to a thousand hearers than to talk directly with one soul. Yet personal conversation is most fruitful. It was Christ's method, *e.g.* with Nicodemus, the woman at the well, etc. This duty is sadly neglected from lack of moral courage.

Ver. 29.—*Character and prayer.* The character of a man has much to do with the

efficacy of his prayer. The prayers of different men are not of equal value. One man's most urgent petition is but wasted breath, while the slightest sigh of another is heard in heaven, and answered with showers of blessing. Let us consider how these great diversities come to be.

I. A MAN'S NEARNESS TO GOD IS TO BE MEASURED BY HIS CHARACTER. Some men appear to have what is called a gift of prayer, but in reality they are only cursed with a fatal fluency in phrases. By long habit they have acquired a facility of pouring forth voluminous sentences with a certain unctuousness that persuades inconsiderate hearers into the notion that they are "mighty in prayer." Yet, in truth, this facility is of no account whatever with God, who does not hear our "much speaking." On the other hand, if a man's heart is wrong with God, he is cut off from access to heaven. Such a man cannot truly pray, though he may "say his prayers." It may be said that even the worst sinner can pray for pardon, and of course this is a great and glorious truth. But he can only do so effectually when he is penitent. The man whose heart and life turn towards goodness is brought into sympathy with God, so that he is spiritually near to God, and his prayers find ready access to heaven.

II. THE CHARACTER OF THE MAN WILL DETERMINE THE CHARACTER OF HIS PRAYERS. He may be known by his prayers, if only we can tell what those prayers really are. His true heartfelt desires, not his due and decorous devotions, are the best expression of his real self. Now, a bad man will desire bad things, and a good man good things. It would be most unfitting in God, indeed positively wrong, to give the bad man the desires of his heart. But he who prays in the name of Christ, *i.e.* with his authority, can only pray for the things of which Christ approves, and he will only do this when he has the spirit of Christ, and is in harmony with the mind and will of his Lord. The holy man will only pray—consciously, at least—for things that agree with holiness. It is reasonable to suppose that his prayers will be heard when the ill petitions of the bad man are rejected.

III. THE CHARACTER OF A MAN AFFECTS HIS FITNESS TO RECEIVE DIVINE ANSWERS TO HIS PRAYERS. Two men may ask for precisely similar things in the way of external blessings. Yet one is selfish, sinful, rebellious, and ungrateful. To give to this man what he asks will be hurtful to him, injurious to others, dishonouring to God. But a good man will know how to receive blessings from God with gratitude, and how to use them for the glory of his Master and the good of his brethren. Further, in regard to internal blessings, what would be good for the man whose heart and life are in the right, would be hurtful to the impenitent. Saint and sinner both pray for peace. To the saint this is a wholesome solace; to the sinner it would be a dangerous narcotic. Therefore God responds to the prayer of the one, and rejects the petition of the other.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 2, 4, 7.—*Virtues and vices of the tongue.* I. MILDNESS AND VIOLENCE. (Ver. 1.) The soft answer is like the water which quenches, and the bitter retort, the "grievous words," like the oil which increases the conflagration of wrath. As scriptural examples of the former, may be mentioned Jacob with Esau (Gen. xxxii., xxxiii.), Aaron with Moses (Lev. x. 16—20), the Reubenites with their brethren (Josh. xxii. 15—34), Gideon with the men of Ephraim (Judg. viii. 1—3), David with Saul (1 Sam. xxiv. 9—21), Abigail with David (1 Sam. xxv. 23—32). And of the latter, Jephthah (Judg. xii. 1—6), Saul (1 Sam. xx. 30—34), Nabal (1 Sam. xxv. 10—13), Rehoboam (1 Kings xii. 12—15), Paul and Barnabas (Acts xv. 39).

II. THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF WISE SPEECH AND THE REPULSIVENESS OF FOOLISH TALK. (Ver. 2.) If this verse be more correctly rendered, it means that the tongue of the wise makes knowledge lovely, while the mouth of the fool foams with folly. The speech of the former is apt to time and place—coherent—and wins upon the listener. The latter is unseasonable, confused, nonsensical, repellent. Notice the *tact* of St. Paul's addresses (Acts xvii. 22, 23; xxvi. 27—29), and what he says about foolish babbling in 2 Tim. ii. 16—18; Titus i. 10.

III. MODERATION AND EXTRAVAGANCE. (Ver. 4.) A calm and measured tone

should be cultivated, as well as a pure and peaceful heart; these mutually react upon one another. The extravagant, immoderate, licentious tongue is "like a blustering wind among the boughs of the trees, rushing and tearing the life and spirit of a man's self and others" (Bishop Hall). Beware of exaggeration.

IV. SPEECH A DIFFUSIVE INFLUENCE. (Ver. 7.) The lips of the wise scatter seeds of good around them; *not so* with the heart and lips of the fool. "They trade only with the trash of the world, not with the commerce of substantial knowledge." The preaching of the gospel is compared to the scattering of good seed, and evil activity is the sowing of tares in the world-field (Matt. xiii. 24, etc.).—J.

Ver. 3.—*The omnipresence of God.* I. GOD IS A SPIRIT. We cannot exhaust the sublimity, the awfulness, the comfort, the meaning, in this thought.

II. GOD SEES ALL AND KNOWS ALL. Both the good and the evil. In looking upon evil deeds which pass unchastised in appearance, we are ready to exclaim, "And yet God has never spoken a word!" But God has seen, and will requite.

III. HENCE LET US POSSESS OUR SOULS IN PATIENCE. Commit them unto him in well-doing, and wait for the "end of the Lord." He knows, among other things, the need of his children, and bethinks him of helping and delivering them.—J.

Ver. 5.—*Contempt and respect for instruction.* The fool is as a "wild ass's colt" (Job xi. 12), recalcitrant, stubborn; while he who early shows a willingness to listen to good advice has the germ of prudence, the prophecy of a safe career.

I. A MURMURING TEMPER, A RELUCTANCE TO SUBMIT TO NECESSITY AND THE COURSE OF LIFE, IS IN REALITY A CONTEMPT OF GOD.

II. SUBMISSION TO THE INEVITABLE, COMPLIANCE TO THE LAWS OF LIVING, IS DOCILITY TO GOD.—J.

Ver. 6.—*True and false gains.* I. A MAN MAY BE POOR, YET POSSESS ALL THINGS. (2 Cor. vi. 10.) *Deus meus, et omnia!*

II. A MAN MAY BE RICH, YET DESTITUTE, POOR, BLIND, AND MISERABLE. If we are not *satisfied*, we are not rich. If we are content, we are never poor.

III. GOD IS THE TRUE AND ONLY GAIN OF THE SOUL. We have a nature which will be satisfied with nothing short of the Infinite. To attempt to feed it with anything less is found to be a cheat and a self-delusion.—J.

Vers. 8, 9.—*God's hatreds and God's delights.* We all have our aversions, natural antipathies, acquired hatreds. A noted author not long ago published a book called 'Mes Haines.' What are the hatreds of him who is Love? They should be our aversions.

I. THE SACRIFICE OF THE WICKED. (Ver. 8.) It is not the man's works which make him good, but the justified man—the man made right with God—produces good works, and these, though imperfect, are well-pleasing to God. The lack of heart-sincerity must stamp every sacrifice, as that of Cain, as an abomination.

II. THE PRAYER OF THE GOOD MAN. Symbolized by fragrant incense, sweet to him are pious thoughts, wishes for the best, charitable aspirations, all that in the finite heart aims at the Infinite.

III. THE WAY OF THE WICKED. A prayerless life is a godless, and hence a corrupt life. It is a meaningless life, and God will not tolerate what is insignificant in his vast significant world.

IV. THE PURSUIT OF GOOD. He who hunts after righteousness, literally, is loved of God. We learn the necessity of patience, constancy, diligence in well-doing. In no other way can genuineness and thoroughness be shown.—J.

Ver. 10.—*The principle of judgment.* I. IT IS NEVER CAUSELESS.

II. THE CONNECTION OF CAUSE AND EFFECT IS OFTEN MYSTERIOUS. Hence we should be slow to trace the judgment of God upon sinners.

III. SOME SINS THAT FORETELL JUDGMENT. 1. Desertion of duty; forsaking of God's ways; travelling in paths we *know* to be crooked or unclean. 2. Indifference to rebuke. For even in error, if we will heed the timely warning and correct the dis-

covered fault, judgment may be averted. If not, there is no way of avoiding the law of doom. The soul that sinneth shall and "*must* die."—J.

Ver. 11.—*The heart open to God.* I. THE HEART A PROFOUND MYSTERY. We speculate about the mysteries of the world *without* us, as if *these* were the great secrets, forgetful what an abyss of wonder is within.

II. THIS MYSTERY MAY BE COMPARED TO THAT OF HADES AND THE KINGDOM OF THE DEVIL. 1. It is equally profound. 2. It is equally fascinating. 3. It is equally hidden from our knowledge. Peruse our greatest masters of the human heart—a Shakespeare, Bacon, Montaigne—we have still not touched the bottom.

III. THE MYSTERY OF ALL WORLDS IS KNOWN TO GOD, THE INTERNAL NO LESS THAN THE EXTERNAL. 1. This is a thought of awe. 2. Still more it should be of comfort. My God, thou knowest all, *all* that fain would hide itself from others, even from myself—and yet "hast stooped to ask of me the love of this poor heart"!—J.

Vers. 12—15.—*Sullen folly and cheerful wisdom.* I. DISLIKE OF CRITICISM. (Ver. 12.) Often seen in those who are most critical themselves. The jiber is easily galled by a telling retort. The satirical man least loves satire upon himself. But one of the lessons we learn from truly great minds is that of willingness to turn a jest against one's self, and to find positive pleasure in a criticism of one's own character that hits the mark, provided it be good-natured. But with ill nature no one can be pleased. Most necessary it is for the health of the soul to be often with those who know more than we do.

II. THE APPEARANCE THE MIRROR OF THE MAN. The placid, serene, smiling, winning visage reflects the soul; and so with the downcast brow and dejected mien. It may surprise us that so commonplace an observation should be thought worth recording; but there was a time when such flashed upon man as a new discovery. Perhaps it may be a discovery to many that they may do much by assuming a cheerful manner to regulate and calm the heart.

III. BUT APPEARANCES ARE NOTHING WITHOUT REALITY. (Ver. 14.) To be truly wise is not to know a great deal, but to be always on the track and pursuit of knowledge; and to be utterly foolish it is only necesary to give the reins to vanity, to yield to idleness, to follow every passing pleasure. The *countenance* of the fool is expressive of what? Of the want of impressions, of vacancy and vanity.

IV. THE FOLLY OF GLOOM AND THE WISDOM OF CHEERFULNESS. (Ver. 15.) In what sense can we ever say that our days are *evil*, except that we have made them so? And how more readily can we make them so than by yielding to the dark and gloomy mood, and ever looking on the dark side of things? The side of things on which we see the reflection of our narrow selves is ever dark; that on which we see God's attributes mirrored—the beauty of his nature, the wisdom of his providence—is bright and inspiring. It is, indeed, a feast to the soul to have found God; for thought, for feeling, for every practical need, he is present, he alone "shall supply all our need." Our Lord thus speaks of his body and his blood, of which to eat is life.—J.

Vers. 16, 17.—*Alternatives.* I. POVERTY WITH PIETY, OR RICHES WITH DISCONTENT. Which shall we choose? Naturally all, or nearly all, will prefer to take riches with its risks rather than poverty with its certain privations. Our Bible is precious because it reminds us that there is *another side* in this matter. Riches are too dearly gained at the expense of peace of conscience; poverty is blessed if it brings us nearer to God.

II. SCANTY FARE WITH RICH SPIRITUAL SEASONING, OR RICH FARE WITH A POOR HEART. Which? For ourselves and our personal comfort? For others and the hospitality we should like to dispense to them? For ourselves, high thinking with low living; for others, slight fare with large welcome will make a true feast.—J.

Vers. 18—23.—*Facets of moral truth.* Again flashing upon us, mostly in the light of contrast. As, indeed, from precious stones and false paste, up to the highest truths of the spirit, we can know nothing truly except by the comparison of its opposite.

I. HASTE OF TEMPER AND LONG-SUFFERING. (Ver. 18.) Quarrelsomeness, irritable words (would that we could recall them!), a thousand stabs and wounds to the heart of

our friend and to our own, the result of the former. For the latter, read the exquisite descriptions of the New Testament wherever the word "long-suffering" occurs, and see the matchless beauty, and learn to covet the possession of that character—the impress of God in human nature—and those best gifts which belong to "the more excellent way."

II. IDLENESS AND HONESTY. (Ver. 19.) The way of the former beset with difficulty. Lazy people take the most trouble, in the affairs of the soul as in everything. The honest path is the only easy path in the long run. We must remember that it *is* a *long run* we have to pass over, and must make our choice accordingly. Life is no mere picnic or excursion. For amusement of the leisure hour we may strike into a by-path, but never lose sight of the high-road of faith.

III. PARENTAL JOY AND SORROW. (Ver. 20.) On the whole, these are one of the best indices of a man's character. A truly good parent may not understand his child, as Mary misunderstood Jesus; but at the bottom of the heart, when there is filial goodness there is parental sympathy and approval.

IV. SPURIOUS JOY AND QUIET PERSISTENCE IN RIGHT. (Ver. 21.) This is a good contrast. The fool is not content with saying or doing the foolish thing; he must needs chuckle over it and make a boast of it, often gaining applause for his mere audacity. But the man of true sense is content to forego the momentary triumph, and goes on his way. Ever to forsake the way we know to be right, even in momentary hilarity, brings its after-sting.

V. FAILURE AND SUCCESS IN COUNSELS. (Ver. 22.) Wild tumultuous passion causes the former; and calm deliberation, the comparison and collision of many minds, brings about sound and stable policy. To lean upon one's own weak will, to act in haste or under impulse, how seldom can a prosperous issue come of this! See how individuals rush into lawsuits, nations into war, speculators into bankruptcy,—all for want of consultation and good advice. We need the impetus of enthusiasm, not less the direction of cool prudence; if one or the other factor be omitted, disaster must ensue.

VI. SEASONABLE WORDS. (Ver. 23.) We must consider not only the *matter*, but the *manner*, of our utterances. This requires "a mind at leisure from itself" to seize the happy opportunity, to refrain from introducing the jarring note, to turn the conversation when it threatens to strike on breakers. Oh, happy art! admirable and enviable in those that possess it, but cultivable by all who have the gentle heart. We cannot conceive that the conversations of Christ were ever other than thus seasonable.—J.

Vers. 24—33.—*Religion and common sense.* What is religion without common sense? Fanaticism, extravagance, and folly. What is common sense without religion? Dry, bald, uninspired and uninspiring worldliness. What are they united? The wisdom of both worlds, the wisdom of time and of eternity. Let us look at some of their combined teachings.

I. TEACHINGS OF COMMON SENSE. 1. *To avoid danger and death.* (Ver. 24.) This is obvious enough, but, unguided by religion, prudence may easily make mistakes. 2. *To avoid unjust gains.* (Ver. 27.) Every advantage must be *paid for*, in some coin or other. Then, "is the game worth the candle?" Will a dishonest speculation, looked at on mere commercial principles, *pay?* 3. *To be cautious in speech.* (Ver. 28.) Speech is the one thing that many think they have a right to squander. There is no more common profligacy than that of the tongue. Yet, is there anything of which experience teaches us to be more economical than the expense of the tongue? 4. *To be generous of kind looks and words.* (Ver. 30.) What can cost less, or be worth, in many cases, more? "Good words," says George Herbert, "are worth much, and cost little." 5. *To be a good listener.* (Ver. 31.) And this implies willingness to receive rebuke. All superior conversation in some way or other brings to light our ignorance and checks our narrowness. And just as he is not fit to govern who has not learned to serve, so only he who has long sat at the feet of the wise will be entitled himself to take his place among the wise. One of Socrates' disciples exclaimed that life indeed was to be found in listening to discourses like his. May we all feel the like in sitting at the feet of *our* Master, who commends those who have thus chosen the good part which shall never be taken away from them! 6. *To avoid conceit and cultivate humility.* (Ver. 32.) It is the over-estimate of self which makes us contemptuous in any sense towards others. But to look down as from a superior height on others is the most

mischievous hindrance to progress in sense and knowledge. A master-mind of our times says that he hates to be praised in the newspapers, and begins to have some hope for himself when people find fault with him. 7. *To found humility upon religion.* (Ver. 33.) Its only genuine and deep foundation. What are we in relation to the God whose perfection is revealed to us in nature, in the ideals of the soul, in the fulfilment of the living Person of Christ? From this depth only can we rise; for honour springs from a lowly root; and he that exalteth himself shall be abased.

II. TEACHINGS OF RELIGION. We have already seen how they blend with those of common sense. But let us bring them into their proper distinctiveness and force. 1. *To choose the upward path and shun the downward.* (Ver. 24.) To cleave to God; to love him with mind, and heart, and soul, and strength; to be ever seeking the Divine meaning in the earthly objects, the Divine goal through the course of common events, the true, the beautiful, and the good, in their ineffable blending and unity in God;—this is the upward way. To be striving after emancipation from self, in all the coarser and grosser, in all the more refined and subtle forms of lust and greed,—this is the avoidance of hell and of the downward way. "Seeking those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God," implies and demands "the mortification of the members which are upon the earth." 2. *To consider the judgments of God.* (Vers. 25, 27.) There was a period in the ancient world when men thought of Divine power as blind caprice, fortune, fate, destiny, setting down and raising up whomsoever it would by no fixed moral law. It was a great revelation and a magnificent discovery when men saw that there was a law in the events of life, and this law none other than the holy will of Jehovah. One of the principles of his judgment is here set forth. Godless pride is obnoxious to his disapproval, and incurs extinction at his hands. But he is Compassion, and the poor and friendless, especially the widow, are certain of his protection. It is as if a charmed circle were drawn around her humble dwelling, and a Divine hand kept the fire glowing on her hearth. 3. *To consider the religious aspect of thoughts and words.* (Ver. 26.) Words and thoughts are one, as the body and the soul. A great thinker, indeed, defined thought as talking to one's self—as all our words to others should, indeed, be as thought overheard. Thus we are thrown back on the heart, and the elementary maxims for its guidance in purity. Keep it with all diligence! But perhaps not less important is the *reflex* influence; for if bad words be scrupulously kept from the tongue, evil images will less readily arise in the heart. 4. *To consider the conditions of access to God.* (Ver. 29.) He is a *moral* Being, and must be approached in a moral character and a moral mood. To suppose that he can be flattered with empty compliments or gifts, as if he were a barbarous Monarch and not a just God, is essentially superstitious. He is the Hearer of prayer, but only of the just man's prayer. To the aspiration of the pious soul never fails the inspiration of the holy God. But of the bad heart it must ever be true, "The words fly up, the thoughts remain below." Thus to view all life's relations in God is both "the beginning of wisdom" and "the conclusion of the whole matter."—J.

Ver. 1.—*The soft answer.* This text has been on the lips of many thousands of people since it was first penned, and has probably helped many thousands of hearts to win an honourable and acceptable victory.

I. THE FACT WHICH CONFRONTS US; viz. that in this life which we are living we must expect a large measure of misunderstanding. "It is impossible but that offences will come." With all our various and complex relationships; with all that we are expecting and requiring of one another in thought, word, and deed; with the limitations to which we are subject both in mind and in spirit;—how could it be otherwise? A certain considerable measure of mistake, and of consequent vexation, and of consequent anger, will arise, as we play our part in this world. Occasions will arise when our neighbours, when our friends, when our near relatives, will speak to us with displeasure in their hearts, and with annoyance, if not anger, in their tone. This we must lay our account with.

II. THE TEMPTATION WHICH ASSAILS US. This is to a resentment which utters itself in "grievous words." Anger provokes anger and makes it angrier still; vexation grows into positive bitterness, and bitterness ends in miserable strife. Thus the "little fire" will "kindle a great matter;" thus a spark becomes a flame, and sometimes a flame

becomes a fire and even a conflagration. Many a feud may be traced back to the utterance of a few hasty words, which might have been met and quieted by a pacific answer, if they had fallen on patient and wise ears.

III. THE BEARING WHICH BECOMES US. To return "the soft answer." It does become us, because: 1. This is the true victory over our own spirit (see homily on ch. xvi. 32). 2. It is also the worthiest victory over the man who provokes us. We "turn away wrath;" and how much nobler a thing it is to win by kindness than to crush by severity! 3. It is to render an essential service to many beside the actual spokesman. When one man starts a quarrel, a great many suffer on both sides. And when one man quenches a quarrel, he saves many from misery (and perhaps from sin) into which they would otherwise fall (see Judg. viii. 1—3). 4. It is to act in accordance with the will and the example of our Lord.—C.

Ver. 3.—*God's searching glance.* The text, with others treating of the same subject, assures us, concerning the Divine notice of us, that—

I. IT IS ABSOLUTELY UNIVERSAL. The eyes of the Lord are "in every place." There is no secret place, however screened from the sight of man, which is not "naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (see Ps. cxxxix.; Jer. xxiii. 24; Heb. iv. 13).

II. IT IS CONSTANT. Absolutely unintermitted, day and night; through youth and age; in prosperity and in adversity; under all imaginable conditions.

III. IT IS THOROUGH. Penetrating to the innermost sanctuary of the soul, searching its most secret places, "discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart;" discovering (1) beneath the fair exterior that which is foul within; (2) beneath the rugged surface the inward beauty which is breaking forth.

IV. IT IS TO BE FEARED BY THE REBELLIOUS AND THE DISOBEDIENT. 1. Those who are living and are purposing to live in the commission of some flagrant sin. 2. Those who are deliberately rejecting the authority and disregarding the merciful overtures of God in Jesus Christ. 3. And also those who are continually postponing the hour of decision and of return to their allegiance. These souls may *fear* to think that the eye of the Holy One is continually upon them; or they may be *ashamed* as they think that the eye of the appealing and disappointed Saviour is regarding them.

V. IT IS TO BE COURTED BY THE TRUE AND FAITHFUL. 1. The hearts that are turning toward a Divine Redeemer may be encouraged to believe that his glance of kind encouragement is upon them (see Mark x. 21). 2. The hearts that are surrendering themselves to Christ in faith and love may fill with peace and rest as they are assured of his acceptance (Matt. xi. 28—30; John v. 24; vi. 46, 47). 3. The hearts that, in his holy service, are honestly and earnestly striving to follow and to honour him and to do his work may be glad with a pure, well-founded joy as they count on his precious regard, his loving approval. To these it will be a perpetual delight that the "eyes of the Lord are in every place," beholding every human heart and every human life.—C.

Vers. 8, 9.—*With whom God is pleased.* With whom is God well pleased? A great question, that has had many answers. The statement of the text gives us—

I. GOD'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE WICKED. 1. *Their whole life is grievous to him.* "The way of the wicked is an abomination," etc. And this, not because they hold some erroneous opinions, nor because they make many serious mistakes, nor because they are betrayed into occasional transgressions; but because they determinately withhold themselves from his service; because they claim and exercise the right to dispose of their own life according to their own will; because they deliberately disregard the will of God. They are thus in a state of fixed rebellion against his rule, of settled disavowal of his claims upon them, of consequent neglect of his holy Law. Therefore their entire course or "way" is one of disobedience and disloyalty; it must be painful, grievous, even "abominable" in the sight of the Holy One. 2. *Their worship is wholly unacceptable to him.* If we "regard iniquity in our heart, the Lord will not hear us" (Ps. l. 16—22; lxvi. 18; Isa. i. 15). God "desireth truth in the inward parts;" he cannot and will not accept as of any value whatever the offering that comes from a heart in a state of determined disloyalty to himself and hatred of his

law. 3. *Their worship is positively offensive.* It is "an abomination" unto him. And it is so, because: (1) It is an act of conscious rejection of his claim; the worshipper is taking his Name and his Law upon his lips, and at the very time he is consciously keeping back from God what he knows is his due. (2) It is an act of positive insult, inasmuch as it supposes that God will be indifferent to the wrong things the worshipper is doing, that he will take a few words or offerings instead of purity, truthfulness, integrity, submission.

II. GOD'S PLEASURE WITH THE RIGHTEOUS. 1. *Who they are.* (1) They are not the absolutely perfect in creed or conduct; for these are not to be discovered. (2) They are those who recognize in God the One whose they are and to whom they desire and intend to surrender their hearts and lives. It may be, it must be, an imperfect sacrifice; but it will be a genuine and therefore an acceptable one. 2. *With what, in them, God is well pleased.* (1) With the whole spirit and aim of their life. "They follow after righteousness;" they have set their heart on being just—to God their Creator; to their neighbours, and especially those closely related to them; to themselves. And their daily and hourly life will be an honest and devout endeavour to realize their aim (see Phil. i. 20; iii. 12—15). It is they who truly desire and steadfastly endeavour, against whatever obstacles and with whatever stumblings and haltings, to be right and to do right, with whom God is pleased. (2) With their devotion. The prayer of these "upright" souls is God's "delight." He is pleased when they reverently approach him, when they humbly confess their failures, when they gratefully bless him for his patience, when they earnestly ask him for strength and grace for coming duties and struggles.—C.

Ver. 11.—*The certainty of God's notice.* First we have—

I. THE DIFFICULTY SUGGESTED. It is not unnatural to ask—Does God in very deed take notice of such beings as we are? does he condescend to watch the workings of our mind? are the flitting thoughts that cross our brain, the fugitive feelings that pass through our weak human hearts, within the range of his observation? Is that worth his while? Are they not beyond the pale of his Divine regard?

II. THE ARGUMENT FROM SECRECY. If "Sheol" is before the Lord, if that region of darkness where "the light (itself) is as darkness," if the place of mystery and shadow is within his Divine regard, how much more are those who are living in the light of day, on whom the sunshine falls, who live their life openly beneath the heavens! The writer evidently felt that there was nothing so particularly hidden or secret about the mind of man. And we may well argue that there is nothing inscrutably hidden within our hearts; for do we not read, continually and correctly, the minds of our children? We know what they think and feel. And if their minds are open to us, how much more must our minds—the minds of the children of men—be "naked and open" to our heavenly Father! If our superior intelligence supplies us with the key to their secrets, what does not Omniscience know of us, even of those thoughts and motives we are most anxious to conceal?

III. THE ARGUMENT FROM UNATTRACTIVENESS. "Abaddon [destruction] is before the Lord." That which has no manner of interest in itself, that from which Benevolence would willingly turn its eyes, that which is repelling to the sight of love and life,—that even is before God; he never ceases to regard a scene so utterly uninviting. How much more, then, will he regard the hearts of his own offspring! There is nothing beneath the skies so interesting to him. What has the most charm to *us* in our home? Surely not any furniture or any treasures, however rare, or costly, or beautiful these may be. It is our children; it is their hearts of love for which we care. It is to them that we come home in joyful expectation. It is on them our eye rests with benignity and delight. So with our Divine Father. He does look on all the furniture of this wonderful home in which we dwell (Ps. civ. 31); he ever has before him the sphere and scene of destruction; but that which draws his eye of tender interest and kindly pity and holy love is the heart of his sons and daughters. We are poor and needy, but we are all his offspring, and "the Lord thinketh upon us." 1. With what parental grief does he look upon (1) our separation from himself in sympathy; (2) our unlikeness to himself in spirit and in character; (3) our disobedience to his will! 2. With what parental satisfaction does he view (1) our return to his side and his service; (2)

our increasing likeness to our Leader and Exemplar; (3) our filial obedience and submission to his will!—C.

Vers. 13, 15—17.—*The source of satisfaction.* We learn—

I. THAT THERE SOMETIMES RESTS A LONG AND DEEP SHADOW ON THE PATH OF HUMAN LIFE. 1. Sometimes a *long* one. "*All* the days of the afflicted are evil." They are not a few who have to make up their minds for many months or years of separation or pain, or even for a lifelong trouble. They know that they will carry their burden to the grave. 2. Sometimes a *deep* one. "By sorrow of heart the spirit is broken." The burden is greater than the spirit can bear, it breaks beneath it; the heart is simply overwhelmed; all hope has died out, all gladness is gone from the life, all light from the countenance, all elasticity from the step; the heart is fairly broken.

II. THAT FAVOURABLE CIRCUMSTANCES CANNOT COMMAND SATISFACTION TO THE SPIRIT. 1. *Wealth* will not do it. Great treasure often means great trouble (ver. 16); shares and stocks often bring as much burden as blessing with them; he who piles gold on his counter may be heaping anxiety upon his heart. 2. *Sumptuous* fare will fail (ver. 17). All the delicacies that can be spread upon the table will not give enjoyment to him that has a restless spirit, or a secret that he knows he cannot hide, or a debt he knows he cannot meet, or a bounden duty he knows he has neglected.

III. THAT HAPPINESS MUST BE HEART-DEEP, OR IT IS NOTHING. (Ver. 13.) If it is not the merry heart that produces the cheerful countenance, the smile can very well be spared, both by him who smiles and by those who are in his presence. Few things are sadder to hear than hollow laughter, or to see than a forced and weary smile.

IV. THAT A CHEERFUL SPIRIT IS A VALUABLE BESTOWMENT. (Ver. 15.) Better than the large estate or the high position, or the influential circle, is the buoyant spirit which

> "Ever with a frolic welcome takes
> The thunder and the sunshine."

V. THAT A LOVING SPIRIT IS A STILL GREATER GIFT OF GOD. "Where love is," there is peace and there is joy, however mean the home or slight the fare. He who carries with him to every table and every hearth a loving spirit is a friend of God's own sending; he is "the welcome guest;" he has a treasure in his breast which no coffers will supply.

VI. THAT PIETY IS THE ALL-COMPENSATING GOOD. 1. It makes the poor man rich —"rich in faith," "rich toward God," rich with a wealth which "no thief can steal." 2. It brings comfort to the sorrowful, and introduces that Divine Physician who can bind up the broken heart, and heal *its* wounds. 3. It speaks of a heavenly portion to those who have no hope of deliverance here; there may be "affliction all the days" of life (ver. 15), but "the righteous hath hope in his death" (ch. xiv. 32). Blessed, then, is he in whose heart is "the fear of the Lord."—C.

Ver. 29.—*God's distance from us and nearness to us.* "The Lord is far from the wicked;" and yet how near to us! "He is not far from any one of us;" "He compasses us behind and before, and layeth his hand upon us." We may, indeed, insist upon—

I. GOD'S LOCAL AND EFFECTIVE NEARNESS TO THE WICKED AN AGGRAVATION OF THEIR GUILT. The fact that "in him they do live, and move, and have their being," that by his operative presence they are momently sustained in being, that by the working of his hand around and upon them they are supplied with all their comfort, and filled with all their joys,—this great fact makes more heinous the guilt of forgetfulness of God, of indifference to his will, of rebellion against his rule. But *the* truth of the text is—

II. GOD'S DISTANCE IN SYMPATHY AND IN SPIRIT FROM THE WICKED. God is far from the wicked in that: 1. He is *utterly out of sympathy* with them in all their thought and feeling, in their tastes and inclinations, in their likings and dislikings. He hates what they love; he is infinitely repelled from that which they are drawn to. 2. He regards them with a serious *Divine displeasure.* He is "angry with the wicked every day." His "soul finds no pleasure in them." He is grieved with them; in his holy and loving heart there is the pain of strong parental disapproval. 3. He is *prac-*

*tically inaccessible* to them. It is only he "that has clean hands and a pure heart" who is free to draw nigh unto God. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination" unto him (see homily on ver. 8). God cannot hear us if we "regard iniquity in our hearts;" we virtually withdraw ourselves from him, we place a terrible spiritual distance between our Creator and ourselves, when we take up an attitude of disloyalty toward him, or when we abandon ourselves to any evil course. Yet let it be always kept in mind, that: 4. To the penitent and believing he is always near; in whatever far country the wayward son is living, he may address himself immediately to his heavenly Father.

III. GOD'S SYMPATHETIC NEARNESS TO HIS CHILDREN. "He heareth the prayer of the righteous." Those who are earnestly desirous of serving God, of following Jesus Christ, may be assured: 1. Of his actual and observant nearness to them when they approach him in prayer. 2. Of his tender and loving interest in them (Mark x. 21). 3. Of his acceptance of themselves when they offer their hearts and lives to him and his service. 4. Of his purpose to answer their various requests in such ways and times as he knows to be best for them.—C.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XVI.

**Vers. 1—7.**—These are specially religious maxims, and they all contain the name Jehovah.

Ver. 1.—The Authorized Version makes one sentence of this verse without any contrast or antithesis. This is plainly wrong, there being intended a contrast between the thought of the heart and the well-ordered speech. It is better translated, *The plans of the heart are man's: but the answer of the tongue is from Jehovah.* Men make plans, arrange speeches, muster arguments, in the mind; but to put these into proper, persuasive words is a gift of God. "Our sufficiency is of God" (2 Cor. iii. 5). In the case of Balaam, God overruled the wishes and intentions of the prophet, and constrained him to give utterance to something very different from his original mental conceptions. But the present sentence attributes the outward expression of what the mind has conceived in every case unto the help of God (comp. vers. 9, 33; ch. xv. 23). Christ enjoined his disciples to trust to momentary inspiration in their apologies or defences before unbelievers (Matt. x. 19). This verse is omitted in the Septuagint.

Ver. 2.—**All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes** (ch. xxi. 2). He may deceive himself, and be blind to his own faults, or be following an ill-informed and ill-regulated conscience (ch. xii. 15; xiv. 12), yet this is no excuse in God's eyes. **The Lord weigheth the spirits.** Not the "ways," the outward life and actions only, but motives, intentions, dispositions (Heb. iv. 12). He too knows our secret faults, unsuspected by others, and perhaps by ourselves (Ps. xix. 12). The Septuagint has here, "All the works of the humble are manifest before God, but the impious shall perish in an evil day." The next verse is omitted in the Greek; and the other clauses up to ver. 8 are dislocated.

Ver. 3.—**Commit thy works unto the Lord.** "Commit" (*gol*) is literally "roll" (κύλισον, Theodotion), as in Ps. xxii. 8 and xxxvii. 5; and the injunction means, "Transfer thy burden to the Lord, cast upon him all that thou hast to do; do all as in his sight, and as an act of duty to him." Thus Tobit says to his son, "Bless the Lord thy God alway, and desire of him that thy ways may be directed, and that all thy paths and counsels may prosper" (Tobit iv. 19). The Vulgate, using a different punctuation (*gal*), renders, "Reveal to the Lord thy works." As a child opens its heart to a tender parent, so do thou show to God thy desires and intentions, trusting to his care and providence. **And thy thoughts shall be established.** The plans and deliberations out of which the "works" sprang shall meet with a happy fulfilment, because they are undertaken according to the will of God, and directed to the end by his guidance (comp. ch. xix. 21; Ps. xc. 17; 1 Cor. iii. 9). This verse is not in the Septuagint.

Ver. 4.—**The Lord hath made all things for himself.** So the Vulgate, *propter semetipsum*; and Origen ('Præf. in Job'), δι' ἑαυτόν. That is, God hath made everything for his own purpose, to answer the design which he hath intended from all eternity (Rev. iv. 11). But this translation is not in accordance with the present reading, לְמַעֲנֵהוּ, which means rather "for its own end," for its own proper use. Everything in God's design has its own end and object and reason for being where it is and such as it is; everything exhibits his goodness and wisdom, and tends to his glory. Septuagint,

"All the works of the Lord are with righteousness." **Yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.** This clause has been perverted to support the terrible doctrine of reprobation—that God, whose will must be always efficacious, has willed the damnation of some; whereas we are taught that God's will is that "all men should be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth," and that "God sent his Son not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved" (1 Tim. ii. 4; John iii. 17; comp. Ezek. xxxiii. 11). Man, having free-will, can reject this gracious purpose of God, and render the means of salvation nugatory; but this does not make God the cause of man's destruction, but man himself. In saying that God "made the wicked," the writer does not mean that God made him as such, but made him as he made all other things, giving him powers and capacities which he might have used to good, but which, as a fact, he uses to evil. It will be useful here to quote the wise words of St. Gregory ('Moral.,' vi. 33), "The Just and Merciful One, as he disposes the deeds of mortals, vouchsafes some things in mercy, and permits other things in anger; and the things which he permits he so bears with that he turns them to the account of his purpose. And hence it is brought to pass in a marvellous way that even that which is done without the will of God is not contrary to the will of God. For while evil deeds are converted to a good use, the very things that oppose his design render service to his design." *The day of evil* is the hour of punishment (Isa. x. 3; Job xxi. 30), which by a moral law will inevitably fall upon the sinner. God makes man's wickedness subserve his purposes and manifest his glory, as we see in the case of Pharaoh (Exod. ix. 16), and the crucifixion of our blessed Lord (Acts ii. 23; comp. Rom. ix. 22). It is a phase of God's moral government that an evil day should be appointed for transgressors, and it is from foreknowledge of their deserts that their punishment is prepared. The perplexing question, why God allows men to come into the world whom he knows will meet with perdition, is not handled here. Septuagint, "But the impious is kept for an evil day." Cato, 'Dist.,' ii. 8—

"Nolo putes pravos homines peccata lucrari;
Temporibus peccata latent, sed tempore patent."

Ver. 5.—(For the first member, see ch. vi. 17; viii. 13.) Says the maxim—

Ἀλαζονείας οὐ τις ἐκφεύγει δίκην.

"Pride hath its certain punishment."

We read in the Talmud, "Of every proud man God says, He and I cannot live in the world together." A mediæval jingle runs—

"Hoc retine verbum, frangit Deus omne superbum."

Septuagint, "Impure in the sight of God is every high-hearted man (ὑψηλοκάρδιος)." The second member is found in ch. xi. 21, and must be taken as a form of adjuration. Septuagint, "Putting hands on hand unjustly, he shall not be innocent;" *i.e.* one who acts violently and unjustly shall be held guilty—which seems a trite truism. Many commentators interpret the clause as if it meant that the co-operation and combination of sinners in evil practices will not save them from retribution. But hand clasping hand in token of completing a bargain or alliance is scarcely an early Oriental custom. There is an analogous saying in Greek which implies mutual assistance—

Χεὶρ χεῖρα νίπτει, δακτυλός τε δάκτυλον.

"Hand washes hand, and finger finger."

The LXX. has here two distiches, the first of which occurs in the Vulgate, but the second is not found there. Neither appears in our present Hebrew text. "The beginning of the good way is to do what is just; this is more acceptable to God than to sacrifice sacrifices. He who seeketh the Lord shall find knowledge with righteousness; and they who seek him rightly shall find peace."

Ver. 6.—**By mercy and truth iniquity is purged**; *atoned for*. The combination "mercy and truth" occurs in ch. iii. 3 (where see note), and intimates love to God and man, and faithfulness in keeping promises and truth and justice in all dealings. It is by the exercise of those graces, not by mere external rites, that God is propitiated (see on ch. x. 2). A kind of expiatory value is assigned to these virtues, which, indeed, must not be pressed too closely, but should be examined by the light of such passages in the New Testament as Luke xi. 41; Acts x. 4. Of course, such graces show themselves only in one who is really devout and God-fearing; they are the fruits of a heart at peace with God and man, and react on the character and conduct. The LXX., which places this distich after ver. 27 of ch. xv., translates, "By alms and faithfulness (πίστεσιν) sins are cleansed," confining the term "mercy" to one special form, as in one reading of Matt. vi. 1, "Take heed that ye do not your righteousness [*al.* alms] before men." **By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil.** The practice of true religion, of course, involves abstinence from sin; and this seems so unnecessary a truth to be formally stated

that some take the "evil" named to be physical, not moral evil; calamity, not transgression. But the two clauses are coordinate, and present two aspects of the same truth. The first intimates how sin is to be expiated, the second how it is to be avoided. The morally good man meets with pardon and acceptance, and he who fears God is delivered from evil. So we pray, in the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses, and deliver us from evil." Septuagint, "By the fear of the Lord every one declineth from evil" (comp. ch. xiv. 27).

Ver. 7.—**When a man's ways please the Lord**, which they can do only when they are religious, just, and charitable. **He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him**; to submit themselves. Experience proves that nothing succeeds like success. Where a man is prosperous and things go well with him, even ill-wishers are content to cast away or to dissemble their dislike, and to live at peace with him. Thus Abimelech King of Gerar fawned upon Isaac because he saw that the Lord was with him (Gen. xxvi. 27, etc.). This is the worldly side of the maxim. It has a higher aspect, and intimates the far-reaching influence of goodness—how it disarms opposition, arouses reverence and love, gives no occasion for disputes, and spreads around an atmosphere of peace. To the Jews the maxim was taught by external circumstances. While they were doing the will of the Lord, their land was to be preserved from hostile attack (Exod. xxxiv. 24; 2 Chron. xvii. 10). And Christians learn that it is only when they obey and fear God that they can overcome the assaults of the enemies of their soul—the devil, the world, and the flesh. Talmud, "He who is agreeable to God is equally agreeable to men."

Ver. 8.—**Better is a little with righteousness** (ch. xv. 16; Ps. xxxvii. 16). "Righteousness" may mean here a holy life or just dealing; as **without right**, or, *with injustice*, in the second clause, may refer either generally to wickedness, or specially to fraud and oppression (Jer. xxii. 13). Says Theognis—

Βούλεο δ' εὐσεβέων ὀλίγοις σὺν χρήμασιν οἰκεῖν,
Ἢ πλουτεῖν ἀδίκως χρήματα πασάμενος.

"Wish thou with scanty means pious to live,
Rather than rich with large, ill-gotten wealth."

Another maxim says to the same effect—

Λεπτῶς καλῶς ζῆν κρεῖσσον, ἢ λαμπρῶς κακῶς.

Septuagint, "Better is small getting (λῆψις) with righteousness, than great revenues with iniquity" (see on ch. xv. 29).

Ver. 9.—**A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps** (ver. 1). "Man proposes, God disposes;" or, as the Germans say, "Der Mensch denkt, Gott lenkt" (comp. ch. xx. 24). The word rendered "deviseth" implies, by its species, intensity of thought and care. Man meditates and prepares his plans with the utmost solicitude, but it rests with God whether he shall carry them to completion or not, and whether, if they are to be accomplished, it be done with ease or with painful labour (comp. Gen. xxiv. 12, etc.). We all remember Shakespeare's words in 'Hamlet'—

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will."

Septuagint, "Let the heart of man consider what is just, that his steps may be by God directed aright" (comp. Jer. x. 23).

Ver. 10.—**A Divine sentence is in the lips of the king**. קֶסֶם (*quesem*) is "divination," "soothsaying," oracular utterance. Septuagint, μαντεῖον. The king's words have, in people's minds, the certainty and importance of a Divine oracle, putting an end to all controversy or division of opinion. It seems to be a general maxim, not especially referring to Solomon or the theocratic kingdom, but rather indicating the traditional view of the absolute monarchy. The custom of deifying kings and invoking them as gods was usual in Egypt and Eastern countries, and made its way to the West. "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man," cried the people, when Herod addressed them in the amphitheatre at Cæsarea (Acts xii. 22). The Greeks could say—

Εἰκὼν δὲ βασιλεύς ἐστιν ἔμψυχος Θεοῦ.

"God's very living image is the king."

And thus his utterances were regarded as irrefragably true and decisive. **His mouth transgresseth not in judgment.** The decisions which he gives are infallible, and, at any rate, irresistible. We may refer to Solomon's famous verdict concerning the two mothers (1 Kings iii. 16, etc.), and such sentences as ch. viii. 15, "By me (wisdom) kings reign, and princes decree justice" (see below on ver. 12; ch. xxi. 1); and David's words (2 Sam. xxiii. 3), "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God" (Wisd. ix. 4, 10, 12). Delitzsch regards the second hemistich as giving a warning (consequent on the former clause), and not stating a fact, "In the judgment his mouth should not err." The present chapter contains many admonitions to kings which a wise father like Solomon may have uttered and recorded for the benefit of his son. If this is the case, it is as strange as it is true that Rehoboam made little use of the counsels, and that Solomon's latter days gave the lie to many of them.

Ver. 11.—**A just weight and balance are the Lord's** (ch. xi. 1); literally, *the balance and scales of justice (are) the Lord's*. They come under his law, are subject to the Divine ordinances which regulate all man's dealings. The great principles of truth and justice govern all the transactions of buying and selling; religion enters into the business of trading, and weights and measures are sacred things. Vulgate, "The weights and the balance are judgments of the Lord;" being true and fair, they are regarded as God's judgment. Septuagint, "The turn of the balance is justice before God." **All the weights of the bag are his work.** Some have found a difficulty here, because the bag may contain false as well as true weights (Deut. xxv. 13), and it could not be said that the light weights were the Lord's work. This surely is captious criticism. The maxim merely states that the trader's weights take their origin and authority from God's enactment, from certain eternal principles which he has established. What man's chicanery and fraud make of them does not come into view. (For the law that regulates such matters, see Lev. xix. 35, etc.) That cheating in this respect was not uncommon we learn from the complaints of the prophets, as Micah vi. 11. The religious character of the standard weights and measures is shown by the term "shekel of the sanctuary" (Exod. xxxviii. 24, and elsewhere continually).

Ver. 12.—**It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness.** This and the following verse give the ideal view of the monarch —that which he ought to be rather than what he is (comp. Ps. lxxii.). Certainly neither Solomon nor many of his successors exhibited this high character. The Septuagint, followed by some modern commentators, translates, "He who doeth wickedness is an abomination to kings;" but as the "righteousness" in the second clause (**the throne is established by righteousness**) undoubtedly refers to the king, so it is more natural to take the "wickedness" in the first member as being his own, not his subjects'. When a ruler acts justly and wisely, punishes the unruly, rewards the virtuous, acts as God's vicegerent, and himself sets the example of the character which becomes so high a position, he wins the affection of his people, they willingly obey him, and are ready to die for him and his family (comp. ch. xxv. 5; Isa. xvi. 5). Law-makers should not be law-breakers. Seneca, 'Thyest.,' 215—

> "Ubi non est pudor,
> Nec cura juris, sanctitas, pietas, fides,
> Instabile regnum est."

Ver. 13.—**Righteous lips are the delight of kings.** The ideal king takes pleasure in the truth and justice which his subjects display in their conversation. Such a one hates flattery and dissimulation, and encourages honest speaking. **They (kings) love him that speaketh right**; *that which is just* (ch. viii. 6). The two clauses are co-ordinate. Septuagint, "He loveth upright words" (comp. ch. xxii. 11).

Ver. 14.—**The wrath of a king is as messengers of death.** In a despotic monarchy the death of an offender follows quickly on the offence. Anger the king, and punishment is at hand; instruments are always ready who will carry out the sentence, and that before time is given for reconsideration. The murder of Thomas à Becket will occur as an illustration (comp. Esth. vii. 8, etc.). The LXX. translates, "The king's wrath is a messenger of death," taking the plural as put by enallage for the singular; but possibly the plural may intimate the many agents who are prepared to perform the ruler's behests, and the various means which he possesses for punishing offenders. This first clause implies, without expressly saying, that, such being the case, none but a fool will excite the monarch's resentment (comp. Eccles. viii. 4); then the second clause comes in naturally. **But a wise man will pacify it.** He will take care not to provoke that anger which gluts its resentment so quickly and so fatally (ch. xix. 12; xx. 2). Septuagint, "A wise man will appease him," the king; as Jacob propitiated Esau by the present which he sent forward (Gen. xxxii. 20, 21).

Ver. 15.—**In the light of the king's countenance is life** (ch. xv. 30; Ps. iv. 6). As the king's anger and the darkening of his countenance are death (ver. 14), so, when his look is cheerful and bright, it sheds joy and life around, as the rain refreshes the parched ground. **A cloud of the latter rain.** The former rain in Palestine falls about the end of October or the beginning of November, when the seed is sown; the latter rain comes in March or April, and is absolutely necessary for the due swelling and ripening of the grain. It is accompanied, of course, with *cloud*, which tempers the heat, while it brings fertility and vigour. To this the king's *favour* is well compared. "He shall come down," says the psalmist, "like the rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth" (Ps. lxxii. 6). The LXX., reading בְּנִי (*beni*) for פְּנֵי (*peni*), translates, "In the light of life is the son of the king; and they who are acceptable to him are as a cloud of the latter rain."

Ver. 16.—**To get wisdom than gold** (comp. ch. iii. 14; viii. 10, 11, 19); **and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver;** Revised Version better, *yea, to get understanding is rather to be chosen than* [to get] *silver.*

If the clauses are not simply parallel, and the comparative value of silver and gold is to be considered, we may, with Wordsworth, see here an intimation of the superiority of wisdom (*chochmah*) over intelligence (*binah*), the former being the guide of life and including the practice of religion, the latter denoting discernment, the faculty of distinguishing between one thing and another (see note on ch. xxiii. 4, and the quotation from 'Pirke Aboth' on ch. xv. 33). The LXX., for *kenoh* reading *kinnot*, have given a version of which the Fathers have largely availed themselves: "The nests of wisdom are preferable to gold, and the nests of knowledge are preferable above silver." Some of the old commentators take these "nests" to be the problems and apothegms which enshrine wisdom; others consider them to mean the children or scholars who are taught by the wise man.

Ver. 17.—**The highway of the upright is to depart from evil.** To avoid the dangerous byways to which evil leads, one must walk straight in the path of duty (comp. ch. xv. 19). Septuagint, "The paths of life decline from evil;" and this version adds some paragraphs in illustration, which are not in the Hebrew: "And the ways of righteousness are length of life. He who receiveth instruction will be among the good [or, 'in prosperity,' ἐν ἀγαθοῖς], and he who observeth reproof shall become wise." **He that keepeth his way preserveth his soul.** He who continues in the right way, and looks carefully to his goings, will save himself from ruin and death (ch. xiii. 3). Septuagint, "He who watcheth his own ways keepeth his life." And then is added another maxim, "He that loveth his life will spare his mouth."

Ver. 18.—**Pride goeth before destruction.** A maxim continually enforced (see ch. xi. 2; xvii. 19; xviii. 12). Here is the contrast to the blessing on humility promised (ch. xv. 33). **A haughty spirit**—a lifting up of spirit—goeth **before a fall** (comp. Dan. iv. 29, etc.). Thus, according to Herodotus (vii. 10), Artabanus warned the arrogant Xerxes, "Seest thou how God strikes with the thunder animals which overtop others, and suffers them not to vaunt themselves, but the small irritate him not? And seest thou how he hurls his bolts always against the mightiest buildings and the loftiest trees? For God is wont to cut short whatever is too highly exalted" (comp. Horace, 'Carm.,' ii. 10. 9, etc.). Says the Latin adage, "Qui petit alta nimis, retro lapsus ponitur imis." Cæsar, 'Bell. Gall.,' i. 14, "Consuesso Deos immortales, quo gravius homines ex commutatione rerum doleant, quos pro sceiere eorum ulcisci velint, his secundiores interdum re, et diuturniorem impunitatem concedere." The Chinese say, "Who flies not high falls not low;" and, "A great tree attracts the wind." The Basque proverb remarks, "Pride sought flight in heaven, fell to hell." And an Eastern one, "What is extended will tear; what is long will break" (Lane).

Ver. 19.—This verse is connected in thought, as well as verbally, with the preceding. **Better** it is to be **of an humble spirit with the lowly.** The Revised Version has, *with the poor;* but "meek" or "lowly" better contrasts with "proud" of the second clause. Ps. lxxxiv. 10, "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." **Than to divide the spoil with the proud.** To share in the fruits of the operations and pursuits of the proud, and to enjoy their pleasures, a man must cast in his lot with them, undergo their risks and anxieties, and participate in the crimes by which they gain their wealth. The result of such association was told in ver. 18. The Germans express the connection between abundance and folly by the terse apothegm, "Voll, toll;" "Full, fool." Septuagint, "Better is the man of gentle mind with humility, than he who divideth spoil with the violent."

Ver. 20.—**He that handleth a matter wisely.** *Dabar*, translated "matter," is better rendered "word," as in ch. xiii. 13, with which passage the present is in contrast. Thus Revised Version, *he that giveth heed unto the word.* **Shall find good;** Vulgate, *eruditus in verbo reperiet bona.* The "Word" is the Law of God; he who attends to this shall prosper. The rendering of the Authorized Version is supported by the Septuagint, "The man prudent in affairs is a finder of good things;" he attends to his business, and thinks out the best mode of accomplishing his plans, and therefore succeeds in a worldly sense (comp. ch. xvii. 20). **Whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he;** or, *hail to him,* as in ch. xiv. 21. To heed the Word and to trust in the Lord are correlative things; handling a matter wisely can hardly belong to the same category. The Septuagint contrasts the worldly success of one who manages business wisely and discreetly with the blessedness of him who, when he has done all, commits his cause to God and trusts wholly to him: "He who hath trusted in the Lord is blessed (μακαριστός)."

Ver. 21.—**The wise in heart shall be called prudent.** True wisdom is recognized and acknowledged as such, especially when it has the gift of expressing itself appropriately (see on ch. xxiv. 8). **The sweetness (ch. xxvii. 9) of the lips increaseth learning.** People listen to instruction at the mouth of one who speaks well and winningly. Such a one augments knowledge in others, and

in himself too, for he learns by teaching. Knowledge ought not to be buried in one's own mind, but produced on fit occasions and in suitable words for the edification of others. Ecclus. xx. 30, "Wisdom that is hid, and treasure that is hoarded up, what profit is in them [both?" (see Matt. v. 15). Septuagint, "The wise and prudent they call worthless (*φαύλους*); but they who are sweet in word shall hear more." Wise men are called bad and worthless by the vulgar herd, either because they do not impart all they know, or because they are envied for their learning; but those who are eloquent and gracious in speech shall receive much instruction from what they hear, every one being ready to converse with them and impart any knowledge which they possess.

Ver. 22.—**Understanding is a well-spring of life unto him that hath it** (ch. x. 11; xiii. 14). The possessor of understanding has in himself a source of comfort and a vivifying power, which is as refreshing as a cool spring to a thirsty traveller. In all troubles and difficulties he can fall back upon his own good sense and prudence, and satisfy himself therewith. This is not conceit, but the result of a well-grounded experience. **But the instruction of fools is folly**; *i.e.* the instruction which fools give is folly and sin; such is the only teaching which they can offer. So the Vulgate, *doctrina stultorum fatuitas;* and many modern commentators. But *musar* is better taken in the sense of "discipline" or "chastisement" (as in ch. i. 7; vii. 22; xv. 5), which the bad man suffers. His own folly is the scourge which punishes him; refusing the teaching of wisdom, he makes misery for himself, deprives himself of the happiness which virtue gives, and pierces himself through with many sorrows. Septuagint, "The instruction of fools is evil."

Ver. 23.—**The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth.** Out of the abundance of his heart the wise man speaks; the spirit within him finds fit utterance. *Pectus est quod disertos facit.* The thought and mind control the outward expression and make it eloquent and persuasive (comp. ch. xv. 2). **And addeth learning to his lips;** Vulgate, "addeth grace." But *lekach*, which means properly "reception," "taking in," is best rendered "learning," as in ver. 21; ch. i. 5, etc. The intellect and knowledge of the wise display themselves in their discourse. Delitzsch, "Learning mounteth up to his lips." Ecclus. xxi. 26, "The heart of fools is in their mouth; but the mouth of the wise is in their heart." Septuagint, "The heart of the wise will consider what proceedeth from his mouth; and on his lips he will carry prudence (*ἐπιγνωμοσύνην*)."

Ver. 24.—**Pleasant words are as an honeycomb.** "Pleasant words" are words of comforting, soothing tendency, as in ch. xv. 26; Ps. xix. 10. The writer continues his praise of apt speech. The comparison with honey is common in all languages and at all times. Thus Homer sings of Nestor ('Iliad,' i. 248, etc.)—

> "The smooth-tongued chief, from whose persuasive lips
> Sweeter than honey flowed the stream of speech."
>
> (Derby)

So the story goes that on the lips of St. Ambrose, while still a boy, a swarm of bees settled, portending his future persuasive eloquence. **Sweet to the soul, and health to the bones** (ch. xv. 30). The verse forms one sentence. The happy results of pleasant words are felt in body and soul. Honey in Palestine is a staple article of food, and is also used as a medicinal remedy. Of its reviving effects we read in the case of Jonathan, who from a little portion hurriedly taken as he marched on had "his eyes enlightened" (1 Sam. xiv. 27). Septuagint, "Their sweetness is the healing of the soul."

*Ἰατρὸς ὁ λόγος τοῦ κατὰ ψυχὴν πάθους.*

"Speech the physician of the soul's annoy."

Ver. 25.—A repetition of ch. xiv. 12.

Ver. 26.—**He that laboureth for himself**; literally, *the soul of him that laboureth laboureth for him.* "Soul" here is equivalent to "desire," "appetite" (comp. ch. vi. 30), and the maxim signifies that hunger is a strong incentive to work—the needs of the body spur the labourer to diligence and assiduity; he eats bread in the sweat of his brow (Gen. iii. 19). Says the Latin gnome—

> "Largitor artium, ingeniique magister
> Venter."
>
> "The belly is the teacher of all arts,
> The parent of invention."

"De tout s'avise à qui pain faut," "He who wants bread thinks of everything." There is our own homely saw, "Need makes the old wife trot;" as the Italians say, "Hunger sets the dog a-hunting" (Kelly). **For his mouth craveth it of him**; his mouth must have food to put in it. The verb אָכַף (*akaph*) does not occur elsewhere; it means properly "to bend," and then to put a load on, to constrain, to press. So here, "His mouth bends over him, *i.e.* urgeth him thereto" (Revised Version). Eccles. vi. 7, "All labour of man is for his mouth;" we should say stomach. Hunger in some sense is the great stimulus of all work. "We commanded you," says St. Paul (2 Thess. iii. 10), "that

if any would not work, neither should he eat." There is a spiritual hunger without which grace cannot be sought or obtained—that hungering and thirsting after righteousness of which Christ speaks, and which he who is the Bread of life is ready to satisfy (Matt. v. 6; John vi. 58). The Septuagint expands the maxim: "A man in labours labours for himself, and drives away (ἐκβιάζεται) his own destruction; but the perverse man upon his own mouth carrieth destruction."

Ver. 27.—This and the three following verses are concerned with the case of the evil man. **An ungodly man**—a man of Belial—**diggeth up evil.** A man of Belial (ch. vi. 12) is a worthless, wicked person, what the French call a *vaurien*. Such a one digs a pit for others (ch. xxvi. 27; Ps. vii. 15), devises mischief against his neighbour, plots against him by lying and slandering and overreaching. Wordsworth confines the evil to the man himself; he digs it as treasure in a mine, loves wickedness for its own sake. But analogy is against this interpretation. Septuagint, "A foolish man diggeth evils for himself." So Ecclus. xxvii. 26, "Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein; and he that setteth a trap shall be taken therein." As the gnome says—

Ὁ δὲ κακὴ βουλὴ τῷ βουλεύσαντι κακίστη.

**And in his lips** there is **as a burning fire** (ch. xxvi. 23). His words scorch and injure like a devouring flame. Jas. iii. 6, "The tongue is a fire; the world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by hell." Septuagint, "And upon his lips he treasureth up fire."

Ver. 28.—**A froward man soweth strife** (ch. vi. 14, 19). The verb means, literally, "sends forth," which may signify "scatters as seed" or "hurls as a missile weapon." The character intended is the perverse man, who distorts the truth, gives a wrong impression, attributes evil motives; such a one occasions quarrels and heartburnings. **And a whisperer separateth chief friends** (ch. xvii. 9). *Nirgan* is either "a chatterer," or "a whisperer," "calumniator." In ch. xviii. 8 and xxvi. 20, 22 it is translated "tale-bearer." "Be not called a whisperer (ψίθυρος)," says the Son of Sirach (Ecclus. v. 14), speaking of secret slander. "Slanderers," says an old apothegm, "are Satan's bellows to blow up contention." Septuagint, "A perverse man sendeth abroad evils, and kindleth a torch of deceit for the wicked, and separateth friends." The alternative rendering of the second clause, "estrangeth a leader," *i.e.* alienates one leader from another, or from his army, is not confirmed by the authority of the versions or the best commentators.

Ver. 29.—**A violent man enticeth his neighbour.** The man of violence (ch. iii. 31) is one who wrongs others by injurious conduct, by fraud or oppression. How such a one "enticeth," talks a man over, we see in ch. i. 10, etc. Septuagint, "The lawless man tempts (ἀποπειρᾶται) friends." **And leadeth him into the way** that is **not good** (Ps. xxxvi. 4; Isa. lxv. 2); a position where he will suffer some calamity, or be induced to commit some wickedness.

Ver. 30.—This verse is better taken as one sentence (so the Septuagint), and translated, as Nowack, "He that shutteth his eyes in order to contrive froward things, he that compresseth his lips, hath already brought evil to pass;" he has virtually effected it. From such a crafty, malignant man you need not expect any more open tokens of his intentions. **He shutteth his eyes** (comp. Isa. xxxiii. 15); either that he may better think out his evil plans, or else he cannot look his neighbour in the face while he is plotting against him. The Vulgate has, *attonitis oculis;* Septuagint, "fixing (στηρίζων) his eyes." **Moving his lips;** rather, *he who compresseth his lips*, to hide the malignant smile with which he might greet his neighbour's calamity (comp. ch. vi. 13, etc.; x. 10), or that neither by word nor expression he may betray his thoughts. Others take the two outward expressions mentioned as signals to confederates; but this is not so suitable, as they are the man's own feelings and sentiments that are meant. One who gives these tokens **bringeth evil to pass;** he has perfected his designs, and deems them as good as accomplished, and you will do well to note what his bearing signifies. Some take the meaning to be, brings punishment on himself; but the warning is not given for the sinner's sake. Septuagint, "He defines (ὁρίζει) all evils with his lips; he is a furnace of evil."

Ver. 31.—**The hoary head** is a **crown of glory** (ch. xx. 29). (For "crown," see on ch. xvii. 6.) Old age is the reward of a good life, and therefore is an honour to a man (comp. ch. iii. 2, 16; iv. 10; ix. 11; x. 27). **If it be found**—rather, *it shall be found*—**in the way of righteousness;** the guerdon of obedience and holiness; whereas "bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days" (Ps. lv. 23). It is well said in the Book of Wisdom (iv. 8, etc.), "Honourable age is not that which standeth in length of time, nor that is measured by number of years. But wisdom is the grey hair unto men, and an unspotted life is old age."

Ver. 32.—He that is **slow to anger** (ch. xiv. 29) is **better than the mighty.** The long-suffering, non-irascible man is more of a hero than the valiant commander of a

great army. One overcomes external foes or obstacles; the other conquers himself; as it is said, **And he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city** (ch. xxv. 28). 'Pirke Aboth,' iv. 1, "Who is the hero? The man that restrains his thoughts." Maxims about self-mastery are common enough. Says an unknown poet, "Fortior est qui se quam qui fortissima vincit Mœnia, nec virtus altius ire potest." So Publ. Syr., 'Sent.,' 795, "Fortior est qui cupiditates suas, quam qui hostes subjicit." And the mediæval jingle—

> "Linguam frænare
> Plus est quam castra domare."

At the end of this verse the Alexandrian Manuscript of the Septuagint, followed by later hands in some other uncials, adds, "and a man having prudence [is better] than a great farm."

Ver. 33.—**The lot is cast into the lap.** The bosom or fold of the garment (ch. vi. 27; xvii. 23; xxi. 14). It is not quite clear what articles the Jews used in their divinations by lot. Probably they employed stones, differing in shape or colour, or having some distinguishing mark. These were placed in a vessel or in the fold of a garment, and drawn or shaken thence. Such a practice has been common in all ages and countries; and though only cursorily mentioned in the Mosaic legislation (Numb. xxvi. 55), it was used by the Jews from the time of Joshua, and in the earliest days of the Christian Church (see Josh. xviii. 10; Judg. xx. 9; 1 Sam. x. 20, 21; Acts i. 24, etc.). As by this means man's agency was minimized, and all partiality and chicanery were excluded, the decision was regarded as directed by Providence. There is one case only of ordeal in the Law, and that under suspicion of adultery (Numb. v. 12, etc.). In the Epistle to the Hebrews, in place of the lot we read (vi. 16), "An oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife." **The whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.** In these cases the Jew learned to see, in what we call chance, the overruling of Divine power. But this was not blind superstition. He did not feel justified in resorting to this practice on every trivial occasion, as persons used the *Sortes Virgilianæ* or even the verses of the Bible for the same purpose. The lot was employed religiously in cases where other means of decision were not suitable or available; it was not to supersede common prudence or careful investigation; but, for example, in trials where the evidence was conflicting and the judges could not determine the case, the merits were ascertained by lot (comp. ch. xviii. 18). After the effusion of the Holy Spirit, the apostles never resorted to divination, and the Christian Church has wisely repudiated the practice of all such modes of discovering the Divine will. Septuagint, "For the unrighteous all things fall into their bosom, but from the Lord are all just things," which may mean either that, though the wicked seem to prosper, God still works out his righteous ends; or the evil suffer retribution, and thus God's justice is displayed.

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*Man's thought and God's work.* Theology and philosophy have ever been confronted with the problem of the inter-relation of the Divine and the human in life. If God is supreme, what room is there for man's will, thought, and individual personality? If man has freedom and power, how can God be the infinite Ruler and Disposer of all things? It may not be possible to reconcile the two positions. But it must be unwise to ignore either of them. If we cannot mark their confines, we can at least observe the contents of the domain of each.

I. MAN HAS FREEDOM OF THOUGHT. "Man's are the counsels of the heart." Though externally constrained by circumstances, he is free to roam at large in the ample fields of imagination. The mind has a certain originative power. It is well-nigh a creator of thoughts—at least it can select the ideas that occur to it, arrange them, draw deductions from them; or it can let its fancies grow into new shapes; or, again, it can organize schemes, project plans, formulate purposes. Now, this liberty and the power it implies carry with them certain momentous consequences. 1. *We are responsible for our thoughts.* They are all known to God, and they will all be judged by him. Let us therefore take heed what follies and fancies we harbour in our most secret "chambers of imagery." 2. *We may exercise power with our thoughts.* These thoughts are seeds of actions. Inasmuch as we can direct them, we can turn the first springs of events. Here it is, in this inner workshop of the mind, that a man must forge his own future, and strike out works of public good. 3. *We cannot be coerced in our thoughts.* The tyrant may fling a man into a dungeon, but he cannot destroy the convictions that are

enthroned in the bosom of his victim; he may tear out his tongue, but he can never tear out his thoughts. Here the powers of despotism fail; here the inalienable "rights of man" are ever in exercise.

II. GOD WORKS THROUGH MAN'S LIFE. "The answer of the tongue is from the Lord." Though a man thinks out his ideas with originative power, when he comes into the world of action other influences lay hold of him, and his utterances are not wholly his own. This is conspicuously true of the prophet, who is not a mere mouthpiece of Divine words, but a living, thinking man; and yet whose utterances are inspired by God. The remarkable fact now is that it is true also of every man, of the godless man as well as the devout man. God controls the outcome of every man's life. 1. *He controls through internal impulses.* Conscience is the voice of God, and every man has a conscience. When conscience is disobeyed, the willing service of God is rejected, but still an unconscious doing of God's will may be brought about. In the days of the Exodus God was guiding even the stubborn Pharaoh to consent at last to the Divine purpose in the liberation of the Hebrews. 2. *He controls through external circumstances.* These modify a man's words and deeds. Even after he has spoken, they give point and direction to what he has said and done.

Ver. 4.—*The purpose of creation.* It is commonly asserted that God made the world in love, that he created it from the goodness of his heart, because he desired to have creatures to bless. From this point of view, creation represents grace, giving, surrender, sacrifice, on the part of God. But another and apparently a contrary view is suggested by the words before us. Here it would seem that God created all things from self-regarding motives, as a man makes a machine for his own use. The contradiction, however, is only superficial. For if we take the second view, we must still bear in mind what the character of God is. Now, God is revealed to us as essentially love. Therefore only those things will please him that agree with love. A cruel Being might make for himself creatures that would amuse him by exhibiting contortions of agony, but a fatherly Being will be best pleased by seeing his family truly good and happy. If the universe is made to please Divine love, it must be made for blessedness. Yet it cannot be made for selfish happiness. It must be created so as to find its own good in God, and thus to give itself up to him as the End of its being. Apply this principle—

I. IN REGARD TO THE UNIVERSE AT LARGE. The law of gravitation is universal. All things tend to rush to their centres of attraction. In a large way the universe is drawn to God, its Centre. 1. *It is ever more and more realizing the purpose of God.* This is seen in all growth—the seed becomes the flowering plant, etc. It is strikingly exemplified in the doctrine of evolution. The great thought of God concerning the universe is slowly emerging into fact. 2. *It is continually approaching the thought of God.* The higher orders of creatures are nearer to the nature and thought of the Infinite Spirit than the lower. The upward movement is a Godward movement. 3. *It is growingly fulfilling the purpose of God.* From the formless and void past the universe moves on to "one far-off Divine event," when God's will shall be completely accomplished.

II. IN REGARD TO EVIL. Evil in itself, moral evil, cannot have been made by God, who is only holy. But in two respects evil may come within God's purposes. 1. *Physical evil directly works out God's purposes.* It is only evil to our eyes, as shadows look gloomy and winter feels painful. Really it is good, because it is part of the whole good plan of the universe. God sends pain in love, that the issue of it may be the higher blessedness of his children. 2. *Moral evil will be overruled for Divine purposes.* The bad man has his uses. Nebuchadnezzar was essential to the chastisement of Israel. Judas Iscariot was an agent in the chain of events that issued in Christ's great work of redemption.

III. IN REGARD TO INDIVIDUAL SOULS. We are all made for God. He is the End of our being, not only as the home and rest we need, but as the goal after which we should aim. The great aim of Christ's work is to bring all things in subjection to God, that he "may be All in all" (1 Cor. xv. 28). The mistake of men is in seeking their own good first, even though this be the higher good of "other-worldliness." For our great end is to forget self in God.

Ver. 24.—*Pleasant words.* I. PLEASANT WORDS ARE GOOD IN SOCIAL INTERCOURSE. They are said to cost little, while they are worth much. But often they are not to be had without trouble. 1. *Sympathy.* We must put ourselves to the trouble of entering into our brother's feelings if we would speak with real kindness to him. 2. *Self-suppression.* Angry words may be the first to rise to our lips; bitter words of scorn or melancholy words springing from the gloom of our own minds may come more readily than the pleasant words that are due to our neighbours. 3. *Thought.* Words of honey soon cloy if no satisfying thoughts lie behind them. Pleasant words should be more than words—they should be messengers of healing, suggestions of helpfulness. Now, as some trouble is required for the production of this kind of speech in daily intercourse, it is well to consider how valuable it is. It draws hearts together. It lightens the load of life and oils its wheels. There are enough of clouds about the souls of most men to make it desirable that we should shed all the sunshine that we possibly can. It would be like a migration from Northern gloom to Southern sunshine for all speech to be seasoned with truly pleasant words.

II. PLEASANT WORDS ARE NEEDED IN CHRISTIAN TEACHING. The preacher is not to be a false prophet of smooth sayings, whispering, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace. There are times when hard words must be spoken, and most unpleasant truths do need to be driven home to unwilling hearers. But it will be only the pressing necessity of the subject that will force men of tender hearts to utter painful words. When the topic is not of this character, the most winning words should be chosen. 1. *In teaching the young.* The gloom of some good people has repelled the young. Children ought to see the sunny side of religion. All who are themselves bright and happy should know that there is a greater gladness for them in Christ. The preacher of the gospel belies his message when he proclaims it like a funeral dirge. 2. *In interesting the careless.* We cannot frown men into the Church. If we show the attractiveness of the gospel by cheerful manners, we help to commend it to the world. 3. *In comforting the sorrowful.* It is not necessary to speak sad words to the sad in order to prove our sympathy. It should be our aim to lighten the load of their sorrow.

III. PLEASANT WORDS ARE FOUND IN THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Christ preached so that "the common people heard him gladly." Men wondered at the "gracious words" that fell from his lips. Christianity is a religion of Divine grace. Surely there must be found many pleasant words in the description of it. The words of the gospel are pleasant, in particular, on several accounts. 1. *They tell of God's love.* 2. *They portray Christ.* 3. *They invite men to salvation.* 4. *They reveal the blessedness of the kingdom of heaven.*

Ver. 25.—*The treacherous path.* What way have we here referred to? If the path be so deceptive, surely the guide should indicate it. Yet the way to destruction is not named, nor is its place pointed out on the chart of life. No doubt the reason of this indefiniteness of expression is just that the dangerous way is a broad road, very easy to discover, yet there are many tracks along it, and each person may take his own course. It is so broad that any description of it may possibly leave out some of its devious paths. Therefore it is better only to indicate its character and leave it for each to consider the warning, that an attractive appearance in the path is no proof of a safe end.

I. THE APPARENT RIGHTNESS OF THE WAY. 1. *The fact.* It is not only said that the way of death is attractive, like a smooth garden-path winding among flower-beds, while the way of life is a steep and rugged mountain-track; but this way even seems to be right. There is an apparent justification for following it. Conscience is in danger of being deluded into giving it a quasi-sanction. 2. *The cause.* We are always tempted to condone the agreeable. If no danger is apparent, sanguine minds refuse to believe that they are approaching one. Convention simulates conscience. The multitude who tread the broad way tempt us into trusting the sanction of their example. It is difficult to believe that that is wrong which fashion encourages. 3. *The limitations.* (1) The way only "seemeth" right. We need to be guarded against succumbing to the bondage of appearances. The question is not as to what a thing seems, but what it is. (2) It is right in the eyes of the man who is tempted to follow it. But it is not right in the eyes of God. We have to look to the higher standard of

God's approval. It is of no use that our course seems right to ourselves if it is wrong before God. On the other hand, it may be objected that these considerations destroy the validity of conscience; for if we are not to follow our own conscience, what higher guide can we have? The answer may be threefold. (1) Seeming right may not be the verdict of our true consciences, but only the too readily accepted conclusion of more worldly considerations. (2) Conscience may be perverted. (3) At all events, while we have the light of revelation in Scripture and especially in Christ, we have a guide for conscience, to neglect which is to be left without excuse.

II. THE FATAL END OF THE WAY. 1. *The importance of the end.* The great question is—Whither are we going? The purpose of a road is not to serve as a platform for stationary waiting, but to lead to some destination. It is foolish for the traveller to neglect the sign-post, and only follow the attractiveness of the road, if he wishes to reach his home. In life the value of the course chosen is determined by its issues. 2. *The character of the end.* The end is "the way of death." This is true of every course of sin. Dark and dreadful, without qualification of any kind, this goal ever stands at the end of the way of wickedness. Disappointment may come first, and sorrow, and weariness; it will be well for us if they warn us before we take the final plunge into soul-destruction. 3. *The manner of reaching the end.* The pleasant way does not lead directly into the pit of destruction. It is only a preliminary stage in the downward journey. It brings the traveller to "the ways" of death. It may be regarded as a by-path running into the broad road. There are questionable amusements and dangerous friendships that are not themselves fatal, but they incline the careless to ways of evil. They are perilous as subtle tempters fashioned like angels of light.

Ver. 31.—*The glory of old age.* I. OLD AGE MAY BE CROWNED WITH GLORY IN THE COMPLETION OF LIFE. It is not natural to die in youth. We talk of the bud gathered before it has opened on earth, that it may bloom with perfection in heaven, etc.; but we must confess that there is a great mystery in the death of children. If God so wills it, it is better to live through the whole three score years and ten into full old age. The broken column is the symbol of the unfinished life. "Such a one as Paul the aged" could say, "I have finished my course." 1. *Life is good.* It may be sorrow-stricken and it may be wrecked on the rocks of sin. Then, indeed, it is evil. There was one of whom it was said, "It had been good for that man if he had not been born" (Matt. xxvi. 24). But in itself life is good. Men in mental sanity prize it. The Old Testament idea of the value of a full long life is more healthy than the sickly sentimentalism that fancies an early death to be a Heaven-sent boon. 2. *Time is for service.* Therefore the longer the time allotted to one, the more opportunity is there for doing good. This, again, may be abused and misspent in sin. But the old age of a good man means the completion of a long day's work. Surely it is an honour to be called into the field in the early morning of life, and to be permitted to toil on till the shadows descend on a long summer evening.

II. OLD AGE MAY BE CROWNED WITH GLORY IN ITS OWN ATTAINMENTS. A bad old age presents a hideous picture. A hoary-headed sinner is, indeed, a spectacle of horror. Mere old age is not venerable in itself. Reverence for years implies a belief that the years have gathered in a harvest of venerable qualities. Old age has its defects, not only in bodily frailty, but in a certain mental stiffening. Thus Lord Bacon says, "Men of age object too much, consult too long, adventure too little, repent too soon, and seldom drive business home to the full period, but content themselves with a mediocrity of success;" and Madame de Staël says, "To resist with success the frigidity of old age, one must combine the body, the mind, and the heart; to keep these in parallel vigour one must exercise, study, and love." But, on the other hand, there are inward attainments of a ripe and righteous old age that give to the late autumn of life a mellow flavour which is quite unknown in its raw summer. "Age is not all decay," says a modern novelist; "it is the ripening, the swelling, of the fresh life within, that withers and bursts the husk." It has been remarked that women are most beautiful in youth and in old age. The wisdom, the judiciousness, the large patience with varieties of opinion which should come with experience, are not always found in old people, who sometimes stiffen into bigotry and freeze into dreary customs. But when these graces are found in a large and healthy soul, no stage of life can approach the glory of old age.

Even when there is not capacity for such attainments, there is a beautiful serenity of soul that simpler people can reach, and that makes their very presence to be a benediction.

III. OLD AGE MAY BE CROWNED WITH GLORY IN ITS PREPARATION FOR THE FUTURE. In unmasking the horrible aspect of death and revealing the angel-face beneath, Christianity has shed a new glory over old age. It is the vestibule to the temple of a higher life. The servant of God has been tried and disciplined by blessing, suffering, and service. At length he is "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." He can learn to resist the natural melancholy of declining powers with the vision of renewed energy in the heavenly future. Or, if he cares for rest, he may know that it will be a rest with Christ, and he can say, with the typical aged saint Simeon, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

Ver. 32.—*Self-control.* The world has always made too much of military glory. From the days of the Pharaohs, when brutal monarchs boasted of the number of cities they had sacked, to our own time, when successful generals receive thanks in Parliament, and grants of money far beyond the highest honours and emoluments ever bestowed upon the greatest and most useful civilians, it has been the habit of men to flatter and pamper soldiers out of all proportion to their deserts. But we are here reminded of a simple and private victory which is really greater than one of those great military exploits that send a shock of amazement round the world. It is a more noble feat to be able to rule one's own spirit than to capture a city. Consider some of the ways in which this supreme excellence of self-control is apparent.

I. IT IS GREATER IN EFFORT. In ancient days, before the invention of heavy ordnance, a siege taxed all the energies of the most skilful and powerful general. This provincial city of Jerusalem was long able to hold out against the legions of Rome. But self-control is even more difficult. 1. *The enemy is within.* The war of the soul is a civil war. We may be successful in external life, and yet unable to cope with the inner foes of our own hearts. 2. *The enemy is turbulent.* Some races are harder to rule than others; but no half-savage, wholly fanatical dervishes, could be more fierce than the wild passions that rage within a man's own breast. 3. *The enemy has acquired great power.* The uprising of passion is not a veiled sedition; it is out-and-out rebellion. Long habit has given it a sort of vested interest in the privileges of its lawlessness. 4. *The enemy is subtle.* "The heart is deceitful above all things." It is plotting treason when all looks safe. The careless soul slumbers over a mine of dynamite in the region of its own passions. It needs a supreme effort to quell and curb and rule such a foe.

II. IT IS GREATER IN RESULTS. At first sight this proposition must appear absurd. The man who curbs his own spirit does something inward, private, secret. The man who takes a city makes his mark on history. How can the self-control be the more fruitful thing? 1. *It means more to the individual man.* The successful general has won a name of glory. Yet at its best it is but superficial and empty. He may be despising himself while the world is shouting his praises. But the strong soul that has learnt to control itself has the inward satisfaction of its self-mastery. 2. *It means more to the world.* Weak men may win a temporary success, but in the long run their inner feebleness is certain to expose itself. Such men may take a city, but they cannot rule it. They may do startling things, but not really great things, and the mischief of their follies will be more disastrous than the gain of their successes.

III. IT IS GREATER IN CHARACTER. True greatness is not to be measured by achievements, which depend largely upon external circumstances. One man has an opportunity of doing something striking, and another is denied every chance. Yet the obscure person may be really far greater than the fortunate instrument of victory. True greatness is in the soul. He is great who lives a great soul-life, while a Napoleon may be mean in spite of his brilliant powers and achievements. In the sight of Heaven he stands highest who best fights the enemies in his own breast, because he exercises the highest soul-powers. It is the province of Christian grace to substitute the glory of self-victory for the vulgar glare of military success.

Ver. 33.—*The lottery of life.* I. LIFE APPEARS TO BE A LOTTERY. "The lot is

cast into the lap." We seem to depend largely on chance. 1. *We are ignorant of important facts.* We are obliged to grope our way through many dark places. Life comes to us veiled in mystery. It may be that certain material considerations would greatly modify our action if only we knew them, yet we must act without regard to them, from sheer ignorance. 2. *We cannot predict the future.* Even when we do grasp the essential points of our situation in the present, we cannot tell what new possibilities may emerge. A sudden turn of the kaleidoscope may give an entirely novel complexion to life. 3. *We are unable to master our circumstances.* We find ourselves surrounded by innumerable influences which we may understand, more or less, but which we cannot alter. Sometimes it appears as though we were no more free agents than the driftwood that is cast up on the beach by the angry surf. Circumstances are too strong for us, and we must let circumstances take their course. 4. *We cannot control the course of events.* Many things happen quite outside the range of our lives, yet their results will strike across the path of our own actions. Other people are busy planning and working, and we do not all consult together and work in harmony. When many hands throw the shuttle it is impossible to bring out any sure design.

II. GOD DISPOSES OF THE LOTTERY OF LIFE. Voltaire says, "Chance is a word void of sense; nothing can exist without a cause." It is but a name for our ignorance of the course of events. Nevertheless, if there were no mind behind the apparent confusion of life, universal causation would but give us a blind and purposeless fate—no better, surely, than a wild and chaotic chance. But to one who believes in God the terrible uncertainty of the lottery of life is a great reason for prayer and trust. 1. *God knows all.* He knows every fact, and he foresees the whole future. Herein we have a grand reason for faith. One who knows so much more than we do must needs often act in a way that we do not understand. But his infinite knowledge is a reason for our unlimited trust in him. 2. *God controls all.* Events seem to be tossed about in the lap of chance. Yet just as surely as laws of motion govern the slightest movement of all the leaves that are blown by an autumn wind, Divine purposes control all human events, in the midst of their seeming confusion. This must be so if God is God.

"He maketh kings to sit in sovereignty;
He maketh subjects to their power obey;
He pulleth down, he setteth up on high;
He gives to this, from that he takes away;
For all we have is his; what he will do, he may."
(Spenser.)

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—3.—*The rule and guidance of Jehovah.* I. GOD THE OBJECT AND FULFILMENT OF HUMAN DESIRE. We are wishful, craving creatures, "with no language but a sigh." The answer of the praying tongue and heart is God himself—in the fulness of his wisdom and love, the generosity of his gifts, the accessibility of his presence. A philosopher of this century actually taught that God was the Creator of human wishes and imagination. Let us rather say, it is God who creates and calls forth the longings of the finite heart, which (as Augustine says) is restless till it rests in him.

II. GOD THE CORRECTOR OF OUR FALSE JUDGMENTS. (Ver. 2.) We are prone to judge of actions and choices by their *æsthetic* value, *i.e.* by reference to our feeling of pleasure and pain; God pronounces on their *ethical* value, their relation to his Law and to the ideal of our own being.

III. GOD THE SUPPORT OF OUR WEAKNESS. (Ver. 3.) What is the source of all care and over-anxiety, but that we are unequal to the conflict with laws mightier than our frail energies and endeavours? Without God, we stand trembling in the presence of a giant fate which can crush us. But there is no such fate to the believer in God, only a holy power and immovable will. "We are a care to the gods," said Socrates. Much more can the Christian say this, and learn to get rid of his troubles by making them in childlike faith God's troubles, his cares God's cares. Our plans become fixed, our

purposes firm, when we are conscious that they are God's plans and purposes being wrought out through us.—J.

Vers. 4—9.—*The administration of rewards and punishments.* I. THE MORAL DESIGNS OF GOD. (Ver. 4.) The creation is *teleological*; it has a beginning, a process, and an end in view, all determined by the will and wisdom of God. If this is true of every plant, of every mollusc, it is true of every man. We are formed to illustrate his praise. Disobedience, with its consequences, ratifies his just and holy laws.

II. THE MORAL FEELINGS OF GOD. (Ver. 5.) Only that which stands in a true relation to him can be true. Haughtiness and arrogance are, so to speak, in the *worst taste.* In the eyes of God they are not beautiful, and cannot escape his criticism and correction.

III. HIS PROVISION FOR THE OBLIVION OF GUILT AND THE CURE OF MORAL EVIL. (Ver. 6.) In social relations he has opened a fountain, sweet and healing, for mutual faults and sins. Love hides a multitude of sins. "I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much" (comp. Isa. lviii. 7; Dan. iv. 27). But prevention is better than healing, and in religion is the prophylactic against evil.

IV. GOD'S RECONCILING LOVE. (Ver. 7.) What sweeter pleasure does life yield than reconciliation? 'Tis a deeper blessing than peace which has never been broken. Life is full of the principle of opposition; and God is manifested, first in the drawing of us to himself, and then in the union of estranged human hearts to one another.

V. THE LAW OF COMPENSATION. (Ver. 8.) He hath set the one over against the other, that we should seek nothing after him. Poverty has great advantages, if we will see it so—is more favourable, on the whole, to moral health than the reverse condition. And the hard crust of honest poverty, how sweet! the luxurious living of the dishonest rich, how insipid! or how bitter!

VI. DIVINE RECTIFICATIONS. (Ver. 9.) We must take heed to our own way; yet with all our care, we cannot ensure right direction or security. We need God's rectification and criticism at every point, and hence should ever say to ourselves, "If the Lord will, we will do this or that" (Jas. iv. 15). The blending of human with Divine counsel, human endeavour with God's guidance, may defy analysis, but is known in experience to be *real.*—J.

Vers. 10—15.—*Divine and human authority.* I. THE DERIVATION OF AUTHORITY AND LAW FROM GOD. (Ver. 10.) The true ruler is the representative of God. Royal decrees and legal statutes profess to rest, and must rest ultimately, if they are to be binding, upon the moral Law itself. Hence the reverence in old days for "the Lord's anointed," though in the person of a Charles Stuart, was the popular witness to a deep truth, which lies at the foundation of society.

II. PRINCIPLES OF STABLE RULE. (Ver. 11.) The pair of scales have ever been viewed as the emblems of justice, and so the expressions, symbolically, of the nature of God. The second allusion is to the stone weights which the Oriental merchant carries in his bag, serving the purpose the more exactly, as not liable to rust. The exact balance and the just weight, then, if symbols of Jehovah, must be the symbols of every righteous human government.

III. THE PRINCIPLES OF ROYAL FAVOUR AND DISFAVOUR. (Vers. 12—15.) 1. The ruler must be of *pure sentiment, abhorring all kinds of immorality,* keeping his court pure, "rearing the white flower of a blameless life in the fine light that beats upon the throne." How much we owe in these respects to the example of our sovereign and her husband is written on the thankful heart of every religious Englishman. 2. *Strong moral convictions.* That the throne securely rests, not upon might, but right; not upon bayonets, but upon the Word of God. The influence proceeding from such a mind will be constantly felt as antipathetic to falsehood and corruption, and the other eating mildews of high places. 3. *Sympathy with honest policies.* How common is it to assume that politics have little or nothing to do with morality! No one who believes in the teaching of his Bible can accept such a dogma. He who acts upon it is already a traitor to his country and his God. As Greece had its Demosthenes, who has been called a "saint in politics," so we have had, thank God, in our time men of eloquent tongue and true heart in the national councils. May their line and tradi-

tion never become extinct! 4. *Their dread judicial power.* (Ver. 14.) The authorities who represent the penal powers of law are a terror to evil-doers. There must be the power to punish. And a measured and well-tempered severity does in a sense "reconcile" numbers, not to be affected otherwise, to a course of law-abiding and just conduct. 5. *The attractions of their smile.* (Ver. 15.) Ever, while human nature continues what it is, the smile of the sovereign, the tokens of his favour—the star, the medal, the garter, the uniform—will be sought after with eagerness and worn with pride. There may be a side of idle vanity in this, yet equally a side of good. It is good to seek association with greatness, though the ideal of greatness may often be mistaken. Only let us see that there is no real greatness which does not in some way reflect the majesty of God.—J.

Vers. 16—26.—*The Divine justice in respect to the wise and fools.* We see the moral order of God revealed in the character and life of men in various ways. Their conduct has a good or evil effect on themselves, on their fellows, and is exposed to Divine judgment. Let us take these in their order.

I. THE REFLEXIVE EFFECT OF MAN'S CONDUCT. 1. Wisdom is *enriching* (ver. 16). To acquire it is better than ordinary wealth (ch. iii. 14; viii. 10, 11, 19). 2. Rectitude is *safety* (ver. 17). It is a levelled and an even way, the way of the honest and good man; not, indeed, always to his own feeling, but in the highest view, "He that treads it, trusting surely to the right, shall find before his journey closes he is close upon the shining table-lands to which our God himself is Sun and Noon." The only true way of self-preservation is the way of right. 3. The *truth of contrast* (ver. 18). Pride foretells ruin; the haughty spirit, overthrow and destruction (ch. xv. 25, 33). The thunderbolts strike the lofty summits, and leave unharmed the kneeling vale; shiver the oak, and pass harmless over the drooping flower. We are ever safe upon our knees, or in the attitude of prayer. A second contrast appears in ver. 19. The holy life with scant fare better than a proud fortune erected on unjust gains.

> "He that is down need fear no fall;
> He that is low, no pride."

4. The *effect of religious principle* (ver. 20). We need constantly to carry all conduct into this highest light, or trace it to this deepest root. Piety here includes two things: (1) obedience to positive command; (2) living trust in the personal God. Happiness and salvation are the fruit. "I have had many things in my hands, and have lost them all. Whatever I have been able to place in God's hands, I still possess" (Luther).

II. EFFECTS IN RELATION TO OTHERS. 1. The good man is *pleasing* to others (vers. 21, 24). There is a grace on his lips, a charm in his conversation, in a "speech alway with grace, seasoned with salt." How gladly men listened to our great Exemplar, both in public and in private! Thus, too, the good man sweetens instruction, and furthers its willing reception in the mind of his listeners. 2. He earns a good reputation for *sense, discretion, prudence* (vers. 21, 22). And this not only adds to his own happiness (for we cannot be happy without the good will of our fellows), but it gives weight to his teaching (ver. 23). The teacher can produce little effect whose words stand not out in relief from the background of character. The true emphasis is supplied by the life. 3. The *contrast* (ver. 22). The folly of fools is self-chastising. The fool makes himself disagreeable to others; even if he chances upon a sound word or right action, it is devoid of the value and weight which only character can give. He incurs prejudice and opposition on every hand, sows thorns in his own path, and invites his own destruction.

III. THE PRINCIPLE OF DIVINE JUDGMENT IN ALL. Every one of these effects marks in its way the expression of the Divine will, the laws of a Divine order. But, above all, the *end* determines the value of choice and the quality of life. The great distinction between the *seeming* and the *real* is the distinction between facts as they appear in the light of our passions, our wishes, our lusts, our various illusions and self-deceptions, and facts as they are in the clear daylight of eternal truth and a judgment which cannot err (ver. 25). To guard against the fatal illusions that beset us, we should ask: 1. Is this course of conduct according to the definite rules of

conduct as they are laid down in God's Word? 2. Is it according to the best examples of piety? Above all, is it Christ-like, God-like?—J.

Ver. 26.—*The blessing of hunger.* I. AT BOTTOM, HUNGER, THE NEED OF BREAD, IS THE GREAT STING AND GOAD TO ALL EXERTION, TO USEFUL ACTIVITY IN GENERAL.

II. HENCE HUNGER IS THE HELPER OF OUR TOIL. And we may thank God for every stimulus to do our best. Have not the best things been done for the world in every department by poor men?

III. AS APPLIED TO RELIGION, IT IS THE HUNGER OF THE SOUL WHICH PROMPTS US TO SEEK FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS; the emptiness of other joys which sends us to the feast of the gospel. Through toil and trouble, the worst unrest and distress can alone be overcome.—J.

Vers. 27—30.—*Penal judgments on guilt.* GODLESS STRIVINGS. Life is full of success and failure. There are successes which cost the soul, and failures in which is contained the reaping of life eternal. The activity of the worthless man (ver. 27). 1. It is *mischievous in spirit and in end.* He is depicted as one who digs a grave for others (ch. xxvi. 27; Jer. xviii. 20, *sqq.*). And his words are like fire that scorches, blasting reputation, withering the buds of opening good in the sentiment of the young, scoffing down the right and true. 2. It is *contentious;* breeding quarrels, creative of strife, introducing breaches between friends, disuniting households. "Envy and every evil work" is wherever he goes. 3. It is the activity of the *tempter*, the *seducer.* Not content with error himself, he would have partners in sorrow and in guilt. It is thus truly *diabolical.* 4. It is *meditated* and *determined* (ver. 30). Very striking is the picture of this verse—the eyes half closed, the bit lips, the firm line about the mouth of one resolved on dark designs and their determined execution. What a power is thought for good or evil! Oh for its right direction by the loving and creative Spirit of all wisdom and goodness, that it may be ever inventive of kind and healing deeds, that may "seal up the avenues of ill," rather than open them more widely to the processions of darkness and hate!—J.

Vers. 31, 32.—*The gentle life.* Portrayed with exquisite sweetness and beauty.

I. AN HONOURED AGE. The biblical pictures of the aged pious are very charming, and Polycarp, with his eighty-six years upon him, passing to another crown, that of martyrdom, is sublime; also "Paul the aged and the prisoner." The text points out what we must all recognize for an æsthetic truth, that it is the association of age with goodness which makes it truly respectable, venerable, beautiful.

II. MORAL HEROISM. The heathen type of heroism was strength of arm—bodily strength, manly courage against an outward foe. The spiritual and the Christian type is in strength of will against evil, self-mastery, self-conquest, sublime patience. Better than to be members of any knightly order, "Companions" of the Bath, or any similar society speaking of the lower and carnal virtues, to be "companions in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ."—J.

Ver. 33.—*Chance and providence.* I. CHANCE IS BUT AN EXPRESSION OF HUMAN IGNORANCE. When we speak of that which is contingent, we mean something the law of which is not yet known.

II. MAN'S CONTROL OVER EVENTS IS LIMITED. We can give the external occasion to a decision; the decision itself rests with a higher power.

III. GOD OVERRULES ALL THINGS, AND OVERRULES THEM FOR THE BEST. To pretend that we are not free is to deny our nature, and so to deny him; and it is also a denial of him to think that we can be absolute masters of our fate. Between night and day—truths that are obscure and convictions that are clear—our life is balanced. Life rests on two pillars—the providence of God and the responsibility of man.—J.

Vers. 1, 3, 9.—*Thought, action, prayer.* It may be said that the three main elements of human experience are those of thinking, of acting, and of praying. We have not done our best until we have done all of these.

I. THOUGHT. "The preparations of the heart belong to man" (Revised Version). "Thy thoughts" ("thy purposes," Revised Version). We are told of Peter, after the denial, that "when he *thought* thereon, he wept" (Mark xiv. 72). But if he had thought beforehand what grief he would cause his Master by such unworthiness, he would not have had occasion to weep at all. "When Judas saw that he was condemned, he repented." But if he had thought, he would have seen that this was the plain and inevitable issue of his action. The pity is that we do not think as we should before we act. The preparation of the heart belongs to us; it is our most bounden duty to think, and to think well, before we act. And we must remember that *speech is action*, and often most important and decisive action too. We should include in our thought, when we are forming our "purposes" (Revised Version), the consideration of the effects of our prepared action upon (1) our whole nature—bodily, mental, spiritual; (2) our family and our friends; (3) our neighbours and associates; (4) our fellow-worshippers and fellow-workers; (5) the cause of Jesus Christ; (6) not only the immediate, but the further future. We should, so far as we can, think the whole subject through, look at it from all those points of view that we command; above all, we should take a decreasingly selfish and an increasingly generous and devout view of the subjects that come before us.

II. ACTION. "Thy works." Thought must be followed by vigorous effort, or it will "lose the name of action." Our works include not only those industries in which we are professionally engaged,—these are of great importance to us, as those which occupy the greater part of our time and most of our strength; but they include also our contributions, larger or smaller, worthy or unworthy, to the condition of our homes, to the character and the destiny of our children, to the comfort and well-being of our dependents or our employers, to the improvement of our locality, to the stability and freedom and success of the institutions (social, literary, ecclesiastical, municipal, national) upon which we can bring any influence to bear. We may move in a humble sphere, and yet, when all is told that the chronicles of heaven can tell, we may include in a busy and conscientious life many "works" that will not want the Divine approval or the blessing of mankind.

III. PRAYER. "The answer of the tongue is from the Lord . . . and thy thoughts shall be established." The two clauses imply, respectively, (1) that God sometimes makes other issues to result than those which we expect; (2) that God continually brings to pass that which we strive to accomplish, especially when we commend our cause to his Divine favour. The practical conclusions are these, respectively: 1. That we must be quite willing for the hand of God to give a different direction to our activities; quite prepared to accept another issue from that which we had set before our own minds. For God "seeth not as we see," and he works out his gracious purposes in other ways than those of our choosing. 2. That we should always realize our dependence on God for a favourable issue, and earnestly ask his blessing on our labour. It is the touch of his Divine hand that must quicken into life, that must crown with true success.—C.

Ver. 2.—(See homily on ver. 25.)—C.

Ver. 6.—*The penitent's review and prospect.* Placing ourselves in the position of the man who has sinned and suffered, and has been led to repentance and submission, of the man who is earnestly desirous of escaping from the sinful past and of becoming a new man and of living a new life, let us ask—What is his hope? what are his possibilities?

I. IN VIEW OF THE PAST AND OF HIS RELATIONS WITH GOD. What is his hope there? What are the possibilities of his sins being forgiven, his iniquity purged away? What he must rely upon, in this great domain of thought, is this—*truth in himself* and *mercy in God.* 1. He himself must be a true penitent, one that

> ". . . feels the sins he owns,
> And hates what he deplores;"

that intends with full purpose of heart to turn from all iniquity and to cleave to

righteousness and purity. 2. He must cast himself on the boundless mercy of God gained for him and promised to him in Jesus Christ his Saviour.

II. IN VIEW OF THE PAST AND OF HIS RELATIONS WITH MEN. God accepts true penitence of spirit and right purpose of heart, for he can read our hearts, and knows what we really are. But *man* wants more. Before he receives the sinner to his confidence and restores him to the position from which he fell, he wants clear proofs of penitence, manifestations of a new and a clean heart. The man who has put away his sin can only "purge" the guilty past by the practice of "mercy and truth," of kindness and integrity, of grace and purity. He has done that which is wrong, false, hurtful. Let him now do that which is just, true, right; that which is kind, helpful, pitiful, generous; then we shall see that he means all that he says, that his professions are sincere; then he may be taken back—his iniquity purged—to the place which he has lost.

III. IN VIEW OF THE FUTURE, HAVING REGARD TO HIMSELF. How shall the penitent make good the promises he has made to his friends? How shall he ensure his future probity and purity? how shall he engage to walk in love and in the path of holy service, as he is bound to do, taking on him the name of Christ? The answer is, by walking on *in reverence* of spirit, by proceeding in "the fear of the Lord;" thus will he "depart from evil," and do good. It is the man who cultivates a reverent spirit, who realizes the near presence of God, who walks with God in prayer and holy fellowship, who treasures in his mind the thoughts of God, and reminds himself frequently of the will of God concerning him—it is he who will "never be moved from his integrity;" he will redeem his word of promise, he will live the new and better life of faith and holiness and love.—C.

Ver. 11 (and see ch. xi. 1; xx. 10, 23).—*Honesty in business.* The repetition of this maxim (see above) is an indication of the importance that should be attached to the subject. It is one that affects a very large proportion of mankind, and that affects men nearly every day of their life. The text reminds us—

I. THAT BUSINESS IS WITHIN THE PROVINCE OF RELIGION. The man who says, "Business is business, and religion is religion," is a man whose moral and spiritual perceptions are sadly confused. "God's commandment is exceeding broad," and its breadth is such as will cover all the transactions of the market. Commerce and trade, as much as agriculture, are "the Lord's;" it is an order of human activity which is in full accord with his design concerning us; and it is a sphere into which he expects us to introduce our highest principles and convictions, in which we may be always serving him.

II. THAT DISHONESTY IS OFFENSIVE IN HIS SIGHT. "A false balance is his abomination" (ch. xi. 1; xx. 10). Dishonesty is evil in his sight, inasmuch as: 1. It is a flagrant violation of one of his chief commandments. The second of all the commandments is this, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (see Matt. xxii. 29). But to cheat our neighbour in the market is to do to him what we should strenuously protest against his doing to us. 2. It is a distinct breach of what is due to our brother. It is a most unbrotherly action; it is an act done in conscious disregard of all the claims our fellow-men have on our consideration. Moreover, it is an injury to the society of which we are members; for it is one of those wrongs which are *crimes* as well as sins; it is an act which strikes at the root of all fellowship, all commerce between man and man. 3. It is an injury done by a man to himself. No man can rob his brother without wronging his own soul. He is something the worse for every act of dishonesty he perpetrates. And he who is systematically defrauding his neighbours is daily cutting into his own character, is continually staining his own spirit, is destroying himself.

III. THAT HONESTY IS ACCEPTABLE TO GOD. "A just weight is his delight." Not that all honest dealing is equally acceptable to him. Much here, as everywhere, depends upon the motive. A man may be honest only because it is the best policy, because he fears the exposure and penalty of fraud: there is small virtue in that. On the other hand, he may be strictly fair and just in all his dealings, whether his work be known or unknown, because he has a conviction of what is due to his neighbour, or because he has an abiding sense of what God would have him be and do. In this case

his honesty is as truly an act of piety, of holy service, as was a sacrifice at the temple of Jehovah, as is a prayer in the sanctuary of Christ. It is an act rendered "unto the Lord," and it is well-pleasing in the sight of God his Saviour; he "serves the Lord Christ" (Col. iii. 23, 24). It is a great thing that we need not leave the shop or the ship, the office or the field, in order to render acceptable sacrifice unto the Lord our God. By simple conscientiousness, by sterling and immovable integrity, whatever the post we occupy, maintained by us with a view to the observant eye of our ever-present Master, we may honour and please him as much as if we were bowing in prayer or lifting up our voice in praise in the worship of his house.—C.

Ver. 16.—(See homily on ch. viii. 10, 11.)—C.

Vers. 18, 19 (ch. xi. 2; xviii. 12).—*Pride and humility.* Great insistance is laid in Scripture on the evil of pride and the value of humility. The subject has a large place in those "thoughts of God," which are communicated to us in his Word.

I. THE EVIL OF PRIDE. 1. *It is based on falsity.* For what has the richest or the strongest or the cleverest man, what has the most beautiful or the most honoured woman, that he or she has not received (1 Cor. iv. 7)? Ultimately, we owe *everything* to our Creator and Divine Benefactor; and the thought that our distinction is due to ourselves is an essentially false thought. Hence: 2. *It is irreverent and ungrateful;* for it is constantly forgetful of the heavenly source of all our blessings. 3. *It is ugly and offensive* in the sight of man. That self-respect which makes a man superior to all meanness and all unworthiness of himself is honourable and excellent in our eyes; but pride, which is an overweening estimate of our own importance or virtue, is wholly unbeautiful; it marks a man's character as a scar marks his countenance; it makes the subject of it a man whom we look upon with aversion rather than delight—our soul finds no pleasure in regarding him. It is positively offensive to our spirit. 4. *It is repeatedly and severely condemned by God* as a serious sin (ch. viii. 13; Ps. xii. 3; xxxi. 23; ci. 5; cxxxviii. 6; Isa. ii. 12; Mark vii. 22; 1 Tim. iii. 6; 2 Tim. iii. 2; Jas. iv. 6, etc.). 5. It is spiritually perilous in a very high degree. No truth is more constantly illustrated than that of the text, "Pride goeth before destruction," etc. Pride begets a false confidence; this begets unwariness, and leads into the place of danger; and then comes the fall. Sometimes it is in *health;* at other times, in *business;* or it may be in *office* and in *power;* or, alas! it may be in *morals* and in *piety.* There is no field of human thought and action in which pride is not a most dangerous guide. It leads up to and (only too often) over the precipice.

II. THE EXCELLENCE OF HUMILITY. "Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly," etc. And it is better because, while pride is open to all these condemnations (as above), humility is to be commended and to be desired for the opposite virtues. 1. It is founded on a true view of our own hearts. The lowlier the view we take of ourselves, the truer the estimate we form. There *is* a lowliness of word and demeanour that is feigned and that is false. A man may be "proud of his humility," and may declaim his own sins with a haughty heart. But real humility is based on a thorough knowledge of our own nature, of its weakness and its openness to evil; on a full acquaintance with our own character, with its imperfection and liability to fail us in the trying hour. 2. It is admirable in itself. We do not, indeed, admire servility; we detest it heartily. But we do admire genuine humility. It is a very valuable adornment of a Christian character; it graces an upright life with a beauty no other quality can supply. There is no one whom it does not become, whom it does not make much more attractive than he (or she) would otherwise be. 3. It is the very gateway into the kingdom of God. It is the humble heart, conscious of error and of sin, that seeks the Teacher and the Saviour. It is the guide which conducts our spirit straight to the feet and to the cross of our Redeemer. 4. It is an attribute of Christian character which commends us to the love and to the favour of our Lord. 5. It is the only ground on which we are safe. Pride is a slippery place, where we are sure to slip and fall; humility is the ground where devotion finds its home, which a reverent trustfulness frequents, where God is ready with the shield of his guardianship, from which temptation shrinks away, where human souls live in peace and purity and attain to their maturity in Jesus Christ their Lord.—C.

Ver. 25 (see ch. xiv. 12).—*The supreme mistake.* We may well be startled, and we may well be solemnized, as we witness—

I. THE MARVELLOUS RANGE OF HUMAN COMPLACENCY. It is simply wonderful how men will allow themselves to be deceived respecting themselves. That which they ought to know best and most thoroughly, they seem to be least acquainted with—their own standing, their own spirit, their own character. They believe themselves to be all right when, in fact, they are all wrong. They suppose themselves to be travelling in one way when they are moving in the very opposite direction. This strange and sad fact in our experience applies to: 1. *Our direct relation to God.* We may be imagining ourselves reconciled to him, in favour with him, enjoying his Divine friendship, engaged on his side, promoting his kingdom, while, all the time, we are far from him, are condemned by him, are doing the work of his enemies, are injuring his cause and his kingdom. Witness the hypocrites of our Lord's time, and the formalists and ceremonialists of all times; witness also the persecutors of every age; witness those of every land and age who have failed to understand that it is he, and only he, who "doeth righteousness that is righteous" in the sight of God. 2. *Our relation to our fellow-men.* How often men have thought themselves just when they have been miserably unjust, kind when they have been heartlessly cruel, faithful when they have been guiltily disloyal! 3. *What we owe to ourselves.* Only too often men think that conduct pure which is impure, consistent with sobriety which is a distinct step toward insobriety, agreeable which is objectionable, safe which is seductive and full of peril.

II. THE DISASTROUS END OF A SERIOUS MISTAKE. The way seems right to a man, and he goes comfortably and even cheerily along it, but the end of it is—*death.* 1. In some cases this end is premature physical decline and dissolution. 2. In all cases it is spiritual decay and the threatened death of the soul, the departure and ultimate loss of all that makes human life honourable, all that makes a human spirit fair in the sight of God. 3. The death which is eternal.

III. OUR CLEAR WISDOM IN VIEW OF THIS POSSIBILITY. It is: 1. *To ask ourselves how we stand in God's sight.* Man may be accepting us on our own showing, but God does not do that. "The Lord weigheth the spirits" (ver. 2). He "looketh upon the heart;" he considers the aim that is before us and the spirit that is within us; what is the goal we are really seeking; what is the motive by which we are really animated; what is the deep desire and the honest and earnest endeavour of our heart. 2. *To be or to become right with him.* If we find ourselves wrong in his view, to humble our hearts before him; to seek his Divine forgiveness for all our wandering; to ask his guidance and inspiration to set forth upon a new course and to maintain it to the end. He alone can "show us the path of life."—C.

Ver. 28.—(See homily on ch. xvii. 9.)—C.

Ver. 31.—*The crown of old age.* Many are the crowns which, in imagination, we see upon the head. Many are eagerly desired and diligently sought; such are those of fame, of rank, of wealth, of power, of beauty. These are well enough in their way; but (1) that which is spent in winning them is often far more valuable than the good for which the sacrifice is made; and (2) the crown, when it is worn, usually weighs heavier and gives less satisfaction than was imagined in the ardour of pursuit. Old age is a crown. It is natural that men should desire it, for two reasons. 1. It means a *prolongation of life;* and life, under ordinary conditions, is greatly desired, so that men cling to it even tenaciously. 2. It means *the completion of the course of life.* Age is one of its natural stages. It has its privations, but it has also its own honours and enjoyments; those who have passed through life's other experiences may rightly wish to complete their course by wearing the hoary head of old age. But in connection with age, there is—

I. THE CROWN OF SHAME. For it is *not* always found in the way of righteousness. An old man who is still ignorant of those truths which he might have learned, but has neglected to gather; or who is addicted to dishonourable indulgences which he has had time to conquer, but has not subdued; or who yields to unbeautiful habits of the spirit which he should long ago have expelled from his nature and his life; or who has not yet returned unto that Divine Father who has been seeking and calling him

all his days;—such an old man, with his grey hairs, wears a crown of dishonour rather than of glory. But while we may feel that he is to be condemned, we feel far more inclined to pity than to blame. For what is age not found in the way of righteousness—age without excellency, age without virtue, age uncrowned with faith and hope? Surely one of the most pitiable spectacles the world presents to our eyes. It is pleasant, indeed, to be able to regard—

II. THE CROWN OF HONOUR. When old age *is* found in the way of righteousness, it is a crown of honour, in that: 1. It has upon it the *reflection of an honourable past.* It speaks of past *virtues* that have helped to make it the "green old age" it is; of past *successes* that have been gained in the battle of life; of past *services* that have been diligently and faithfully rendered; of past *sorrows* that have been meekly borne; of past *struggles* that have been bravely met and passed; for it was in the rendering and in the bearing and in the meeting of these that the hair has been growing grey from year to year. 2. It has *the special excellency of the present.* "A crown of beauty" (marginal reading). In the "hoary head" and in the benignant countenance of old age there is a beauty which is all its own; it is a beauty which may not be observable to every eye, but which is there nevertheless; it is the beauty of spiritual worth, of trustfulness and repose, of calmness and quietness; it is *a* beauty if not *the* beauty of holiness. He who does not recognize in the aged that have grown old in the service of God and in the practice of righteousness something more than the marks of time, fails to see a crown of beauty that is visible to a more discerning eye. 3. It has *the blessed anticipation of the future.* It looks homeward and heavenward. A selfish and a worldly old age is grovelling enough; it "hugs its gold to the very verge of the churchyard mould;" but the age that is found in the ways of righteousness has the light of a glorious hope in its eyes; it wears upon its brows the crown of a peaceful and blessed anticipation of a *rest* that remains for it, of a *reunion* with the beloved that have gone on before, of a *beatific vision* of the Saviour in his glory, of a *larger life* in a nobler sphere, only a few paces further on.—C.

Ver. 32 (with ch. xiv. 17, 29).—*The command of ourselves.* Our attention is called to the two sides of the subject.

I. THE EVIL OF IMPATIENCE. How bad a thing it is to lose command of ourselves and to speak or act with a ruffled and disquieted spirit appears when we consider that: 1. It is *wrong.* God gave us our understanding, our various spiritual faculties, on purpose that we might have ourselves under control; and when we permit ourselves to be irritated and vexed, to be provoked to anger, we do that which crosses his Divine purpose concerning us and his expectation of us; we do that which disappoints and grieves our Father. 2. It is *a defeat.* We have failed to do that which was set us to do. The hour when our will is crossed is the hour of trial; then it is seen whether we succeed or fail; and when we lose control of our spirit we are defeated. 3. It is an *exhibition of folly.* He that is hasty of spirit "exalteth folly" (ch. xiv. 29). He gives another painful illustration of folly; he shows that he is not the wise man we could wish that he were. He shows once more how soon and how easily a good man may be overcome, and may be led from the path of wisdom. 4. It *conducts to evil.* "He that is soon angry will deal foolishly" (ch. xiv. 17). A man who loses the balance of a good temper will certainly "deal foolishly." We are never at our best when we are angry. Our judgment is disturbed; our mental faculties are disordered; they lose their true proportion. We do not speak as wisely, we do not act as judiciously, as we otherwise should. In all probability, we speak and act with positive folly, in a way which brings regret on our own part and reproach from our neighbour. Very possibly we say and do that which cannot easily, if ever, be undone. We take the bloom off a fair friendship; we plant a root of bitterness which we are not able to pluck up; we start a train of consequences which will run we know not whither.

II. THE TRUE CONQUEST. To be master of ourselves is to be "of great understanding," to be "better than the mighty," or than "he that taketh a city." It is so, inasmuch as: 1. It is an *essentially spiritual* victory. To take a city is, in part, to triumph over physical obstacles, over walls and moats and bullets; but he that ruleth his spirit is doing battle with evil tempers and unholy inclinations and unworthy impulses. He is striving "not against flesh and blood," but against the mightier enemies that couch

and spring on the human soul; he is fighting with far nobler weapons than sword or bayonet or cannon—with thought, with spiritual energy, with deep resolve, with strenuous will, with conscience, with prayer. The victory is fought and won on the highest ground, the arena of a human spirit. 2. It is a *victory over ourself.* And this is worthier and better than one gained over another. (1) There is no humiliation in it; on the contrary, there is self-respect and a sense of true manfulness. (2) Our first duty is that we owe to ourselves. God has committed to each human spirit the solemn charge of his own character. We have other high and sacred functions to discharge, but the first and greatest of them all is to honour, to train, to rule, to cultivate, to ennoble, our own spirit. We are therefore carrying out the express will of God when we victoriously command ourselves. 3. It is *bloodless and beneficent.* The warrior may well forget the honours he has received when he is obliged to remember the cries of the wounded on the battle-field, and the tears of the widows and the orphans who are the victims of war. But he who rules his own spirit has no sad memories to recall, no heart-rending scenes to picture to his mind. His victories are unstained with blood; by the conquest of himself he has saved many a heart from being wounded by a hasty word, and he has preserved or restored that atmosphere in which alone happiness can live and prosperity abound.—C.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XVII.

Ver. 1.—(Comp. ch. xv. 16, 17; xvi. 8.) **Better** (sweeter) **is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith.** Dry bread was soaked in wine or water before it was eaten. Thus Boaz bid Ruth "dip her morsel in the vinegar" (Ruth ii. 14); thus Jesus gave the sop to Judas when he had dipped it (John xiii. 26). The Septuagint is pleonastic, "Better is a morsel with joy in peace." Aben Ezra connects this verse with the last two of ch. xvi., confining the application to the patient man; but the sentence seems rather to be independent and general. **Than an house full of sacrifices with strife.** Of the thank or peace offerings part only was burnt upon the altar, the rest was eaten by the offerer and his family; and as the victims were always the choicest animals, "a house full of sacrifices" would contain the materials for sumptuous feasting (see on ch. vii. 14). The joyous family festival often degenerated into excess, which naturally led to quarrels and strife (see 1 Sam. i. 5, 6, 13; ii. 13, etc.). So the agapæ of the early Church were desecrated by licence and selfishness (1 Cor. xi. 20, etc.). Septuagint, "than a house full of many good things and unrighteous victims with contention." With this verse compare the Spanish proverb, "Mas vale un pedazo de pan con amor, que gallinas con dolor."

Ver. 2.—**A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame.** Here is intimated the supremacy of wisdom over folly and vice. The contrast is better emphasized by translating, *A servant that dealeth wisely shall have rule over a son that doeth shamefully;* i.e. a son of his master. (For similar contrast between "wise" and "shameful," comp. ch. x. 5; xiv. 35.) Slaves were often raised to high honour, and might inherit their master's possessions. Thus Abraham's servant, Eliezer of Damascus, was at one time considered the patriarch's heir (Gen. xv. 2, 3); Ziba, Saul's servant, obtained the inheritance of his lord Mephibosheth ("the Shameful," 2 Sam. xvi. 4); Joseph was advanced to the highest post in Egypt. Ecclus. x. 25, "Unto the servant that is wise shall they that are free do service; and he that is wise will not grudge when he is reformed." Septuagint, "A wise household servant shall rule over foolish masters." "I have seen," says Ecclesiastes (x. 7), "servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth." **Shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren;** shall share on equal terms with the sons of the house. This innovation on the usual disposition of property could happen only in the case of an abnormally intelligent and trusted slave. In 1 Chron. ii. 34, etc., mention is made of a case where a master, having no son, gave his daughter in marriage to a slave, and adopted him into the family. Delitzsch understands the clause to mean that the slave shall have the office of dividing his master's inheritance among the heirs, shall be the executor of his deceased master's will; but this explanation hardly seems to do justice to the merits of the "wise servant," and takes no account of the idea involved in "shameful son." But the Septuagint appears to countenance this view, rendering, "and among the brethren he shall divide the portions."

Ver. 3.—**The fining-pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold.** The word *matsreph*, "fining-pot," occurs also in ch. xxvii. 21. It is not certain what is meant by it. There is no evidence that the Israelites were acquainted with the use of acids in the manipulation of impure or mixed metals; otherwise the "pot" and the "furnace" would represent the two usual modes of reduction; but it is most probable that both allude to the same method of smelting the ore in crucibles, for the purpose of separating the pure metal from the dross. That silver and gold were plentiful in Solomon's time is abundantly evident; indeed, the amount of the precious metals collected by David and his son is almost incredible (see 1 Chron. xxii. 14; xxix. 2, etc., from which and similar passages it is inferred that the sums enumerated equalled more than nine hundred millions of pounds sterling). **But the Lord trieth the hearts** (ch. xv. 11; xxiv. 12). That which fire does for the metals, the Lord does for men's hearts; he purifies them from dross, brings forth the good that is in them, purged from earthly infirmities. God's process is the application of sorrow, sickness, temptation, that, duly meeting these, the soul may emerge from the trial as pure gold, fit for the Master's use (comp. Jer. xii. 3; Mal. iii. 2; 1 Pet. i. 7; Rev. iii. 18).

Ver. 4.—**A wicked doer giveth heed to false** (evil) **lips.** A bad man delights in and hearkens to evil words; he takes pleasure in those who counsel wickedness, because they are after his own heart. Like mates with like. **And a liar giveth ear to a naughty** (*mischievous*) **tongue.** One who is himself mendacious listens with avidity to any tale that may injure a neighbour, however monstrous and improbable it may be. Septuagint, "A wicked man listens to the tongue of transgressors; but a just man heedeth not false lips." The Greek adds here, or in some manuscripts, after ver. 6, a paragraph which is not found in the Hebrew, Syriac, or Latin: "To him who is faithful the whole world-wealth belongs; but the unfaithful is not worth an obole." On this the Fathers have frequently commented (see Corn. à Lapide, *in loc.*).

Ver. 5.—**Whoso mocketh the poor** (see ch. xiv. 31, which is nearly identical). **He that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished** (ch. xi. 21; xxiv. 17, 18). The particular calamity primarily intended seems to be that which reduces a person to poverty. Delight in others' misfortunes, even those of enemies, is a most detestable form of selfishness and malice. Job, testifying to his own integrity, was thankful to think that he was free from this vice (Job xxxi. 29). The Greeks had a name for it, and called it ἐπιχαιρεκακία, which is used by Aristotle ('Eth. Nic.,' ii. 6. 18). The pious author looks for retributive punishment on such spitefulness. The LXX. tries to improve the contrast by inserting a gloss, "He who rejoices at one who perishes shall not go unpunished; but he who hath compassion shall obtain mercy," which is remarkably like Christ's sentence, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

Ver. 6.—**Children's children are the crown of old men** (comp. Ps. cxxvii.; cxxviii.). (For the term "crown," comp. ch. xvi. 31.) Thus St. Paul calls his converts his "joy and crown" (Phil. iv. 1; 1 Thess. ii. 19). In the East a large number of children is considered a great blessing, being a guarantee of the stability of the family. Thus writes Euripides ('Iph. Taur.,' 57)—

Στύλοι γὰρ οἴκων παῖδες εἰσιν ἄρσενες.

"Male children are the pillars of the house."

**The glory of children are their fathers.** A long line of good or celebrated ancestors is the glory of their descendants, and brings a blessing on them (see 1 Kings xi. 13; xv. 4). Hereditary nobility, based on descent from some eminent progenitor, may be a source of not unseemly pride, and a spur to a life worthy of such excellent ancestry.

Ver. 7.—**Excellent speech becometh not a fool.** שְׂפַת יֶתֶר; *verba composita*, Vulgate, *i.e.* studied, complicated, expressions; χείλη πιστά, "faithful lips," Septuagint. Others translate, "arrogant," "pretentions." It is literally, *a lip of excess* or *superabundance*, and is best taken in the above sense, as arrogant or assuming. A *nabal*, a "vicious fool," ought not to flaunt his unwisdom and his iniquities before the eyes of men, but to keep them hidden as much as possible. As such presumptuous behaviour is incongruous in the case of a fool, **much less do lying lips [become] a prince**; a noble person, such a one as is called in Isaiah (xxxii. 8) "liberal," where the same word, *nadîb*, is used. This is an illustration of the saying, "Noblesse oblige." Thus the Greek gnome—

Ἐλευθέρου γὰρ ἀνδρὸς ἀλήθειαν λέγειν.

"A free man's part it is the truth to speak."

To John the Good, King of France, is attributed the noble maxim which well became his chivalrous character, "Si la bonne foi était bannie du reste du monde, il faudrait qu'on la retrouvât dans le cœur des rois" (Bonnechose, 'Hist. de France,' i. 310). "My son," says the rabbi in the Talmud, "avoid lying first of all; for a lie will tarnish the brightness of thy honour." For "prince," the Septuagint has, "a just man," which makes the maxim a mere truism.

Ver. 8.—There is a breath of satire in this verse. **A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it.** "A precious stone" is literally "a stone of grace" (ch. i. 9). The gnome expresses the idea that a bribe is like a bright jewel that dazzles the sight and affects the mind of him who receives it (see on ch. xv. 27; comp. Deut. xvi. 19; 1 Sam. xii. 3). Ovid, 'Art. Amat.,' iii. 653—

"Munera, crede mihi, capiunt hominesque deosque;
Placatur donis Jupiter ipse datis."

It is possible that the gnome may have a more general application, and apply to gifts given to appease anger or to prove friendship (ch. xix. 6; xxi. 14). Septuagint, "A reward of graces is discipline to those who use it;" *i.e.* moral discipline brings an ample reward of graces to those who practise it. **Whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth.** The Authorized Version refers these words to the gift. Delitzsch points out that the words are more properly taken of the person who receives the gift, so that they should be rendered, "Wheresoever he turneth himself he dealeth wisely." Inflamed by sordid hopes and the love of gain, he acts with all possible skill and prudence in order to work out his wages and show that he was rightly selected to receive the present. The verse merely states a common trait among unscrupulous men, and pronounces no judgment upon it.

Ver. 9.—**He that covereth a transgression seeketh love**; *i.e.* strives to exercise, put in practice, love (comp. Zeph. ii. 3; 1 Cor. xiv. 4). Thus Nowack. One who bears patiently and silently, extenuates and conceals, something done or said against him, that man follows after charity, obeys the great law of love (comp. ch. x. 12). Some explain the clause to mean, "procures love for himself;" but the second member certainly is not personal, therefore it is more natural to take the first in a general sense. **He that repeateth** (harpeth on) **a matter separateth very friends** (ch. xvi. 28). He who is always dwelling on a grievance, returning to it and bringing it forward on every occasion, alienates the greatest friends, only embitters the injury and makes it chronic. Ecclus. xix. 7, etc., "Rehearse not unto another that which is told unto thee, and thou shalt fare never the worse. Whether it be to friend or foe, talk not of other men's lives; and if thou canst without offence, reveal them not. For he heard and observed thee, and when time cometh he will hate thee. If thou hast heard a word, let it die with thee; and be bold, it will not burst thee." So the rabbis said: "Abstain from quarrels with thy neighbour; and if thou hast seen something bad of thy friend, let it not pass thy tongue as a slander" (Dukes, § 61). The Mosaic Law had led the way to this duty of forbearance: "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Lev. xix. 18). Septuagint, "He who concealeth injuries seeketh friendship; but he who hateth to conceal them separateth friends and households."

Ver. 10.—**A reproof entereth more** (deeper) **into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool.** A deserved rebuke makes a deeper impression upon a man of understanding than the severest chastisement upon a fool. Hitzig quotes Sallust, 'Jug.,' xi., "Verbum in pectus Jugurthæ altius, quam quisquam ratus est, descendit." Quint. Curt., liv. 7, "Nobilis equus umbra quoque virgæ regitur, ignavus ne calcari quidem concitari potest." The antithesis is put more forcibly in the Septuagint, "A threat breaks the heart of a prudent man; a fool even scourged feels it not."

Ver. 11.—**An evil man seeketh only rebellion.** So the Greek and Latin Versions; but, as Nowack intimates, a bad man seeks many other things which do not come directly in the category of rebellion; and it is better to take *meri*, "rebellion," as the subject, regarding it as put for the concrete, thus: "A rebellious man striveth only for what is evil." From the point of view of an Eastern potentate, this is true enough. Absolute government looks upon any rising against constituted authority, any movement in the masses, as necessarily evil, and to be repressed with a high hand. Hence the succeeding clause, **Therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him.** The "cruel messenger" (ch. xvi. 14) is the executioner of the king's wrath (comp. 1 Kings ii. 29, etc.). He is called "cruel" because his errand is deadly, and he is pitiless in its performance. This seems to be the sense intended. The LXX. gives a different notion, derived from the ambiguous term *malak*, like the Greek ἄγγελος: "The Lord will send forth a pitiless angel against him." The verse then becomes a statement concerning the retribution inflicted by God on obstinate sinners, such as Pharaoh and the Egyptians. These are delivered over to "the tormentors" (Matt. xviii. 34), the angels that execute the wrath of God, as in Ps. lxxviii. 49 and Rev. viii. 6, etc. As all sin is rebellion against God, it is natural to read into the passage a religious meaning, and for homiletical purposes it is legitimate to do so. But the writer's intention is doubtless as explained above, though his language may be divinely directed to afford a further application.

Ver. 12.—**Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man.** The Syrian bear was once common throughout Palestine; it is now found in but few localities, such as the hills of Hermon and Lebanon, and in the wilds east of the Jordan, the destruction of wood and forest having deprived these animals of the shelter necessary to their existence. The ferocity of the bear when deprived of its young had become proverbial (see 2 Sam. xvii. 8; Hos. xiii. 8; Hart, 'Animals of the Bible,' 28, etc.). **Rather than a fool in his folly**; *i.e.* in the paroxysm of his passion. Compare Saul's ungoverned language to Jonathan (1 Sam. xx. 30), and Herod's murder of the children (Matt. ii. 16). So we read of the people being filled with ἄνοια against Jesus (Luke vi. 11). Oort supposes that this proverb arose from the riddle, "What is worse to meet than a bear?" Septuagint, "Care will fall upon a man of understanding; but fools imagine evils." The Greek translators take "bear" as used metaphorically for terror and anxiety, but go far astray from the Hebrew text.

Ver. 13.—**Whoso rewardeth evil for good.** This was David's complaint of the churlish Nabal (1 Sam. xxv. 21). Ingratitude shall surely be punished. **Evil shall not depart from his house.** Terribly has the ingratitude of the Jews been visited. They cried in their madness, "His blood be on us and on our children!" and their punishment is still going on. Injunctions on this subject are frequent in the New Testament (see Matt. v. 39; Rom. xii. 17; 1 Thess. v. 15; 1 Pet. iii. 9). The Talmud says, "Do not throw a stone into the well whose waters you have drunk." The Greeks felt the sting of ingratitude. Thus Leiodes complains to Ulysses ('Od.,' xxii. 319)—

'Ὡς οὐκ ἔστι χάρις μετόπισθ' ἐνεργέων.

Two sayings of Publius Syrus are quoted ('Sent.,' vv. 219, 274): "Ingratus unus omnibus miseris nocet;" "Malignos fieri maxime ingrati docent."

Ver. 14.—**The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water.** The small rift in the bank of a reservoir of water, if not immediately secured, is soon enlarged and gets beyond control, occasioning widespread ruin and destruction; so from small and insignificant causes, which might at first have been easily checked, arise feuds and quarrels which extend in a wide circle, and cannot be appeased. Palestine was largely dependent upon its reservoirs for the storage of water, perennial springs being of rare occurrence. The three pools of Solomon in the neighbourhood of Bethlehem, which were connected by channels with Jerusalem, are still to be seen in all their massive grandeur; and, indeed, every town had its reservoir, or tank, as we find in India at the present time. These receptacles had to be kept in good repair, or disastrous consequences might ensue. On the tendency of a quarrel to grow to a dangerous extent, a Bengal proverb speaks of "going in a needle and coming out a ploughshare." Vulgate, *Qui dimittit aquam, caput est jurgiorum*, which seems to mean that the man who needlessly lets the water of a cistern run to waste gives occasion to quarrels. But St. Gregory ('Moral.,' v. 13), commenting on the passage, interprets differently: "It is well said by Solomon, 'He that letteth out water is a head of strife.' For the water is let out when the flowing of the tongue is let loose. And he that letteth out water is made the beginning of strife, in that, by the incontinency of the lips, the commencement of discord is afforded" (Oxford transl.). Probably, however, in the Latin, as in the Hebrew, the particle of comparison is suppressed, so that the clause means, "As he who lets out water, so is he who gives occasion to strife." **Therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with.** The last word הִתְגַּלַּע is of doubtful interpretation. It occurs in ch. xviii. 1 and xx. 3, and is variously translated, "before it rushes forward," "before it grows warm," "before a man becomes wrathful." But Hitzig, Nowack, and others take it to signify, "before men show their teeth," like angry dogs snarling at one another. The moralist advises men to subdue angry passions at once before they become exacerbated. The Vulgate seems to have quite mistaken the clause, translating, *Antequam patiatur contumeliam, judicium deserit*, which seems to mean that a patient, peace-loving man (in contrast with the irascible) avoids lawsuits before he is involved in a lasting quarrel. Septuagint, "The beginning (ἀρχὴ) of justice gives power to words; but discord and contention lead the way to want." The Greek commentators see here an allusion to the clepsydra, the water-clock which regulated the length of the speeches in a court of law; but the reference is by no means clear.

Ver. 15.—**He that justifieth**—in a forensic sense, declares righteous, acquits—**the wicked**, etc. Two forms of the perversion of justice are censured, viz. the acquittal of a guilty person and the condemnation of an innocent one (comp. ch. xxiv. 24; Isa. v. 23).

Ver. 16.—**Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom?** A fool thinks that there is a royal road to wisdom, and that it, like other things, is to be purchased with money. Vulgate, *Quid prodest stulto habere divitias, cum sapientiam emere non possit?* The rabbis in later time were

not allowed to take fees for teaching; but it was customary to make offerings to seers and wise men, when their services were engaged or their advice was asked (see the case of Saul and Samuel, 1 Sam. ix. 7, 8). The last clause gives the reason why it is useless for a fool to try to learn wisdom even at a large expenditure on teachers. **Seeing** he hath **no heart** to it; *i.e.* no capability for receiving it; his mental digestion cannot assimilate it. The heart, as we have already noticed, is regarded as the seat of the understanding. Thus the LXX., "Why doth a fool have wealth? for a man without heart cannot acquire wisdom." In the Gospel Christ calls his disciples "fools and slow of heart to believe what the prophets had written, and himself opened their mind (*τὸν νοῦν*), that they might understand the Scriptures" (Luke xxiv. 25, 45). The Septuagint and Vulgate here introduce a distich derived from portions of vers. 19, 20, "He who raises his house high seeketh destruction; and he who perversely declineth from learning (*ὁ δὲ σκολιάζων τοῦ μαθεῖν*) shall fall into evils."

Ver. 17.—**A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.** Some find a climax in the two clauses, and translate the last as Revised Version margin, "And is born as a brother for adversity," the same person being meant in both members of the sentence. A real friend loves his friend in prosperity and adversity; yea, he is more than a friend in time of need—he is a brother, as affectionate and as trusty as one connected by the closest ties of relationship (comp. ch. xviii. 24). Siracides gives a very cruel version of this proverb, "A friend cannot be known in prosperity; and an enemy cannot be hidden in adversity. In the prosperity of a man enemies will be grieved; but in his adversity even a friend will depart" (Ecclus. xii. 8, etc.). Cicero had a truer notion of the stability of friendship when he quoted Ennius's dictum, "Amicus certus in re incerta cernitur" ('De Amicit.,' xvii.). Misfortune, says our maxim, is the touchstone of friendship; and one Greek gnome enjoins—

*Ἰδίας νόμιζε τῶν φίλων τὰς συμφοράς.*

"Thy friend's misfortunes deem to be thine own;"

while another runs—

*Κρίνει φίλους ὁ καιρὸς, ὡς χρυσὸν τὸ πῦρ.*

"The crisis tests a friend, as fire the gold."

Septuagint, "Have thou a friend for every crisis, and let brethren be useful in adversities; for for this they are made." Commenting on the expression, "is born," Wordsworth fancifully remarks, "Adversity brings him forth. He comes, as it were, out of the womb of calamity, and seems to be born for it."

Ver. 18.—**A man void of understanding** (Hebrew, *heart*) **striketh hands**; clinches the bargain which makes him responsible (see on suretyship, ch. vi. 1, etc.; and note, xx. 16). **Becometh surety in the presence of his friend**; to his friend for some third party. What is here censured is the weakness which, for the sake of perhaps worthless companions, lets itself be hampered and endangered by others' obligations. For, as our adage runs, he that is surety for another is never sure himself. The Septuagint takes the "striking of hands" to be a sign of joy (Vulgate, *plaudet manibus*), "The foolish man claps (*ἐπικροτεῖ*) and rejoices in himself, so also he who pledges himself for his friend."

Ver. 19.—**He loveth transgression that loveth strife,** because strife leads to many breaches of the commandments (comp. ch. xxix. 22; Jas. i. 20). Septuagint, "He who loveth sin rejoices in battles." **And he that exalteth his gate seeketh destruction.** He who builds a sumptuous house and lives in the way that his magnificent surroundings demand draws ruin on himself, either because he affects a state which he is unable to support, or acts so as to provoke reprisals and injurious consequences. The entrance to a Palestinian house would usually be of humble dimensions and sparse ornamentation; any doorway of great architectural pretensions would be uncommon, and would be regarded as a token of extraordinary wealth or reprehensible pride. Aben Ezra, taking "gate" as a metaphor for "mouth," explains the hemistich of the danger of random or excessive speech. This makes a good parallel with the first clause; but it is doubtful whether the words will bear this interpretation (see Hitzig); and the two clauses may present two forms of selfishness, captiousness and ostentation, both of which lead to quarrels and ruin (comp. ch. xvi. 18).

Ver. 20.—**He that hath a froward heart findeth no good.** (For "froward," see on ch. xi. 20; for "find good," on ch. xvi. 20.) The perverse, wilful man shall not prosper, shall win no blessing in his worldly matters, much less in spiritual things. Septuagint, "He who is hard of heart meeteth not with good things." **He that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief;** literally, *he who turns himself about with his tongue,* saying one thing at one time and something quite contrary at another. Vulgate, *qui vertit linguam;* Septuagint, *ἀνὴρ εὐμετάβολος γλώσσῃ,* "easily changed in tongue" (comp. ch. viii. 13; x. 31, where the word is different). "Mischief" (*ra*) "is trouble,"

"calamity," as in ch. xiii. 17. Speaking of the various aspects which words may assume, Cato ('Dist.,' iv. 20) says—

"Sermo hominum mores et celat et indicat idem."

"Man's words his character reveal,
But often they his mind conceal."

Ver. 21.—**He that begetteth a fool** doeth it **to his sorrow** (comp. ver. 25). The words for "fool" in the two clauses are different. Here it is *kesil*, which implies bold, self-confident folly, the worst form of the vice; in the second hemistich it is *nabal*, which rather denotes dulness and stupidity, a want of mental power. A conceited, offensive fool causes infinite trouble to his father, both from his need of constant correction, and the watchfulness required to repair the consequences of his foolish actions. There is also the grief at seeing instruction and warning thrown away on a worthless object. Septuagint, "The heart of a fool is a pain to him who possesseth it." **The father of a fool hath no joy.** The contrast in the case of a good son is seen in ch. xv. 20 and xxiii. 24. The LXX. adds a clause from ch. x. 1, with the view of improving the parallelism, "But a prudent son rejoiceth his mother."

Ver. 22.—**A merry heart doeth good** like **a medicine.** So Aben Ezra, understanding the particle of comparison, which is not in the Hebrew. The word translated "medicine" (*gehah*) occurs nowhere else, and probably means "healing," "relief." The clause is better rendered, *a cheerful heart maketh a good healing* (comp. ch. xv. 13; xvi. 24). Vulgate, *ætatem floridam facit;* Septuagint, *εὐεκτεῖν ποιεῖ*, "makes one to be in good case." A cheerful, contented disposition enables a man to resist the attacks of disease, the mind, as every one knows, having most powerful influence over the body. Ecclus. xxx. 22, "The gladness of the heart is the life of man, and the joyfulness of a man prolongeth his days." **A broken spirit drieth the bones;** destroys all life and vigour (comp. ch. iii. 8; Ps. xxii. 15; xxxii. 4). We all remember the distich—

"A merry heart goes all the day,
Your sad tires in a mile-a."

So the rabbis enjoin, "Give care no room in thine heart, for care hath killed many" (Dukes, p. 68). Religious gladness is a positive duty, and "low spirits," as Isaac Williams says, "are a sin." Asks the Greek moralist—

*Ἀρ' ἐστὶ συγγενές τι λύπη καὶ βίος;*

And Lucretius (iii. 473) affirms—

"Nam dolor ac morbus leti fabricator uterque est."

"Workers of death are sorrow and disease."

Ver. 23.—**A gift out of the bosom;** *i.e.* secretly from the fold of the garment, and not from the purse or bag wherein money was ostensibly carried. A corrupt judge "taketh," *i.e.* receives a bribe conveyed to him secretly (ch. xxi. 14). **To pervert the ways of judgment.** The judges had no appointed salaries; hence the unprincipled among them were open to bribery. The strict injunctions of the Law, and the stern denunciations of the prophets, were alike ineffectual in checking corruption (see Exod. xxiii. 8; Deut. xvi. 19; Isa. i. 23; Jer. xxii. 17; Ezek. xiii. 19; Hos. iv. 18, etc.). Septuagint, "The man that receiveth gifts in his bosom unjustly, his ways shall not prosper." For, as Job avows (xv. 34), "Fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery." The LXX. adds, "The impious turns aside from the ways of righteousness."

Ver. 24.—**Wisdom is before** [the face of] **him that hath understanding.** The idea is that the intelligent man directs his look towards Wisdom, and therefore she beams upon him with all her light; as the Vulgate puts it, "In the face of the prudent wisdom shines." He has one object to which he directs all his attention (ch. xv. 14). The Septuagint rendering is not so satisfactory: "The countenance of a prudent man is wise;" he shows in his look and bearing the wisdom that guides him. Thus Eccles. viii. 1, "A man's wisdom maketh his face to shine, and the hardness of his face is changed." **The eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth.** A fool has no one definite object in view; he pursues a hundred different things, as they happen to come in his way, but misses the most important quest of all, and fritters away the powers which might have aided him to obtain wisdom.

Ver. 25.—This verse is more or less a repetition of ver. 21; ch. x. 1; xv. 20; and comp. xix. 13. **A grief** (*kaas*). The Vulgate and Septuagint translate, "anger." A foolish son provokes the wrath of his father, and is **bitterness to her that bare him.** "Bitterness" (*memer*) occurs nowhere else; *mar* and *marar* are common enough.

Ver. 26.—**Also** (*gam*). This may be intended to connect this verse with what was said above (ver. 23) about the perversion of justice; or, as is more probable, it is used to emphasize what is coming. **To punish the just is not good.** *Damnum inferre justo*, Vulgate; *ζημιοῦν*, Septuagint; and the word has a special reference to punishment by fire. **Nor to strike princes for equity;** the expression, "is not good," being understood

from the former clause. "Princes" are the noble in character rather than in position only. Two forms of evil are named, viz. to punish the innocent, and to visit with contumely and injury the man of high character who cannot be induced to pervert justice. Revised Version, *nor to smite the noble for their uprightness.* So virtually the Vulgate, Septuagint, and Syriac. Another rendering is, "to strike the noble is against right," which seems feeble and less suitable to the parallelism.

Ver. 27.—**He that hath knowledge spareth his words**; Revised Version, *he that spareth his words hath knowledge;* he shows his common sense, not by rash talk or saying all he knows, but by restraining his tongue (comp. ch. x. 19; Jas. i. 19). 'Pirke Aboth' (i. 18), "All my days I have grown up amongst the wise, and have not found aught good for a man but silence; not learning but doing is the groundwork, and whoso multiplies words occasions sin." Say the Greek gnomes—

Ἐνίοις τὸ σιγᾶν ἐστι κρεῖττον τοῦ λέγειν.
Κρεῖττον σιωπᾶν ἢ λαλεῖν ἃ μὴ πρέπει.

And Theognis (v. 815) writes—

Βοῦς μοι ἐπὶ γλώσσης κρατερῷ ποδὶ λὰξ ἐπιβαίνων
Ἴσχει κωτίλλειν καίπερ ἐπιστάμενον.

"Speech for a shekel, silence for two; it is like a precious stone" ('Qoheleth Rabbah,' v. 5). Septuagint, "He who spareth to utter a harsh speech is prudent" (ἐπιγνώμων). **A man of understanding is of an excellent spirit**; Revised Version, *he that is of a cool spirit is a man of understanding;* i.e. he who considers before he speaks, and never answers in hot haste, proves that he is wise and intelligent. Septuagint, "The long-suffering man is prudent." The above is the reading of the Khetib, followed by most interpreters. The Keri gives, "of a precious spirit" (*pretiosi spiritus*, Vulgate), that is, one whose words are weighty and valuable, not lavishly thrown about, but reserved as costly jewels.

Ver. 28.—**Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise.** Not betraying his ignorance and incapacity by words, a foolish man is credited with possessing sense (comp. Job xiii. 5). Proverbs to this effect are found in all languages. Thus the Greek—

Πᾶς τις ἀπαίδευτος φρονιμώτατος ἐστι σιωπῶν.

Cato, 'Dist.,' i. 3—

"Virtutem primam esse puta compescere linguam;
Proximus ille Deo qui scit ratione tacere."

Talmud, "Silence becomes the wise, much more fools." The Dutch have appropriated this maxim, "Zweigen de dwazen zij waren wijs," "Were fools silent, they would pass for wise." "Si tacuisses, philosophus mansisses." "Silence," says the Sanskrit gnome, "is the ornament of the ignorant." "Talking comes by nature," say the Germans, "silence of understanding." The LXX. gives a different turn to the first clause: "A foolish man inquiring of wisdom will have wisdom imputed to him;" the expressed desire of knowledge will be taken as a proof of intelligence. The second clause is co-ordinate with the former. **He that shutteth his lips** is esteemed **a man of understanding**; Revised Version, *when he shutteth his lips, he is esteemed as prudent;* Septuagint, "A man making himself dumb will seem to be prudent." Theophrastus is said to have thus addressed a guest who was very silent at table: "If you are a fool, you act wisely; if you are wise, you act foolishly." "Let every man," says St. James (i. 19), "be swift to hear, slow to speak."

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 5.—*Mocking the poor.* The terrible inequality of human lots was never more apparent than it is in the present day. England is renowned for her wealth; yet England is a haunt of hungry misery. It is nothing but selfish hypocrisy to justify this condition of affairs by quoting the words of our Lord, "The poor always ye have with you" (John xii. 8). If they are always with us in abject need and distress, so much the worse for the condition of society. The statement of a distressing fact is no justification for it. Meanwhile, if the huge evil of pauperism cannot be abolished at once, it is our duty to lessen, not to aggravate it.

I. CONSIDER IN WHAT WAYS THE POOR ARE MOCKED. 1. *When their condition is disregarded.* There are thousands of people living in affluence who simply ignore the fact that they have needy brethren. Dives at his feast does not give a thought to Lazarus pining at his gate. Surely it is a mockery to the awful misery of the East End that the West End feasts and *fêtes* itself with undisturbed complacency. 2. *When their rights are neglected.* This happens in many ways, even in an age and a country that boasts of its administration of justice. (1) The so-called "sweating system" is

nothing better than robbery, by means of which the strong take advantage of the necessities of the weak. (2) It is hard for poor people to avail themselves of the law-courts; so that the cry is raised that "there is one law for the rich and another for the poor." (3) Poor men have the natural rights of their manhood treated with contempt. The courtesy which is offered to the well-to-do is denied to them. Rough treatment is meted out to them. Common politeness is refused to a man with a threadbare coat. 3. *When their deficiencies are ridiculed.* The poor man is generally illiterate, his "speech bewrayeth him." He has never learnt the manners of good society. So the classes above him put up their eye-glasses to inspect him, as though he were some strange, repulsive animal. 4. *When their merits are ignored.* There is honest poverty. There are brave men fighting against adverse circumstances with the courage of heroes. Are these people to be mocked at simply because they cannot put money in their purses? The kindness of the poor to the poor is a rebuke to the cynicism of the rich. Yet how difficult it is for poor men to be duly recognized! Dr. Johnson spoke from experience when he said—

> "This mournful truth is everywhere confess'd,
> Slow rises worth by poverty depressed."

The world mocks the poor when it judges people by the fashion of their clothes and the size of their houses, instead of looking to their character and lives.

II. CONSIDER THE GREAT SIN OF MOCKING THE POOR. He who does this "reproacheth his Maker." For the God who made the rich man also made the poor man. The reproach of the child is a reproach of his Father. We do more than wrong our brethren when we treat the unfortunate with contempt; we insult our God. He is the God of the poor, and he takes their wrongs as injuries to himself. This is no slight, shadowy offence. It is an awful sin in the sight of Heaven. The only reason that is suggested why Dives should be writhing in torments of fire is that he was a rich man who gave no heed to the misery of his neighbour. Here is an awful prospect for the careless comfortable classes of England! The evil is aggravated with us, because we profess that religion which preaches a gospel to the poor. In the Church of Christ rich and poor meet together. For the rich man to despise his fellow-Christian, then, is for him to deny his Master, "who had not where to lay his head." Let it be remembered that Christ, who was rich, "for our sakes became poor." He is the Friend and Brother of the poor.

Ver. 10.—*The wisdom of accepting a reproof.* I. IT IS DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT A REPROOF. Only the wise man will take it. Many difficulties stand in the way. 1. *It is hard to believe that the reproving counsellor is a true friend.* He appears to be censorious. We think he takes a pleasure in finding fault with us. We accuse him of a Pharisaic self-satisfaction in comparing his own virtue with our fault. 2. *It is difficult to admit the application of the accusation to ourselves.* David is indignant at Nathan's recital of the parable of the ewe lamb. Yet he fails to see that the moral of it comes home to himself till the prophet exclaims, "Thou art the man!" 3. *It is not easy to confess our own humiliation.* When we see that we are accused, pride rises up to defend us. It is possible for a large amount of pride to lodge with a great quantity of folly. Indeed, the more a person is emptied of real worth the more room is there in him for self-inflation. 4. *It is troublesome to yield to a reproof.* To do so we must not merely admit our fault, but consent to mend our ways. We must allow the reproof to work actively in us if it is to be of any use. The drunkard is often ready to confess his sin, but he is not so eager to renounce the cause of it. 5. *It is distressing to bear the reproof of God.* In reading the Bible people are tempted to appropriate the promises to themselves and to leave the threatenings for their brethren. It needs a divinely inspired wisdom to help us to profit by the warnings of Scripture.

II. IT IS WISE TO ACCEPT A REPROOF. Many as are the obstructions that stand in the way of our receiving and acting upon it, we should do well to conquer them. He is but a foolish person who despises correction. The wise man may shrink from it, but he will not reject it. 1. *A true reproof is justly due.* We have earned it by our own fault. It is foolish to kick against the consequences of our own conduct. 2. *A reproof is a wholesome corrective.* It is not a judge's sentence, but a friend's counsel.

Its object is not condemnation, but salvation. 3. *A reproof is a mild substitute for harder treatment.* While we foolishly rail at its harshness, we should be thankful for the lenity of the most stern well-deserved reproof. It might have been dispensed with, and we might have received condign punishment. The reproof is not so hard to bear as the "hundred stripes" that may follow if it is disregarded. It is wise to close with the earlier counsel. 4. *A reproof is an element of Divine grace.* Christ sends the Comforter to convict the world of sin as well as of righteousness and judgment (John xvi. 8). It is to our own cost that we receive this gracious Guest with resentful discourtesy. But, on the other hand, we plainly need Divine grace to accept a reproof in a meek and humble spirit. The wisdom to receive a reproof well is so difficult to attain that we need to seek it as an inspiration from God.

Ver. 14.—"*The beginning of strife.*" I. STRIFE MAY HAVE A SMALL BEGINNING. It is not necessary to intend great mischief if a quarrel is to be started. One word of an unfriendly character may be enough to mar the peace of brethren. A single act of unkindness may be the beginning of discord, provoking retaliation, and so originating a long-continued state of war. A quarrel may arise among very insignificant persons. It may be concerned with very unimportant questions. It may appear as a very slight affair—"a tempest in a tea-cup."

II. STRIFE GROWS WIDER. The small hole in the dyke through which a little water oozes is worn by the escaping stream so that it becomes larger, and the larger it is the more water pours through it; and this, in turn, will tear still greater pieces from the banks. A little rift within the lute is the commencement of the mischief that will silence all the music. A dispute between two frontier officers may lead to a war between two nations. Thus the strife between a few grows into a quarrel between many persons.

III. STRIFE GROWS MORE INTENSE. It not only involves more persons; it also becomes aggravated in its violence. Increasing in volume, it also grows in vehemence. The flood rushes with alarming velocity. The misunderstanding becomes a war. The coldness between friends turns into the bitterness of enmity. Anger degenerates into hatred.

IV. STRIFE BECOMES UNCONTROLLABLE. It might be arrested in its early stage. A boy pressing his knee against the small hole in the dyke could hold back the trickling stream. But if the mischief is not checked in an early stage, "all the king's horses" cannot arrest the mad career of the escaping river. An insignificant person may start a quarrel, which many wise and strong men will fail to allay. It is easier to be a war-maker than a peace-maker Events grow too strong for the most powerful energies of man.

V. STRIFE ISSUES IN INCALCULABLE RESULTS. The flood pours down through the valley and over the plain, uprooting trees, devastating fields, deluging homesteads, drowning men and cattle. The mischief is enormous, and the course and extent of it cannot be measured beforehand. No one can tell what harm may grow out of his meddlesome mischief-making. A foolish person may mean to do no real harm, only to show a little passing spite. But he has let out the waters; the flood-gates are open; the huge army of destruction is scouring the country. Amazed and aghast at the unexpected consequences of his folly, he would fain undo the reckless deed or stay its fatal consequences. But it is too late. Those consequences have passed beyond his reach. He can never tell how far the evil effects of what he has done may extend.

VI. STRIFE SHOULD BE CHECKED IN ITS EARLIEST STAGE. It is best to avoid the very beginning of it. But if, unhappily, it has been started, it should be stayed at once. To nurse a quarrel is worse than to cherish a viper in one's bosom. Fling it away and crush it, before it spawns a deadly brood of evil. The great human quarrel with heaven, begun in Eden, was like the letting out of waters. So is the soul's quarrel with God. It is best to make peace at once, through repentance and contrition.

Ver. 17.—*The true friend.* I. THE PORTRAIT OF THE TRUE FRIEND. We must study its lineaments that we may know the original. The word "friend" is used so loosely, often as a term of mere politeness, that some such inquiry is necessary if we would disentangle it from frivolous associations and affix it to its worthy object.

1. *The essential note of true friendship is invariability of affection.* The friend "loveth at all times." This does not mean that he is always displaying his affection. Effusiveness is no proof of sincerity. "Still waters run deep." Neither are we to suppose that the affection must be always shown in the same way. The manifestation of it must vary according to the moods and feelings of the friend, and also according to the circumstances and behaviour of the object of affection. There are times when friendship must be angry, when love must frown. Still the love must remain. (1) True friendship is independent of time. It does not wear out with years. The true friend of youth is the friend of manhood. (2) It is independent of circumstances. It survives the loss of social delights. It holds on through poverty (3) It is not shaken by slander. (4) It even outlives unworthy treatment. 2. *The great test of true friendship is adversity.* (1) Then the friendship is most valuable. If it will not serve then it is of little use. We want friends to whom we can go in the hour of need. (2) Then its quality is proved. The shallow, selfish man cuts his acquaintances in their trouble. Poverty severs the cords of pretended friendship. But real friendship is proved and comes out at its best under adverse circumstances. Then its brotherly character is revealed. The friend of prosperous days becomes the brother in days of trouble. 3. *The secret of true friendship is love.* Love is stronger than death, and love can survive the loss of all things. It endures through time and change, and in spite of violent strains upon its strength.

II. THE DISCOVERY OF THE TRUE FRIEND. The portrait is ideal. Do we ever see the ideal realized? In a measure, yes, and that repeatedly. The cynical pessimism that disbelieves in any generous, unselfish friendship is false to the nature of man, and false to the noble tale of good lives. Generosity is not dead. Friendship is possible. But every human friend is imperfect. Surely the portrait of the true friend must suggest to us One who alone perfectly answers to its noble features. We discover the true Friend in Christ. 1. He gives us the note of true friendship in *invariability of affection.* His love to the race endures through the ages. His love to each individual of his people is ever-abiding and constant. It outlasts many provocations, frequent unfaithfulness, great unworthiness on their part. Christ did not cease to love St. Peter when the apostle denied his Master. 2. *He is a Brother in affliction.* The Companion of our joys, he is especially our Helper in trouble; he came expressly to save from the terrible evil of sin. He is the sympathizing Friend for all sorrow. 3. *The secret of his friendship is love.* It is not our claim or attractiveness, but the love of Christ, that makes him our abiding, faithful Friend. If we would measure the durability of his friendship, we must gauge the greatness of his undying love.

Ver. 22.—*The healing effects of cheerfulness.* I. CHEERFULNESS IS COMMENDED IN SCRIPTURE. The Bible does not put a premium on sombreness. It never suggests that there is a merit in gloom. It urges the need of repentance, calls upon men to grieve for their sins, threatens the wrath of God against impenitence, and so brings up occasions for distress of soul; it also rebukes "the laughter of fools," the empty merriment of frivolity and the riot and revelry of dissipation (Eccles. vii. 6). But it does not commend sorrow on its own account. On the contrary, it brings joy and encourages gladness. Christ gave his joy to his people (John xv. 11). St. Paul emphatically reiterated his advice to his readers to rejoice (Phil. iv. 4). God loves his children and delights in their happiness. God is blessed, therefore happy; and he desires for his children a share in his blessedness, which must involve a participation in his gladness.

II. CHEERFULNESS EXERTS A HEALING INFLUENCE OVER THE INDIVIDUAL SOUL. Too much indulgence in sorrow induces a morbid condition. It is not healthy in itself, for man is not meant to be a perpetual incarnation of pain. The natural merriment of children is not only innocent; it is positively helpful to the sane growth of their minds. Cheerful Christians are strong Christians; for "the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. viii. 10). It is easier to bear disappointment when the spirit is free and buoyant. Temptation is less powerful against a contented soul than against one that is enfeebled by fretful dissatisfaction. We can do our work best when we do it gladly. In a cheerful mood we take the widest, wisest, healthiest views of truth. Sour feelings lead to false estimates of the world. Even after sin and repentance, when

the sinner is pardoned, a sober, humble cheerfulness is healthier than perpetual lamentation. Therefore the fatted calf is killed, etc.

III. CHEERFULNESS IS A SOURCE OF HEALTHY INFLUENCE FOR OTHERS. The gloomy saint cultivates his own sombre sanctity at the expense of his neighbours. He should be helping them and attracting them into the way of life. But he is repelling and hindering them. Children are best won by a cheerful presentation of religion. The indifferent are made to see that the cross of Christ does not mean perpetual distress and trouble to the Christian. The lost and fallen have hopes inspired within them when they are approached with hopes of better things. The gospel is goodness; it should be preached with a cheerful spirit; its "glad tidings of great joy" speak healing to the nations.

IV. CHEERFULNESS IS TO BE BEST ATTAINED IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. The merry soul may be only superficially glad, or even sinfully delighted, when it should be humbled in repentance. But after repentance and pardon God gives his own deep, sure joy. This joy rests on the love of God and fellowship with him. It is confirmed by service. When one can say, "I delight to do thy will, O my God" (Ps. xl. 8), he has reached the true fountain of a cheerful spirit. Such a joy can master adversity and rejoice in tribulation (2 Cor. vi. 10). It was when engaged in an apostolic mission that Paul and Silas were able to sing in prison (Acts xvi. 25).

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—9.—*Traits of outward and inward happiness. Happiness depends more on the inward state than on the outward condition.* Hence—

I. CONTENTMENT AS AN ELEMENT OF HAPPINESS. (Ver. 1.) The dry morsel, with rest and quiet in the spirit, is better, says the preacher, than the most luxurious meal; the allusion being to slaughtered sacrificial animals as the chief constituents of a rich repast (ch. ix. 2; Gen. xliii. 16). It suggests the picture of "holy love, found in a cottage" (Matthew Henry). The secret of happiness lies rather in limiting our desires than in increasing our substance.

II. PRUDENCE AND THRIFT. (Ver. 2.) The prudent servant may rise, and probably not seldom did rise in ancient times, to superiority over the idle and dissipated son of the house. In this light Abraham looked upon Eliezer—that he might probably step into the place of a son in his house. How much more depends, in reference to power and influence in this world, upon sense and prudence than upon birth and every external advantage!

III. THE TRUE HEART. (Ver. 3.) The heart which has been tried in the scales of Jehovah, assayed by the tests of an infallible truth. We need to remind ourselves how little we know of the depths of human character. Our inquiries and our teachings are inadequate and deceptive. The search of the human heart is a royal privilege of God. Without the true, the divinely approved heart, there is no real root of good or bliss.

IV. A SINCERE TEMPER. (Ver. 4.) This is suggested, as often, by the hideous contrast of the wicked, inwardly corrupt heart, which willingly takes note of and inclines to lying words, to the tempter and his wishes. It takes pleasure in the "naughty words" it dares not, perhaps, utter itself; is glad to borrow words from another to fit its own evil thoughts. In contrast to this, the spirit of the candid and sincerely good man is that expressed by Bishop Hall, "If I cannot stop other men's mouths from speaking ill, I will either open my mouth to reprove it, or else I will stop my ears from hearing it, and let him see in my face that he hath no room in my heart."

V. COMPASSION, PITY, AND SYMPATHY. (Ver. 5.) Contempt of the poor is contempt of the majesty of God. The greater part of poverty is not wilful; it is in the course of the providence of God. "To pour contempt on the current coin with the king's image on it is treason against the sovereign." There is something worse than even this, viz. to rejoice in the calamities of others. It is a peculiarly inhuman view, and is certain to be punished in the remorse of the conscience, in the closing up of the way to God's heart in the time of one's own need.

VI. FAMILY JOYS. (Ver. 6.) To leave out these would be to leave out that which

gives to life its chief fragrance and charm. As children are the pride and ornament of the parents, so the sons, on the other hand, so long as they themselves are not fathers, can only fall back upon the father. The family tree, the higher it rises and the more widely it extends, increases the honour of the race.

VII. NOBLENESS OF SPEECH. (Ver. 7.) The first element of this is, as so often insisted upon, truthfulness in the inward parts. The second is appropriateness, regard to what is becoming. Thus a high assuming tone ill befits the fool; much less falsity, affectation, hypocrisy, a noble mind. To recollect what is *becoming* in us is a great safeguard to morality and guide to conduct. In the common affairs of life we should not seek to rise above our station, nor should we fall below it. In religion there is also a just mean—the recollection of what it is to be a Christian; and the effort not to rise above the humility of that position, as not to fall below its grandeur and nobility. "If truth be banished from all the rest of the world," said Louis IX. of France, "it ought to be found in the breast of princes." Let us substitute the word "Christians."

VIII. THE VALUE OF GIFTS. (Ver. 8.) There seems to be no reason for taking this only in the bad sense with reference to bribery. Lawful gifts and presents have their charm as well as unlawful. The power of gold to corrupt; the saying of Philip of Macedon, that there was no fortress so strong but that it might be stormed if an ass laden with gold were driven to the gate;—all this is well known. But equally true is it that honest gifts of kindness, having no impure purpose in view, are like jewels. They sparkle with the lustre of human love when turned in any light, and win friends and good will for the giver wherever he goes. It is the generous freedom to give, not necessarily of silver and gold, but of "such things as we have," which is here commended and noted as one of the secrets of happiness. The deepest joy is, in all true gifts, to be expressing the one great gift of the heart to God.

IX. CONCEALING AND FORGIVING LOVE. (Ver. 9.) Let us remind ourselves that in the Law the word for forgiving or atoning is "cover." And frequently we read of God covering the sins of the penitent. This relation is for the imitation of Christians, "followers of God as dear children." "Love covers a multitude of sins." Like the healing hand of Nature, which we see everywhere busy concealing unsightliness, veiling the old ruin with the beautiful ivy and other creeping plants. On the contrary, the tale-bearer has an eye for every crack and seam in the structure of society; tears open and causes to bleed the wounds that might have been healed. Be true, be gentle, be generous, be God-like and Christ-like,—such are the main lessons of this section.—J.

Vers. 10—15.—*Dark phases of human character.* We may take ver. 10 as an introduction to what follows. Exhortations are to be given, and the preacher would prepare us to receive them. On the sensitive mind the censure of the good makes a deeper impression than a hundred blows on the back of the fool. Sincerity, love of truth and tender sympathy, become the exhorter, and humble docility the object of his warnings or rebukes. "Let the righteous smite me, and it shall be a kindness" (Ps. cxli. 5).

I. THE CONTENTIOUS SPIRIT. (Ver. 11.) 1. *His temper.* He seeks rebellion. In private life he may be the man who revolts from the established usages of society, delights in singularity for its own sake, in defying opinion, showing disrespect to names of authority. In public life he may become the heartless demagogue and pest of the commonwealth. 2. *His doom.* A cruel angel shall be sent against him by God; that is, generally, his offence will be visited upon him severely. The curse upon the contentious spirit is the counterpart of the great evangelical blessing on the peacemakers, who shall be called "the children of God." 3. *His dangerous qualities.* (Ver. 12.) Rage is the principle of his action, the motive of his life. To irritate him, to thwart him, is like bringing on one's self the fierce attack of the bear robbed of her whelps. Rage united with intelligence is the most fearful combination of deadly force known in the world. From so dread a picture we turn with the prayer, "From hatred and malice, good Lord, deliver us!" "Oh, may we live the peaceful life!"

II. THE UNGRATEFUL MAN. (Ver. 13.) 1. *His conduct.* He requites good with evil. As there is no virtue so natural, so spontaneous, so pleasurable, as gratitude, so there is no mere *negative* vice so odious as ingratitude. But the positive reversal of gratitude in returning evil for good—for this there is no one word in our (nor probably

in any) language. It is a wickedness indeed *unutterable*. 2. *His doom* is punishment from God. And the severity of the punishment teaches by contrast how dear is gratitude to God. As evil shall ever haunt the house of the dark rebel against light and love, so shall joy and peace attend the steps of the peaceful child of God.

III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF MISCHIEF INCALCULABLE. (Ver. 14.) A homely figure impresses the truth in a way not to be forgotten. Similarly, James compares the progress of mischief to the sparks which may be easily fanned into a great conflagration (iii. 5). How great the service that may be rendered by those who, in the interests of peace, at once trample out the sparks or seal up the avenues of the flood. These rules are good for the avoidance of strife. Consider: 1. Whether the dispute is not about words rather than things. 2. Whether we really understand the subject. 3. Whether it is worth disputing about.

IV. MORAL INDIFFERENCE. (Ver. 15.) To speak the bad man fair, to justify or excuse his evil, and to censure or criticize or condemn the good, from prudence or other motive,—this shows a blindness to moral distinctions, a wilful insensibility which is incompatible with religion, and incurs the deep disapproval and judgment of Jehovah. We have examples in Ezra iv. 1—16; Acts xxiv. 1—9. Religion teaches us to distinguish between things that differ; if we have not learnt that lesson, we have learned nothing. If, having learned it, we disregard it, our profession of religion becomes converted into an hypocrisy and an abomination.—J.

Vers. 16—20.—*Light in the head, love in the heart.* I. MONEY USELESS WITHOUT SENSE. (Ver. 16.) The true view of money is that of means to ends. But if the ends are not seen, or, being seen, are not earnestly desired, of what avail the means? If our heart be set upon the right objects of life, opportunities will always present themselves. If blind to life's meaning, no advantages will seem to be advantages.

II. THE BEAUTY OF FRIENDSHIP. (Ver. 17.) 1. *In general.* It is constant; it is unvarying; it is adapted to all the various states and vicissitudes of life. 2. *In particular.* It takes new life out of sorrow. In distress, the friend is developed into the "brother," and is taken close to the heart. True friendship gladdens at the opportunity of self-devotion for the beloved one's good. It is the distress of our sin which makes us acquainted with him "that sticketh closer than a brother." But thank God for all those who are new-born to us in the freshly revealed grace and goodness of their hearts amidst the scenes of suffering.

III. THE STRICT DUTY OF CAUTION IN REFERENCE TO RESPONSIBILITY. (Ver. 18.) The consequences of becoming bail for a defaulter were in ancient life very terrible. Nowadays there are prudent men who will never set their hand to an acceptance. Although all moral duties are not equally amiable in their aspect, it must be remembered that the ability to do good to others rests upon strict prudence with reference to one's self. We may be maimed or destroyed by imprudence.

IV. RESISTANCE TO THE BEGINNINGS OF EVIL. (Ver. 19.) Contention or temper and passion in general leads on to graver sin. Open the way to one sin, and others will immediately troop forward in its rear. Again, contentiousness and pride are in close connection; the latter is generally the spring of the former. And both are ruinous in their tendency. High towers invite the lightning; but he that does not soar too loftily will suffer the less by a fall. A modest way of life, within our means, is the only truly Christian life.

V. THE TRUE HEART AND THE GUILELESS TONGUE. (Ver. 20.) There is no health, no salvation for self or others, in the false heart and the tongue that flickers and wavers between opposing impulses. Old Homer has the sentiment that he who speaks one thing and thinks another in his heart is hateful as the gates of hell. 1. There is no true light in the head without love in the heart. 2. There is no dualism in our moral character. 3. There is a correspondence between our outward lot and our inward choice.—J.

Vers. 21—28.—*Varied experiences of good and evil in life.* We may divide them into the sorrowful, the joyous, and the mixed experiences.

I. SAD EXPERIENCES. *The sorrow of thankless children.* (Vers. 21, 25.) To name it is enough for those who have known it. It has its analogue in Divine places. How

pathetically does the Bible speak of the grief of God over the rebellious children he has nourished and brought up! and of Christ's lamentation as of a mother over Jerusalem! Let us remember that our innocent earthly sorrows are reflected in the bosom of our God.

II. JOYOUS EXPERIENCES. (Ver. 22.) The blessing of a cheerful heart, who can overprize it in relation to personal health, to social charm and helpfulness? Contrasted with the troubled spirit, like a parching fever in the bones, it is the perpetual sap of life and source of all its greenness and its fruit. A simple faith is the best known source of cheerfulness. It was a fine remark of a good friend of Dr. Johnson's, that "he had tried to be a philosopher, but somehow always found cheerfulness creeping in."

III. MIXED EXPERIENCES OF HUMAN CHARACTER. 1. *The briber.* (Ver. 23.) How strongly marked is this sin in the denunciations of the Bible! and yet how little the practice seems affected in a land which boasts above others of its love for the Bible! The *stealth* and so the *shame*, the evil *motive*, the perverse result, all are branded here. "He that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, he shall dwell on high" (Isa. xxxiii. 15). 2. *The quick perception of wisdom and the warning glance of folly.* The one sees before him what is to be known or done at once; the other is lost in cloudy musings. The more a man gapes after vanity, the more foolish the heart becomes. In religion we see this temper in the restless roving to and fro, the constant query, "Who will show us any good?" "He is full of business at church; a stranger at home; a sceptic abroad; an observer in the street; everywhere a *fool*." 3. *Harshness in judges.* (Ver. 26.) Fining and flogging are mentioned. The writer had observed some such scene with the horror of a just man. Inequity or inhumanity in the judge seems an insult against the eternal throne of Jehovah. 4. *The wisdom of a calm temper and economy of words.* (Vers. 27, 28.) An anxiety to talk is the mark of a shallow mind. The knowledge of the season of silence and reserve may be compared to the wisdom of the general who knows when to keep his forces back and when to launch them at the foe. The composed spirit comes from the knowledge that truth will prevail in one way or another, and the time for our utterance will arrive. Lastly, the wisdom of *silence*, so often preached by great men. Even the fool may gain some credit for wisdom which he does not possess by holding his tongue; and this is an index of the reality. Our great example here is the silence of Jesus, continued for thirty years; out of that silence a voice at length proceeded that will ever vibrate through the world.—J.

Ver. 3.—*Divine proving and purifying.* Heat, like water, is a very bad master but a very excellent servant. It *proves* whether our acquisition has or has not any value, whether it should be carefully preserved or be "trodden underfoot;" and it *refines* that which has any worth at all, separating the dross and securing for us the pure metal which we want for use or ornament. What we do with our materials God does with ourselves; but the fires through which he sends us are of a very different kind from those we kindle.

I. THE FIRES THROUGH WHICH GOD PASSES US. These are the disciplinary experiences through which, in his holy providence and in his fatherly love, he causes us to pass. And of them we may say that their name is legion, for "they are many." They vary as do the histories of human life. It may be (1) a change for the worse, sudden or gradual, permanent or transient, in our temporal conditions, affluence sinking into competence, or competence into pecuniary embarrassment, or into hard toil and scant enjoyment; or (2) bereavement and consequent loneliness of spirit, the loss of some near companion whose fellowship was sweet beyond expression, or whose guidance was incalculably helpful; or (3) disappointment, the going out of some bright hope in the light of which our path had been trodden and the extinction of which throws the future into thick darkness; or (4) the loss of health and strength, when we are taken away from activities which were congenial or apparently necessary to us, and are shut in to an enforced idleness, from which we long to be delivered; or (5) the endurance of pain; or (6) our failure to accomplish some good work on which we had set our heart and put our hand.

II. HIS TRIAL OF OUR SPIRIT. God thus *proves* us. These troubles are trials; they show to our Creator and to ourselves what manner of men we are, what is "the spirit we are of." They prove to him and to us whether we care more about our circumstances

than we do about ourselves and our character; they prove whether we have a deep spirit of submission and of trustfulness, or whether our subjection to the will of God is very shallow and departs as soon as it is tested; they prove whether in the hour of need we look above us for strength and succour, or whether we have recourse only to those persons and things which are around us, or whether we descend to props and stays that are positively beneath us. They prove the quality of our Christian character; they sometimes demonstrate its actual unreality.

III. GOD'S REFINING GOODNESS AND WISDOM. God tries our hearts, not merely that he or we may see what is in them, but that they may be purified (see Isa. xlviii. 10). Many purifying, practical lessons we learn in affliction which we are very slow to receive, and which, but for its discipline, we might never gain at all. They are these, among others. 1. The unsatisfying character of all that is earthly and human. 2. The transitoriness of the present, and the wisdom of laying up treasures in heaven. 3. The secondariness of all claims to those that are Divine, and our consequent obligation to give the first place to the will and the cause of our Redeemer. 4. Our deep need of Christ as the Lord whom we are to be faithfully serving and the Friend in whose fellowship we are to spend our days. With these great spiritual truths burnt into our souls by the refining fires, we shall have our worldliness and our selfishness expelled, and be vessels of pure gold, meet for the Master's use.—C.

Vers. 6, 21, 25.—*Fatherhood and sonship.* Certainly, some of our very greatest mercies are those that come to us in our domestic relationships.

I. THE JOY AND CROWN OF FATHERHOOD AND OF GRANDFATHERHOOD. Our Lord speaks of the mother forgetting her anguish "for joy that a man is born into the world" (John xvi. 21). The joy of parentage is *keen*, and it is common; it may, indeed, be said to be *universal*. And it is *pure* and good; it elevates and enlarges the soul, taking thought and care away from self to another, and by so doing it distinctly benefits and blesses the nature. And, like all pure joys, it is *lasting*; it does not evaporate with time; on the other hand, it grows and *deepens* as the child of its affection develops and matures. Moreover, in the kind providence of God, it is *renewable* in another generation; for the grandfather has almost as much delight in his grandson as the father in his child (text; Gen. l. 23; Ps. cxxviii. 6). Fatherhood (motherhood) is: 1. A *natural desire* of the human heart. 2. Often the reward which God gives to patient industry and virtue in earlier days; for the setting up of a home is, in many if not in most cases, the attainment of a hope for which the young have striven and waited. 3. Sometimes a source of grievous disappointment and saddest sorrow (vers. 21, 25). There is no one in the world who can pierce our souls with such bitter anguish as can our own child when he or she goes astray from wisdom and righteousness. 4. Always an entail of the most serious responsibility; for what we are in spirit and in character it is most likely that our children will become. 5. Therefore a noble opportunity; for it is in our power, by wisdom and virtue, by kindness and piety, to lead our sons into the gates of privilege and up to the gates of the kingdom of Christ. 6. And therefore usually a source of profoundest gratitude and gladness, and the means by which we can hand down our principles and our influence, through our own direct endeavours, to the second and the third generation.

II. THE GLORY OF CHILDHOOD. "The glory of children are their fathers." 1. It is the greatest of all earthly heritages to have parents that can be esteemed and loved. Happy is the son who, as his judgment matures, can honour his father with an undiminishing or even a growing regard and deepening joy. 2. It is a very real delight to be able to look back, through all the later years of life, and recall the memories of the beloved and revered parents who have "passed into the skies." 3. It is the duty of childhood to make the very best response it can make for the love, care, pains, patience, prayerful solicitude, its parents have expended upon it. 4. It will remain a lasting source of thankfulness and joy that every possible filial attention was paid that could be paid; lighting and smoothing the path of the parents to the very door of heaven.—C.

Ver. 9 (with ch. xvi. 28).—*Friendship; the silence that saves and the speech that separates it.* We may learn—

I. THE GOODLINESS OF FRIENDSHIP. "Very friends," or "chief friends," points to intimate friendship. This is one of the very fairest and worthiest things under the sun. The man to whom God gives a lifelong faithful friendship is rich in a treasure which wealth cannot buy and the excellency of which it does not equal. It should be: 1. Founded on *common attachment* to the same great principles, and on mutual esteem. 2. Independent of the changes that occur in circumstances and conditions. 3. Strengthened by adversity. 4. Elevated by piety. 5. Lasting as life. Then it is something which, for intrinsic beauty and substantial worth, cannot be surpassed.

II. THE SILENCE THAT MAY SAVE IT. There *is a speech* that saves it. Often the interposition of a few words of *explanation*, removing an offence which would have grown into seriousness, will save a rupture. Sometimes a kindly word of *counsel* or *remonstrance* to the imprudent or to the mistaken may have the same happy effect. But, at other times, *silence* will save it. We are often tempted, even strongly tempted, to say that which would come between two human hearts. To say what we know would only be to speak the truth; it would gratify the curiosity of those present; it would be a pleasant exercise of power or the use of an advantage we happen to possess. The words rise to our very lips. But no; it is not always our duty to say all that we know; it is often our duty to be silent. There are times when to "cover transgression" is an act of wisdom, of kindness, of generosity, of Christ-likeness (see John viii. 1—11). Let the fact remain untold; let the hearts that have been united remain bound together; seek and secure the permanence of "love."

III. THE SPEECH THAT WILL SEPARATE IT. A whisperer, one that repeats a matter, does separate friends. 1. There is always some occasion for silence in every man's life. No man is so correct in thought and speech that he could afford to have every utterance repeated to any one and every one. We all want the kindly curtain of silence to be drawn over some sentences that pass our lips. 2. There are always some thoughtless speakers—men and women who will carry injurious reports from house to house, from heart to heart; there are some who are *cruelly careless* what things they promulgate; there are some who consciously and guiltily enlarge and misrepresent, who form the dangerous and deadly habit of exaggeration, of false colouring, and who end in systematic falsehood. Those who idly and foolishly report what is true are, indeed, less guilty than they who enlarge and pervert. But they are far from guiltless. We are bound to speak with sufficient caution to save ourselves from the charge of circulating evil and spreading sorrow. We are responsible to God not only for the carefully prepared speech, but also for the casual interjection; that is the meaning of our Lord in his familiar words (Matt. xii. 36). It behoves us to remember that our brother's reputation, usefulness, happiness, is in our charge, and *one slight whisper* may destroy it all. One breath of unkindness may start a long train of sad consequences which we have no power at all to stop. A very few unconsidered and unhappily uttered words may sever hearts that have been beating long in loving unison, may disunite lives that have been linked long in the bonds of happy love.—C.

Ver. 14.—*The growth of strife.* Experience shows us that—

I. STRIFE IS A GROWTH. It is as when one letteth out water; first it is the trickling of a few drops, then a tiny rill, then a stream, etc. So with strife; first it is a disturbing thought; then it becomes a warm or a hot feeling; then it utters itself in a strong, provoking word which leads to an energetic resentment and response; then it swells into a decided, antagonistic action; then it grows into a course of opposition, and becomes a feud, a contention, a war.

II. THE GROWTH OF STRIFE IS A CALAMITY. 1. It is the source of untold and incalculable misery to many hearts. 2. It betrays several souls into feelings and into actions which are distinctly wrong and sinful. 3. It presents a moral spectacle which is grievous in the sight of Christ, the Lord of love. 4. It rends in twain that which should be united in one strong and happy circle—the home, the family connection, the Church, the society, the nation. 5. It arrests the progress which would otherwise be made in wisdom and in worth; for it causes numbers of men to expend on bitter controversy and contention the energy and ingenuity they would otherwise expend on rendering service and doing good.

III. OUR DUTY, OUR WISDOM, IS TO ARREST IT AT ITS BEGINNING. You cannot extin-

guish the conflagration, but you can stamp out the spark; you cannot stop the flow of the river, but you can dam the rill with the palm of your hand. You cannot heal a great schism, but you can appease a personal dispute; or, what is better, you can recall the offensive word you have yourself spoken; or, what is better still, you can repress the rising thought, you can call in to your aid other thoughts which calm and soothe the soul; you can remember him who "bore such contradiction of sinners against himself," who "as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth," and you can maintain a magnanimous silence. When this is no longer possible, because the first inciting word has been uttered and resented, then let there be an earnest and determined effort to quell all heat in your own heart, and to pacify the one whose anger has been aroused. "Blessed are the peacemakers," etc. (see also Matt. v. 25; Rom. xii. 18).—C.

Vers. 16, 24.—*Use and neglect.* "There is everything in use," we say. And certainly a man's position at any time depends far less upon his bestowments and advantages than upon the use he has made of them. The wise man, in these verses, laments the fact that the price of wisdom should so often be in the hand of a man who fails to turn it to account (ver. 16), and that the foolish man wastes his capacities by directing them to things at a distance instead of giving his attention to that which is within his reach. The facts of human life abundantly justify the lament.

I. THE PRESENCE OF OPPORTUNITY. The price of wisdom, and also of worth and of usefulness, is "in our hand." It is not afar off, that we should ask—Who will ascend to the height or travel across the sea to find and fetch it? Opportunity is amongst and even "within us." We find it in: 1. *Our natural capacities;* here represented by the eyes of a man (ver. 24). We have the power of vision, not only bodily, but mental and spiritual. God has given us the faculty of perception, of observation, of intuition; we can see what is before us—our interest, our duty, our possibilities. 2. *Our various advantages;* the education we receive, the friends and kindred who surround us, the literature which is at our command, the resources we inherit, the openings and facilities that are offered us as we move on into life. These are "the price" wherewith we may "buy wisdom" and happiness, usefulness and power. "The gift of God" is a valuable opportunity (see John iv. 10).

II. OUR FOOLISH AND GUILTY NEGLECT OF IT. Those who have the very fairest chance of attaining to wisdom and usefulness sometimes wantonly throw it away. The foolish boy, at the best school in the land, will refuse to learn, and comes out a dunce. The foolish apprentice, with the best sources of technical or professional knowledge at his command, wastes his hours in frivolity, and when his time is up is utterly unfit for the occupation of his life. Information of what is happening all over the world may now be had for a penny a day, and, what is far more precious, the knowledge of the will of God as revealed in the life and by the lips of Jesus Christ may be had for twopence; but, with "the price of wisdom" at these figures, there are those who know nothing of the hopes or struggles of mankind, and nothing of the way to eternal life. Duty, secular and sacred, is immediately before the eyes of the foolish, but their gaze is fixed upon anything and everything else; they are dreaming, by day and by night, of impossible or of hopelessly improbable fortune, and while they might be patiently and successfully building up a good estate, the chances of life are slipping through their hands. Such neglect of God-given opportunity is: 1. A most serious sin. It is the act of hiding our talent in the earth which calls forth the strong condemnation, "Thou wicked and slothful servant" (Matt. xxv. 24—26). 2. The greatest possible folly. It is a practical renunciation of the fair heritage of life which our heavenly Father offers us; it is the act of flinging the price of wisdom "into the waste."

III. OUR WISE USE OF IT. The wise man is he who makes the most and the best he can make of that which is within his reach, that which is "before his face." He does not spend time in looking and longing for that which is "at the ends of the earth;" he sets himself to cultivate the patch of ground, however small and poor, that is just outside his door. He puts out his talents, however mean they may be. He works his capital, however small it may be. He reads well his books, however limited his library may be. He tries to serve others, however narrow his sphere may be. So doing, he is in the way of constant growth and of a large reward (Matt. xxv. 20—24).—C.

Ver. 17.—*The friend in need.* However we read this passge (see Exposition), we have before us the subject of true and lasting friendship. As is stated in a previous homily (see on ver. 9), this is founded on a common attachment to the same great principles, moral and religious; and also on a mutual esteem, each heart holding the other in a real regard. When such intelligent esteem ripens into strong affection, we have a result that deserves to bear the beautiful and honourable name of friendship. The true friend is one that "loves at *all* times," and he is a "brother born for adversity." A false or a weak friendship will not bear the strain which the changeful and hard experiences of life will put upon it; it will break and perish. But a true friendship, well founded and well nourished upon Christian truth, will bear all strains, even those of—

I. DISTANCE.

II. CHANGE OF VIEW AND OF OCCUPATION. Friendship usually begins in youth or in the earlier years of manhood; then will come, with maturity of mind and enlargement of knowledge and change of occupation, difference of view on things personal, political, literary, social. But true friendship will endure that strain.

III. REDUCTION. The loss of health; of property or income, and the consequent reduction in style and in resources; mental vigour with the lapse of time or from the burden of oppressive care and overwork. But faithfulness will triumph over this.

IV. PROSPERITY. One may ascend in circumstances, in social position; may be attended and even courted by the wealthy and the powerful; may have his time much occupied by pressing duties; and the friendship begun years ago, in a much lower position, may be threatened; but it should not be sacrificed.

V. DISHONOUR. It does occasionally happen to men that they fall into undeserved reproach. They are misunderstood or they are falsely accused; and the good name is tainted with some serious charge. Neighbours, casual acquaintances, those associated by the slighter social bonds, fall away; they "pass by on the other side." Then is the time for the true friend to make his faithfulness felt; then he is to show himself the man who "loves at all times," the "brother born for adversity." Then he will not only remember where his friend is living, but he will identify himself with him in every open way, will stand by him and walk with him, and honour him, not reluctantly and feebly, but eagerly and energetically.

VI. DECLENSION. It *may* happen that one to whom we have given our heart in tender and loyal affection, between whom and ourselves there has existed a long and intimate friendship, will yield to temptation in one or other of its seductive and powerful forms. It may be that he will gradually decline; it may be that he will fall with some sad suddenness into serious wrong-doing. Then will come to him compunction, humiliation, desertion, loneliness. All his ordinary companions will fall from him. It will be the extreme of adversity, the lowest deep of misery. Then let true friendship show its hand, offer its strong arm, open its door of refuge and of hope; then let the friend prove himself a "brother born for adversity." 1. Be worthy to love the best, that you may form a true friendship. 2. Ennoble your life and yourself by unwavering fidelity in the testing hour, when your friend is most in need of your loyalty. 3. Secure the abiding love of that Friend who is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."—C.

Vers. 21, 25.—(See homily on ch. x. 1.)—C.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XVIII.

Ver. 1.—This is a difficult verse, and has obtained various interpretations. The Authorized Version gives, **Through desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom**; *i.e.* a man who has an earnest desire for self-improvement will hold himself aloof from worldly entanglements, and, occupying himself wholly in this pursuit, will become conversant with all wisdom. This gives good sense, and offers a contrast to the fool in ver. 2, who "hath no delight in understanding." But the Hebrew does not rightly bear this interpretation. Its conciseness occasions ambiguity. Literally, *For his desire a man who separates himself seeks; in* (or *against*)

*all wisdom he mingles himself.* There is a doubt whether the life of isolation is praised or censured in this verse. Aben Ezra and others of Pharisaic tendencies adopt the former alternative, and explain pretty much as the Authorized Version, thus: "He who out of love of wisdom divorces himself from home, country, or secular pursuits, such a man will mix with the wise and prudent, and be conversant with such." But the maxim seems rather to blame this separation, though here, again, there is a variety of interpretation. Delitzsch, Ewald, and others translate, "He that dwelleth apart seeketh pleasure, against all sound wisdom he showeth his teeth" (comp. ch. xvii. 14). Nowack, after Bertheau, renders, "He who separates himself goes after his own desire; with all that is useful he falls into a rage." Thus the maxim is directed against the conceited, self-willed man, who sets himself against public opinion, delights in differing from received customs, takes no counsel from others, thinks nothing of public interests, but in his mean isolation attends only to his own private ends and fancies (comp. Heb. x. 25). The Septuagint and Vulgate (followed by Hitzig) read in the first clause, for *taavah*, "desire," *taanah*, "occasion;" thus: "He who wishes to separate from a friend seeks occasions; but at all time he will be worthy of censure." The word translated "wisdom" (*tushiyah*) also means "substance," "existence;" hence the rendering, "at all time," *omni existentia*, equivalent to *omni tempore*.

Ver. 2.—**A fool hath no delight in understanding.** This may mean that he takes no pleasure in the wisdom of others, is self-opinionated; or, it may be, does not care for understanding in itself, apart from the use which he can make of it. Vulgate, "The fool receives not the words of wisdom;" Septuagint, "A man of no sense has no need of wisdom." To try to teach a fool is to cast pearls before swine, and to give that which is holy unto dogs. **But that his heart may discover itself;** *i.e.* his only delight is in revealing his heart, displaying his unwisdom and his foolish thoughts, as in ch. xii. 23; xiii. 16; xv. 2. He thinks that thus he is showing himself superior to others, and benefiting the world at large. The LXX. gives the reason, "For rather by folly he is led."

Ver. 3.—**When the wicked cometh, then cometh also contempt.** The contempt here spoken of is not that with which the sinner is regarded, but that which he himself learns to feel for all that is pure and good and lovely (Ps. xxxi. 18). As the LXX. interprets, "When the wicked cometh into the depth of evil, he despiseth," he turns a despiser. So the Vulgate. Going forward in evil, adding sin to sin, he ends by casting all shame aside, deriding the Law Divine and human, and saying in his heart, "There is no God." St. Gregory, "As he who is plunged into a well is confined to the bottom of it; so would the mind fall in, and remain, as it were, at the bottom, if, after having once fallen, it were to confine itself within any measure of sin. But when it cannot be contented with the sin into which it has fallen, while it is daily plunging into worse offences, it finds, as it were, no bottom to the well into which it has fallen, on which to rest. For there would be a bottom to the well, if there were any bounds to his sin. Whence it is well said, 'When a sinner hath come into the lowest depth of sins, he contemneth.' For he puts by returning, because he has no hope that he can be forgiven. But when he sins still more through despair, he withdraws, as it were, the bottom from the well, so as to find therein no resting-place" ('Moral.,' xxvi. 69, Oxford transl.). Even the heathen could see this terrible consequence. Thus Juvenal is quoted ('Sat.,' xiii. 240, etc.)—

"Nam quis
Peccandi finem posuit sibi? quando recepit
Ejectum semel attrita de fronte ruborem?
Quisnam hominum est, quem tu contentum videris uno
Flagitio?"

**And with ignominy** cometh **reproach.** Here again it is not the reproach suffered by the sinner that is meant (as in ch. xi. 2), but the abuse which he heaps on others who strive to impede him in his evil courses. All that he says or does brings disgrace, and he is always ready to revile any who are better than himself. Both the Septuagint and the Vulgate make the wicked man the victim instead of the actor, thus: "but upon him there cometh disgrace and reproach." The Hebrew does not well admit this interpretation.

Ver. 4.—**The words of a man's mouth are as deep waters.** "Man" (*ish*) here means the ideal man in all his wisdom and integrity, just as in ch. xviii. 22 the ideal wife is intended under the general term "wife." Such a man's words are as deep waters which cannot be fathomed or exhausted. The metaphor is common (see ch. xx. 5; Eccles. vii. 24; Ecclus. xxi. 13). For "mouth," the Septuagint reads "heart:" "Deep water is a word in a man's heart." The second hemistich explains the first: **The well-spring of wisdom as a flowing** (*gushing*) **brook.** A man's words are now called a wellspring of wisdom, gushing forth from its source, the wise and understanding heart, pure, fresh, and inexhaustible. Septuagint, "And it leapeth

forth (ἀναπηδύει) a river and a fountain of life." Or we may, with Delitzsch, take the whole as one idea, and consider that a man's words are deep waters, a bubbling brook, and a fountain of wisdom.

Ver. 5.—**It is not good to accept the person of the wicked.** To "accept the person" is to show partiality, to be guided in judgment, not by the facts of a case, or the abstract principles of right or wrong, but by extraneous considerations, as a man's appearance, manners, fortune, family. (For the expression, comp. Lev. xix. 15; Deut. i. 17; and in our book, ch. xxiv. 23; xxviii. 21.) The Septuagint phrase is θαυμάσαι πρόσωπον, which St. Jude adopts (ver. 16). Other writers in the New Testament use λαμβάνειν πρόσωτον in the same sense; *e.g.* Luke xx. 21; Gal. ii. 6). **To overthrow** (turn aside) **the righteous in judgment** is not good (comp. Isa. x. 2). The construction is the same as in ch. xvii. 26. The LXX. adds in the second clause, οὐδὲ ὅσιον, which makes the sentence clear; not seeing this, the Vulgate renders, *ut declines a veritate judicii.* The offence censured is the perversion of justice in giving sentence against a righteous man whose cause the judge has reason to know is just.

Ver. 6.—**A fool's lips enter into contention**; literally, *come with quarrel* (comp. Ps. lxvi. 13); *i.e.* they lead him into strife and quarrels; *miscent se rixis*, Vulgate; "lead him into evils," Septuagint. The foolish man meddles with disputes in which he is not concerned, and by his silly interference not only exposes himself to reprisals, but also exacerbates the original difficulty. **His mouth calleth for strokes.** His words provoke severe punishment, "stripes for his back," as it is said in ch. xix. 29. Septuagint, "His mouth which is audacious calls for death."

Ver. 7.—The results of the fool's disposition and actions are further noted. **A fool's mouth is his destruction** (comp. ch. x. 14; xiii. 3; Eccles. x. 12). A mediæval adage pronounces, "Ex lingua stulta veniunt incommoda multa." **His lips are the snare of his soul**; bring his life into danger (see on ch. xii. 13; comp. ch. xiii. 14; xiv. 27; xvii. 28). So St. Luke (xxi. 35) speaks of the last day coming upon men like "a snare (παγίς)," the word used by the Septuagint in this passage.

Ver. 8.—**The words of a tale-bearer are as wounds.** *Nèrgan*, "tale-bearer," is better rendered "whisperer" (see on ch. xvi. 28). The Authorized Version reminds one of the mediæval jingle—

> "Lingua susurronis
> Est pejor felle draconis."

The verse recurs in ch. xxvi. 22; but the word rendered "wounds" (*mitlahamim*) is to be differently explained. It is probably the hithp. participle of *laham*, "to swallow," and seems to mean "dainty morsels," such as one eagerly swallows. Thus Gesenius, Schultens, Delitzsch, Nowack, and others. So the clause means, "A whisperer's words are received with avidity; calumny, slander, and evil stories find eager listeners." The same metaphor is found in ch. xix. 28; Job xxxiv. 7. There may, at the same time, be involved the idea that these dainty morsels are of poisonous character. Vulgate, *Verba bilinguis, quasi simplicia*, "The words of a man of double tongue seem to be simple," which contains another truth. **They go down into the innermost parts of the belly** (ch. xx. 27, 30). The hearers take in the slanders and treasure them up in memory, to be used as occasion shall offer. The LXX. omits this verse, and in its place introduces a paragraph founded partly on the next verse and partly on ch. xix. 15. The Vulgate also inserts the interpolation, "Fear overthrows the sluggish; and the souls of the effeminate (ἀνδρογύνων) shall hunger."

Ver. 9.—**He also that is slothful** (*slack*) **in his work.** A man that does his work in some sort, but not heartily and diligently, as one who knows that labour is not only a duty and necessity, but a means of sanctification, a training for a higher life. **Is brother to him that is a great waster**; a destroyer. "Brother" is used as "companion" in ch. xxviii. 24 (comp. Job xxx. 29), for one of like attributes and tendencies; as we say, "next door to;" and the destroyer is, as Nowack says, not merely one who wastes his property by reckless expenditure, but one who delights in such destruction, finds a morbid pleasure in havoc and ruin. So the maxim asserts that remissness in duty is as mischievous as actual destructiveness. "An idle brain," say the Italians, "is the devil's workshop." The word rendered "great" is *baal* (ch. i. 19), "owner," *patrono* (Montanus), *domino* (Vatablus); and, taking this sense, according to Wordsworth and others, the sentence implies that the servant who is slothful is brother to a master who is a prodigal. But the interpretation given above is best founded. The LXX., reading מתרפא instead of מתרפה, renders, "He who healeth not (ὁ μὴ ἰώμενος) himself in his works is brother to him who destroyeth himself." Maxims concerning laziness are found in other places; *e.g.* ch. x. 4; xii. 11, 24; xxiii. 21.

Ver. 10.—**The Name of the Lord is a strong tower.** The Name of the Lord signifies all that God is in himself—his attributes, his love, mercy, power, knowledge; which allow man to regard him as a sure Refuge. "Thou hast been a Shelter

for me," says the psalmist (Ps. lxi. 3), "and a strong Tower from the enemy." The words bring before us a picture of a capitol, or central fortress, in which, at times of danger, the surrounding population could take refuge. Into this Name we Christians are baptized; and trusting in it, and doing the duties to which our profession calls, with faith and prayer, we are safe in the storms of life and the attacks of spiritual enemies. **The righteous runneth into it (the tower), and is safe**; literally, *is set on high; exaltabitur*, Vulgate; he reaches a position where he is set above the trouble or the danger that besets him. Thus St. Peter, speaking of Christ, exclaims (Acts iv. 12), "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other Name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." "Prayer," says Tertullian ('De Orat.,' 29), "is the wall of faith, our arms and weapons against man who is always watching us. Therefore let us never go unarmed, night or day. Under the arms of prayer let us guard the standard of our Leader; let us wait for the angel's trumpet, praying." Septuagint, "From the greatness of his might is the Name of the Lord; and running unto it the righteous are exalted."

Ver. 11.—In contrast with the Divine tower of safety in the preceding verse is here brought forward the earthly refuge of the worldly man. **The rich man's wealth is his strong city.** The clause is repeated from ch. x. 15, but with quite a different conclusion. **And as an high wall in his own conceit.** The rich man imagines his wealth to be, as it were, an unassailable defence, to preserve him safe amid all the storms of life. בְּמַשְׂכִּיתוֹ (*bemaskitho*), rendered "in his own conceit," is, as Venetian has, *ἐν φαντασίᾳ αὐτοῦ*, "in his imagination," *maskith* being "an image or picture," as in Lev. xxvi. 1; Ezek. viii. 12; but see on ch. xxv. 11. Aben Ezra brings out the opposition between the secure and stable trust of the righteous in the Lord's protection, and the confidence of the rich worldling in his possessions, which is only imaginary and delusive. Vulgate, *Et quasi murus validus circumdans eum*, "Like a strong wall surrounding him;" Septuagint, "And its glory (δόξα) greatly overshadows him;" *i.e.* the pomp and splendour of his wealth are his protection, or merely paint him like a picture, having no real substance. The commentators explain the word *ἐπισκιάζει* in both senses.

Ver. 12.—(Comp. ch. xvi. 18; xv. 33; where the maxims are found in almost the same words.)

Ver. 13.—**He that answereth a matter,** etc. Thus Ecclus. xi. 8, "Answer not before thou hast heard the cause; neither interrupt men in the midst of their talk." A reminiscence of the passage occurs in the Talmud ('Aboth,' 5. 10), "I weighed all things in the balance, and found nothing lighter than meal; lighter than meal is the betrothed man who dwells in the house of his intended father-in-law; lighter than he is a guest who introduces a friend; and lighter than he is the man who answers before he has heard the other's speech" (Dukes, p. 72, § 21). So Menander—

*Ὁ προκαταγιγνώσκων δὲ, πρὶν ἀκοῦσαι σαφῶς*
*Αὐτὸς πονηρός ἐστι, πιστεύσας κακῶς.*

Seneca, 'Medea,' 199—

"Qui statuit aliquid, parte inaudita altera,
Æquum licet statuerit, haud æquus erit."

Ver. 14.—**The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity.** That high property or faculty of man called "spirit" enables the body to bear up against trouble and sickness (comp. ch. xvii. 22). The influence of the mind over the body, in a general sense, is here expressed. But taking "spirit" in the highest sense, in the trichotomy of human nature, we see an intimation that the grace of God, the supernatural infusion of his presence, is that which strengthens the man and makes him able to endure with patience. **But a wounded (*broken*) spirit who can bear?** The body can, as it were, fall back upon the support of the spirit, when it is distressed and weakened; but when the spirit itself is broken, grieved, wearied, debilitated, it has no resource, no higher faculty to which it can appeal, and it must succumb beneath the pressure. Here is a lesson, too, concerning the treatment of others. We should be more careful not to wound a brother's spirit than we are to refrain from doing a bodily injury; the latter may be healed by medical applications; the former is more severe in its effects, and is often irremediable. In the first clause, רוּחַ, "spirit," is masculine, in the second it is feminine, intimating by the change of gender that in the former case it is a manly property, a virile moral quality, in the latter it has become weakened and depressed through affliction. Septuagint, "A prudent servant soothes a man's wrath; but a man of faint heart (ὀλιγόψυχον) who will endure?" The LXX. take "spirit" in the sense of anger, and "infirmity" as standing for a servant, though where they find "prudent" is difficult to say. Vulgate, *Spiritum vero ad irascendum facilem, quis poterit sustinere?* The Latin interpreter takes one form of weakness of spirit, viz. irascibility, as his interpretation of נִכְאֹת, "wounded." St. Gregory ('Moral.,' v. 78) has yet another version, "Who can dwell with a man whose spirit is ready to wrath?" adding, "For he that does not regulate his feelings by the

reason that is proper to man, must needs live alone like a beast."

Ver. 15.—The first clause is similar to ch. xv. 14; the second gives a kind of explanation of the former—the understanding of the wise man is always expanding and increasing its stores, because his ear is open to instruction, and his ability grows by wholesome exercise (comp. ch. i. 5). *Daath*, "knowledge," which is used in both clauses, the LXX. translates by two words, *αἴσθησιν* and *ἔννοιαν*.

Ver. 16.—**A man's gift maketh room for him** (comp. ch. xix. 6). *Mattam*, "gift," has been taken in different senses. Some consider it to mean a bribe offered for underhand or fraudulent purposes; but the context does not lead to this conclusion, and the parallel passage mentioned above makes against it. Hitzig sees in it a spiritual gift, equivalent to *χάρισμα*; but such a meaning is not elsewhere attached to the word. The term here signifies the present which duty or friendship offers to one whom one wishes to please. This paves a man's way to a great person's presence. **Bringeth him before great men.** The Oriental custom of offering suitable gifts to one in authority, when a favour or an audience is desired, is here alluded to (comp. 1 Sam. x. 27; 1 Kings iv. 21; x. 25). So the Magi brought gifts to the new-born King at Bethlehem (Matt. ii. 11). In a spiritual sense, the right use of riches opens the way to eternal life, evincing a man's practical love of God and man; as Christ says (Luke xvi. 9), "Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when it shall fail, they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles" (Revised Version).

Ver. 17.—**He that is first in his own cause seemeth just**; Revised Version, *he that pleadeth his cause first seemeth just*. A man who tells his own story, and is the first to open his case before the judge or a third party, seems for the moment to have justice on his side. **But his neighbour cometh and searcheth him out** (ch. xxviii. 11). The "neighbour" is the opposing party—*ὁ ἀντίδικος*, Septuagint, which recalls Matt. v. 25—he sifts and scrutinizes the statements already given, shows them to be erroneous, or weakens the evidence which appeared to support them. Thus the maxims, "One story is good till the other is told," and "Audi alteram partem," receive confirmation. Vulgate, *Justus prior est accusator sui*. So Septuagint, "The righteous is his own accuser in opening the suit (*ἐν πρωτολογίᾳ*)." He cuts the ground from under the adversary's feet by at once owning his fault. St. Gregory more than once, in his 'Moralia,' adduces this rendering. Thus on Job vii. 11, "To put the mouth to labour is to employ it in the confession of sin done, but the righteous man doth not refrain his mouth, in that, forestalling the wrath of the searching Judge, he falls wroth upon himself in words of self-confession. Hence it is written, 'The just man is first the accuser of himself'" (so lib. xxii. 33).

Ver. 18.—**The lot causeth contentions to cease** (comp. ch. xvi. 33). If this verse is taken in connection with the preceding, it refers to the decision in doubtful cases, where the evidence is conflicting and ordinary investigation fails to elicit the truth satisfactorily. The lot, being considered to show the judgment of God, settled the question. **And parteth between the mighty.** If it were not for the decision by lot, persons of eminence and power would settle their differences by violent means. This peaceful solution obviates all such contentions. The Septuagint, in place of "lot" (*κλῆρος*), reads now *σιγηρός*, "silent;" but it is evidently originally a clerical error, perpetuated by copyists. The error is noted by a second hand in the margin of the Sinaitic Manuscript.

Ver. 19.—**A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city.** Something must be supplied on which the comparative notion *min*, "than," depends. So we may understand "resists more," or something similar. A brother or a once close friend, when injured or deceived, becomes a potent and irreconcilable enemy. The idea of the preceding verses is carried on, and the primary thought is still concerning lawsuits and matters brought before a judge. This is shown in the second clause by the use of the word "contentions" (*midyanim*). **And their contentions are like the bars of a castle.** They close the door against reconciliation, shut the heart against all feeling of tenderness. True it is, Χαλεποὶ πόλεμοι ἀδελφῶν (Eurip., 'Fragm.'). And again, 'Iph. Aul.,' 376—

> Δεινὸν, κασιγνήτοισι γίγνεσθαι λόγους
> Μάχας θ', ὅταν ποτ' ἐμπέσωσιν εἰς ἔριν.

Aristotle also writes thus ('De Republ.,' vii. 7): "If men receive no return from those to whom they have shown kindness, they deem themselves, not only defrauded of due gratitude, but actually injured. Whence it is said, 'Bitter are the quarrels of friends;' and, 'Those who love beyond measure also hate beyond measure.'" An English maxim gloomily decides, "Friendship once injured is for ever lost." Pliny ('Hist. Nat.,' xxxvii. 4), "Ut adamas, si frangi contingat malleis, in minutissimas dissidit crustas, adeo ut vix oculis cerni queant; ita arctissima necessitudo, si quando contingat dirimi, in summam vertitur simultatem, et ex arctissimis fœderibus, si semel rumpantur, maxima nascuntur dissidia." Ecclus. vi. 9, "There

is a friend, who being turned to enmity will also discover thy disgraceful strife," *i.e.* will disclose the quarrel which according to his representation will redound to thy discredit. The Vulgate and Septuagint have followed a different reading from that of the present Hebrew text: "Brother aided by brother is like a strong and high city, and he is powerful as a well-founded palace," Septuagint. The last clause is rendered in the Vulgate, *Et judicia quasi vectes urbium;* where *judicia* means "lawsuits," legal disputes; these bar out friendship. The first member of the sentence in the Greek and Latin recalls Eccles. iv. 9, etc., "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour," etc. St. Chrysostom, commenting on Eph. iv. 3 ('Hom.,' ix.), writes, "A glorious bond is this; with this bond let us bind ourselves together alike to one another and to God. This is a bond that bruises not, nor cramps the hands it binds, but it leaves them free, and gives them ample play and greater energy than those which are at liberty. The strong, if he be bound to the weak, will support him, and not suffer him to perish; and if again he be tied to the indolent, he will rather rouse and animate. 'Brother helped by brother,' it is said, 'is as a strong city.' This chain no distance of place can interrupt, neither heaven, nor earth, nor death, nor anything else, but it is more powerful and stronger than all things."

Ver. 20.—With the first clause, comp. ch. xii. 14, and with the second, ch. xiii. 2. **A man's belly**; *i.e.* himself, his mind and body, equivalent to **shall he be filled**, or *satisfied*, in the second clause. A man must accept the consequences of his words, good or evil. The next verse explains this.

Ver. 21.—**Death and life are in the power of the tongue**; literally, *in the hand of the tongue.* The tongue, according as it is used, deals forth life or death; for speech is the picture of the mind (comp. ch. xii. 18; xxvi. 28). The vast importance of our words may be learned from Jas. iii.; and our blessed Lord says expressly (Matt. xii. 36, etc.), "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Hence the gnome—

Γλῶσσα τύχη, γλῶσσα δαίμων,

intimating that the tongue is the real controller of man's destiny; and another—

Λόγῳ διοικεῖται βροτῶν βίος μόνῳ.

"By words alone is life of mortals swayed."

**And they that love it (the tongue) shall eat the fruit thereof.** They who use it much must abide the consequences of their words, whether by kind and pure and edifying conversation they contribute health and life to themselves and others, or whether by foul, calumnious, corrupting language they involve themselves and others in mortal sin. For "they that love it," the Septuagint has, οἱ κρατοῦντες αὐτῆς, "they who get the mastery over it."

Ver. 22.—**Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing.** A good wife is meant (as the Septuagint has it, γυναῖκα ἀγαθήν; *mulierem bonam*, Vulgate), a virtuous, prudent helpmate, as in ch. xii. 4; xix. 14; and xxxi. The epithet is omitted, because the moralist is thinking of the ideal wife, the one whose union is blessed, who alone deserves the holy name of wife. Thus in ver. 4 we had the ideal man spoken of. Septuagint, εὗρε χάριτας, "findeth graces," viz. peace, union, plenty, order (see a different view, Eccles. vii. 26—28). **And obtaineth favour of the Lord** (ch. viii. 35; xii. 2); or, *hath obtained* (ch. iii. 13), as shown by the consort whom God has given him. *Ratson*, "good will," "favour," is rendered by the Septuagint ἱλαρότητα, and by the Vulgate, *jucunditatem*, "cheerfulness," "joyousness" (see on ch. xix. 12). Ecclus. xxvi. 1, etc., "Blessed is the man that hath a good wife, for the number of his days shall be double. A virtuous (ἀνδρεία) woman rejoiceth her husband, and he shall fulfil the years of his life in peace. A good wife is a good portion which shall be given in the portion of them that fear the Lord." "A good wife," says the Talmud, "is a good gift; she shall be given to a man that feareth God." And again, "God did not make woman from man's head, that she should not rule over him; nor from his feet, that she should not be his slave; but from his side, that she should be near his heart" (Dukes, p. 69). A Greek gnome runs—

Γυνὴ δικαία τοῦ βίου σωτηρία.

The Septuagint and Vulgate here introduce a paragraph which is not in the Hebrew, and only partly in the Syriac. It seems to be a further explanation of the statement in the text, founded on the practice prevalent at the time when the Septuagint Version was composed, which appears to have made divorce a recognized necessity in the case of adultery: "He who casteth away a good wife casteth away good things; but he who retaineth an adulteress is a fool and impious." The advice of Siracides concerning a wicked wife is austere: "If she go not as thou wouldest have her, cut her off from thy flesh" (Ecclus. xxv. 26). Nothing is here said about the marriage of divorced persons; but the absolute indissolubility of the marriage bond was never held among the Jews, a certain laxity being allowed because of the hardness of their heart (Matt.

v. 32; xix. 8, etc.). The original integrity of the marriage contract was re-established by Christ.

Ver. 23.—This and the following verse, and the first two verses of the next chapter, are not found in the chief manuscripts of the Septuagint, though in later codices they have been supplied from the version of Theodotion. The Codex Venetus Marcianus (23, Holmes and Parsons) is the only uncial that contains them. **The poor useth intreaties; but the rich answereth roughly.** The irony of the passage is more strongly expressed by Siracides: "The rich man hath done wrong, and yet he threateneth withal: the poor is wronged, and he must intreat also" (Ecclus. xiii. 3). The rich man not only does wrong, but accompanies the injury with passionate language and abuse, as if he were the sufferer; while the poor man has humbly to ask pardon, as if he were in the wrong. Thus the Roman satirist writes—

"Libertas pauperis hæc est:
Pulsatus rogat et pugnis concisus adorat,
Ut liceat paucis cum dentibus inde reverti."
(Juv., 'Sat.,' iii. 299.)

Aben Ezra explains the verse as denoting that a poor man making a submissive request from a rich man is answered cruelly and roughly. The hardening effect of wealth is seen in our Lord's parables of Dives and Lazarus (Luke xvi.), and the Pharisee and the publican (Luke xviii.).

Ver. 24.—**A man that hath friends must show himself friendly.** The Authorized Version is certainly not correct. The Hebrew is literally, *a man of friends will come to destruction.* The word הִתְרוֹעֵעַ (*hithroea*) is the hithp. infinitive of רָעַע, "to break or destroy" (comp. Isa. xxiv. 19); and the maxim means that the man of many friends, who lays himself out to make friends of bad and good alike, does so to his own ruin. They will feed upon him, and exhaust his resources, but will not stand by him in the day of calamity, nay, rather will give a helping hand to his downfall. It is not the number of so-called friends that is really useful and precious. **But there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother** (ch. xvii. 17; xxvii. 10).

Νόμιζ' ἀδελφοὺς τοὺς ἀληθινοὺς φίλους.

"Thy true friends hold as very brethren."

The Vulgate has, *Vir amabilis ad societatem magis amicus erit quam frater*, "A man amiable in intercourse will be more of a friend than even a brother."

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 10.—"*A strong tower.*" These words suggest to us an image of a disturbed country with a massive fortified tower standing in its midst, ready to serve as a refuge for the peasants, who till the fields when all is peaceful, but who flee to the tower for shelter when they see the enemy scouring over the plain. The baronial castles of England served the same purpose when our own country was suffering from the ravages of war. In the dangers of life the Name of the Lord is a similar refuge for his people.

I. NOTE THE NATURE OF THE TOWER. "The Name of the Lord." 1. *God himself.* "God is our Refuge and Strength" (Ps. xlvi. 1). He does not send an angel to protect us. The Church is not a citadel for those who have not first found their shelter in God. But God is with his people for their protection. Even when we have sinned we must "flee from God to God"—from his wrath to his mercy. 2. *The God of Israel.* The Lord, Jehovah. He is known in revelation, and he has been proved in history. This is no new tower that has not been tried and may be found faulty in the hour of need, like a fortress that has never been besieged. The story of God's people in all ages is one long confirmation of its venerable strength. 3. *God as he is revealed*—in his Name. This implies two things. (1) Our knowledge of God. The name is significant of the attributes. God is what his Name signifies. (2) God's own glory and faithfulness. He is sometimes appealed to for his Name's sake. For the sake of his glory, and also his fidelity to his promises, his protecting grace is expected.

II. OBSERVE THE CHARACTER OF THE REFUGE. A tower. 1. *Strong.* God is a Fortress. We do not confide in a weak goodness. Our security is in God's strength. 2. *Lofty.* The tower stands high up above the plain. It is the opposite to a mine. We must look up for shelter. We must climb to God. Our safety is in aspiration. 3. *In our midst.* Though the top of the tower soars above our heads, its foundation is at our feet, and we can enter it from where we stand. God is near at hand for shelter and safety. 4. *Conspicuous.* A cave may not be easily discovered among the rocks of the hillside, but a tower is visible to all. Though the presence of God is not visible to the eye of sense, the revelation of the gospel is open and conspicuous.

III. CONSIDER HOW THE REFUGE MAY BE USED. 1. *For the righteous.* The tower is a shelter from undeserved suffering, as in the case of Job. Here wronged innocence is safe. It is also for all the redeemed who stand before God in the new righteousness of Christ. We cannot be sheltered by God till we are reconciled to God. 2. *By entering it.* There is no safety in looking at it. It is necessary to flee to God in order to be protected by him. The fugitive may even need to run to reach the tower before the foe overtakes him. 3. *With safety.* It is not a palace with a banqueting-hall and couches of ease. It is a fortress, and therefore it may not always be comfortable; but it is safe. We are safe with God.

Ver. 13.—*The folly of hasty judgment.* We may observe some of the cases in which this folly of answering a matter before it is heard is commonly practised.

I. THE SOCIAL RELATIONS. Men are often too quick in forming their opinions of other people. A superficial glance is considered enough for an irrevocable verdict. The sentence is pronounced and the neighbour is characterized before he has had a fair chance of revealing his true nature. 1. This is *ungenerous.* We ought to give a man every opportunity of showing the good that is in him, and to be ready to believe that there may be an unseen goodness that is slow to come to the surface. 2. It is *untruthful.* The verdict should never go beyond the evidence. 3. It is *hurtful.* Much harm has been done by the hasty circulation of raw tales of idle calumny. It would be well to take warning, pause, and inquire before encouraging such mischievous gossip. 4. It is *foolish.* Surely we ought to know that a human character is not to be thus rapidly read off. If we are wise we shall be slow in forming a judgment on our neighbours.

II. IN RELIGIOUS BELIEF. Men are only too hasty in forming their opinions in religion. A minimum of evidence and a maximum of prejudice contribute to form the faith of many people. The same is equally true in regard to unbelief. It does not require much knowledge to show that prejudice is rife in the camp of those who venture to call themselves "free-thinkers." Bigotry is always blind. No men are so perverse as the dogmatic. Just in proportion to their assurance is the weakness of the grounds on which they base their assertions. On the other hand, the fear of forming a false judgment should not drive us into a perpetual suspension of inquiry. We can *hear* the matter of Divine revelation. Our duty is neither to rush to a hasty conclusion nor to retreat into paralyzing doubt, but to "search the Scriptures," "try the prophets," and "hear" the teaching on which we can found our convictions. To fail of this is foolishness that must end in shame, because in the end truth must conquer, and then all the votaries of prejudice will be confounded.

III. IN OUR CONDUCT TOWARDS GOD. This is more personal and practical than the question of religious belief, although the two things are very closely connected. We are tempted to misjudge providence, rebel against the action of God, and try to answer him who is unanswerable. Yet we have not the materials for judging God if the very thought of so doing were not presumptuous. We cannot understand his ways, which are other than ours—higher, wider, wiser, better. Perhaps we shall hear the matter at some future time. It may be that when we have reached the other side of the grave we may be able to look back upon the course of life with the light of heaven upon it, and so to solve some of the enigmas of earth. Meanwhile we have no alternative but to walk by faith. Any attempt at a higher flight will but reveal our folly and issue in our shame.

Ver. 14.—*Strong in spirit.* This thought is near akin to that of ch. xvii. 22, where the medicinal properties of a merry heart are commended. But there is some difference between the two. Both ascribe vital energy to the inner life, and commend such a cultivation of it as shall conquer weakness and suffering; but the verse now before us treats of vigour of spirit, while the earlier passage commends cheerfulness.

I. A MAN'S TRUE STRENGTH RESIDES IN HIS INNER LIFE. Samson was a weak man, although he had bodily strength, because he had not strength within. St. Paul was regarded as contemptible in bodily appearance (2 Cor. x. 10), yet he was a hero of fiery energy and rock-like steadfastness. He could say, "When I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Cor. xii. 10). The true self is within. All real weakness or power, failure

or success, must ultimately spring from this true self. Therefore the first question is as to the condition of the inner life. Those people who live only in the outer experiences do not yet know the deeper meaning of life. We have all to learn how to cultivate the powers of the spirit.

II. STRENGTH IN THE INNER LIFE CAN SUPPORT EXTERNAL INFIRMITY. 1. *Weakness of body.* No doubt the normal condition of health would be one of *mens sana in corpore sano.* But when that is not attained, mental health will do much to counteract the evil effects of bodily disease. The mind has so great power over the body that some forms of functional disease are actually cured through mental influences, as in what is called "faith-healing." The will to live is a great help to recovery from an illness. A crushed and broken spirit too often brings the body into a condition which is the despair of the physician. Higher considerations tell in the same direction, and spiritual health—though, perhaps, not what is meant in our text—will sustain, under disease, if it will not lead to bodily cure. 2. *Temporal trouble.* Misfortune can be borne by a brave, strong spirit; while a crushed, feeble spirit succumbs under it. 3. *Spiritual infirmity.* It is difficult to resist the frailty of our own souls. But when we cultivate our better selves we are best able to overcome infirmities of temper, selfishness, etc.

III. STRENGTH OF SPIRIT IS A DIVINE GRACE. 1. *A gift of God.* He can make the weak strong. "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength" (Isa. xl. 29). 2. *An acquisition of faith.* "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength" (Isa. xl. 31). It is possible for the weak to become strong, because all can "wait upon the Lord." No grace is more needed, and no grace proves itself to be more fruitful.

Ver. 17.—*Private judgment.* The Protestant claim to the right of private judgment is not without its limitations. Applied to general truths it is unanswerable; but carried out in personal affairs it is often very dangerous. Every man may say that he is the best judge of what concerns himself. But two considerations modify that contention. 1. No one truly knows himself. 2. A man's doings are not confined to himself. They cross the boundaries of other lives and interests. Therefore, while a man is seemingly making an innocent demand concerning his own business, he is really claiming to be the judge of what affects his neighbours. Hence the need of caution.

I. PRIVATE JUDGMENT IS APPARENTLY JUST, EVEN WHEN IT IS ERRONEOUS. It is rarely that a man will own himself to be in the wrong when he is engaged in any contention with his neighbour. 1. Judgment is prejudiced by previous opinions. We all approach a subject with a stock of prepossessions. Even while honestly intending to make a fair estimate, we cannot but apply the standards of our old set notions. Hence the need of working out "the personal equation." 2. It is biassed by *self-interest.* This may be quite unintentional and unconscious. We may not be aware that we are showing any favour to ourselves. Yet so long as the selfishness of human nature remains as it is, there must be a secret weight in the scale inclining it to our own side. 3. It is distorted by *self-deception.* Not knowing ourselves, we misread our own position. We give ourselves credit for aims that do not exist, and we disregard the real motives that actuate our conduct. 4. It is perverted by *ignorance of the position of other people.* We think we are acting justly when we do not know all the circumstances of the case. If we could see all the rights and claims of our neighbours we might be ready to admit our own error.

II. PRIVATE JUDGMENT MAY BE CORRECTED BY GENERAL TESTIMONY. We recognize in the law-courts that it is only right for both parties to a suit to be heard. The same concession is necessary for obtaining a just estimate of all matters in regard to which differences of opinion are expressed. In private life, in public affairs, in theological controversies, we want to learn how to hear the other side. The very difficulties of private judgment call for the correction that may be thus afforded. But other considerations also demand it. 1. *Truth is many-sided.* Even if we be right, it is possible that our neighbours may not be wrong. Our narrowness prevents us from seeing the solid form of truth and its various facets. 2. *Other people have rights.* Until these have been considered we cannot be sure that what looks like a most just contention on our own part may not be a trespass upon them. 3. *Justice may require*

*investigation.* We see the way in which a skilful counsel will break down the most plausible evidence by probing into its weak places; how he will worm secrets out of the most reticent witness. Truth is often revealed through antagonism. The man who prides himself on hoodwinking his fellows is foolish and short-sighted. If his insincerity is not discovered on earth, it will be revealed at the great judgment.

Ver. 22.—*The blessedness of true marriage.* The Bible does not regard marriage as "a failure," nor does it treat celibacy as a more saintly condition. Even St. Paul, who does not seem to have been a married man, and who is thought by some to undervalue marriage, gives to it a eulogium in describing the union of husband and wife as a copy of the mystical union of Christ and his Church (Eph. v. 22—32).

I. THE BLESSEDNESS OF MARRIAGE. 1. *The companionship of love.* The creation of woman is ascribed to the need of this. "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone" (Gen. ii. 18). In a true marriage a man's wife is his best friend. Fellowship of soul makes the union more than a mere contract of external relationship. Now, this fellowship is greatly needed for solace amid the cares of life, and strength to face its difficulties. The wife is able to give it to her husband, and the husband to the wife, as no persons in the outer circle of social relationship can hope to offer it. 2. *Mutual helpfulness.* In the narrative of the creation, God says, concerning Adam, "I will make him a help meet for him" (Gen. ii. 18). Woman is degraded when she is treated as a toy of idle hours, to amuse in the drawing-room, but not to take her share in the serious concerns of life. No true woman would desire so idle a position. The wife who understands the Christian calling will aim at ministering to her husband in all ways of helpfulness that are within her power, but chiefly in helping his higher life; and the duty of the husband towards the wife will be similar. 3. *Variety of ministration.* The wife is not the counterpart of the husband, but the complement. Human nature is completed in the union of the two. Therefore it is not the part of women to imitate men, nor is inferiority to be assigned to women because they differ from men. The rich, full, perfect human life is attained by the blending of differences.

II. THE SECRET OF THIS BLESSEDNESS. No ideal of human life can be more beautiful than that of the happy home. The serious question is how it shall be realized. 1. *By adaptation.* Every woman is not suitable for every man. Hasty courtships may lead to miserable marriages. So serious a matter as the choice of a companion for life is not to be lightly undertaken if there is to be any hope of its issuing in happiness. 2. *By sympathy.* There must be mutual confidence between husband and wife if the marriage is to be one of true and lasting blessedness. The Oriental cruelty of imprisonment in the harem, and the Western cruelty of degradation in domestic drudgery, are both fatal to the idea of marriage. Whatever be their position in the social scale, it is possible for husbands and wives to share one another's interests and enlarge one another's lives by conceding the fullest mutual confidence. 3. *By self-sacrifice.* Selfishness is fatal to marriage. Love must learn to give, to suffer, to endure. The happiness is most complete when each seeks it chiefly for the other. 4. *By religion.* The true marriage must be ratified in heaven. Its happiness may be wrecked on so many hidden rocks that it is not safe to venture on to the unknown sea without the assurance that God is guiding the voyage.

Ver. 24.—"*The Friend that sticketh closer than a brother.*" Without determining for certain which of the various renderings of the first clause of this verse should be adopted, there can be little doubt that it points to the difficulty of maintaining a wide circle of friends in true affection, contrasted with the blessedness of enjoying one deep and real friendship. The second cause which describes that friendship claims our attention on its own account.

I. THE NATURE OF BROTHERLY AFFECTION. If the true friend is even more than a brother, he will have the marks of brotherhood in an exceptional degree. Now, we have to ask—What are those peculiarities of the relation of brotherhood that determine the brother's affection? 1. *Blood-relationship.* We must all feel the peculiar oneness that belongs to membership in the same family. 2. *Close companionship* Brothers are usually brought up together. They share the same hardships, and they

enjoy the same family favours. They are knit together by similarity of experience. 3. *Community of interests.* Brothers share certain family interests in common. Thus families learn to hold together for the general well-being of the members. 4. *Similarity of constitution.* Brothers resemble one another, more or less. To some extent they have common traits of mind, feelings, sympathies, desires. Hence they are drawn together. How great and wonderful must be the friendship that exceeds even this close brotherly affection! Without the natural cause, it yet surpasses the love of brotherhood!

II. THE SIGN OF BROTHERLY AFFECTION. It is seen in cleaving to one's friend. With the highest type of friendship this will be observed under the most trying circumstances. 1. *In spite of the lapse of time.* Some friendships are but temporary. But brotherhood is lifelong. So also is the truest friendship. 2. *In sore need.* Then shallow friendship proves to be false. But at such a time brother should stand by brother. 3. *When faithfulness is costly.* Possibly one is under a cloud and cruelly misjudged; the brotherly soul will claim this as the most suitable time for showing true affection. Or it may be that some great sacrifice must be made to render needed assistance; this requirement will discover the nature of a friendship, and show whether it be truly that of a brother. 4. *When love is tried by indifference or enmity.* Though a man be unworthy of his brother, still true brotherly love will not cast him off. This is also the case with the highest friendship.

No doubt the object of Solomon was simply to give us a type and picture of true friendship. But as in a previous case (ch. xvii. 17), it is impossible for Christians not to recognize the application of the picture to Jesus Christ. His friendship is in all senses truly brotherly. He became a brother Man in order that he might enter into closest relations of love and sympathy with us, and he proves his friendship by doing more than any man ever did for his brother.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—9.—*Unsocial vices.* There is an inner connection between them all.

I. MISANTHROPY. (Ver. 1.) If this verse be more correctly rendered, this is the meaning yielded. From a diseased feeling the man turns aside to sullen solitude, and thus rejects wisdom. This affords a fine meaning. It is one thing to feel the need of occasional solitude, another to indulge the passion for singularity.

II. OBTRUSIVENESS. (Ver. 2.) Contrast ver. 4. The talkative fool is the very opposite of the misanthrope in his habits; yet the two have this in common—they both unfit themselves for society. We may go out of solitude to indulge our spleen, or into society to indulge our vanity. Talking for talking's sake, and all idle conversation, are here marked, if as *minor* vices, still vices.

III. BASENESS. (Ver. 3.) The word rendered "contempt" points rather to deeds of shame. And the meaning then will be that the evil of the heart must necessarily discover itself in the baseness of the life. As the impure state of the blood is revealed in eruptions and blotches on the skin, so is it with moral evil.

IV. CONSPIRACY AND PLOTTING. (Ver. 5.) The figure employed, literally, to *lift up a person's face*, signifies to take his part. All party-spirit is wrong, because it implies that truth has not the first place in our affections. But party-spirit on behalf of the wicked is an utter abomination, for it implies a positive contempt for, or unbelief in, right and truth.

V. QUARRELSOMENESS. (Vers. 6, 7.) "The apostle, when giving the anatomy of man's depravity, dwells chiefly on the little member with all its accompaniments—the throat, the tongue, the lips, the mouth. It is 'a world of iniquity, defiling the whole body.'" It leads to *violence.* The deadly blow is prepared for and produced by the irritating taunting word. But there is a *recoil* upon the quarrelsome man. The tongue to which he has given so evil licence finally ensnares him and takes him prisoner. And the stones he has cast at others fall back upon himself. Thus does Divine judgment reveal itself in the common course of life.

VI. SLANDEROUSNESS. (Ver. 8.) The word "tale-bearer" is represented more expressively in the Hebrew. It is the man that "blows in the ear." And the picture

comes up before the mind of the calumnious word, whispered or jestingly uttered, which goes deep into the most sensitive places of feeling, and wounds, perhaps even unto death.

VII. IDLENESS. (Ver. 9.) Here we strike upon the root of all these hideous vices. It is the neglect of the man's proper work which suffers these vile weeds to grow. What emphasis there needs to be laid on the great precept, "Do thine own work"! The idler is brother to the corrupter, or vicious man, and his kinship is certain sooner or later to betray itself. The parable of the talents may be compared here. Then, again, how close are the ideas of *wickedness* and *sloth*!—J.

Vers. 10—16.—*Some conditions of weal and woe.* I. CONSTITUTIONS OF LIFE-WEAL. 1. *First and foremost, religion* (ver. 10) and *humility* (ver. 12). The Name of Jehovah stands for all that God *is* (the "I am"). Trust in the Eternal is the real ground of confidence for a creature so *transient* and frail as man. To put the same truth in another way, it is religious principle which can alone sustain the soul calm and erect amidst distress. And with true religion is ever connected humility. The knowledge of one's *just position* in the world is, on the whole, humbling. It is the conceit that one is greater than one really is which is so pernicious *inwardly*, and will prove so outwardly. 2. *Competence of worldly means.* (Ver. 11.) It is the worst hypocrisy and affectation to deny the good of money, even with reference to the culture of the soul. Here we have the common view of riches; they are a *source of strength.* Truly; but one easily exaggerated. 3. *A cheerful temper.* (Ver. 14.) Health is the grand elementary and all-inclusive blessing. Well! one of the main conditions of health is a merry heart, or a disposition to look on the best side of things. "I thank it, poor fool; it keeps on the windy side of care." 4. *An open mind.* (Ver. 15.) The intelligent heart and the ever-listening ear,—these are the great instruments or means of knowledge and wisdom. It is good to have many and large windows in the house; and to keep the soul open on all sides to the light of God. 5. *Judicious liberality.* (Ver. 16.) We found this lesson insisted on in ch. xvii. 8. The heathen poet said, "Gifts persuade the gods, gifts persuade dread kings." Often as the principle is made bad use of, let us recollect it has an opposite aspect, and make friends to ourselves of the "mammon of unrighteousness."

II. SOURCES OF TROUBLE. 1. *Pride.* (Ver. 12.) How emphatic by repetition is the warning against this *inward* vice (ch. xvi. 18)! Like the clouds going *up the hill*, portending rain, so does self-conceit prophesy sorrow. 2. *Excessive eagerness.* (Ver. 13.) "Condemn no one," says the Book of Jesus Sirach (Ecclus. xi. 7), "before thou knowest the matter in question: know first, and then rebuke. Thou shalt not judge before thou hearest the matter; and let others speak first." Ignorance and self-conceit are ever forward; wisdom holds its strength in reserve. 3. *Indulgence in depression.* (Ver. 14.) "A cast-down spirit who can bear?" We must remember that the ailments of the mind are strictly analogous to those of the body; and if the latter are to an indefinite degree under the control of the will, so too are the former. We must believe in the God-given power of the will, or no medicine can avail us.—J.

Vers. 17—21.—*Evils of the tongue and of contention.* I. THE FOLLY OF HASTE IN DEBATE. (Ver. 17.) "One tale is good till another be told." This saw holds good of private life, of lawsuits, of controversies in philosophy and theology. *Audi alteram partem*, "Listen to both sides." This is the duty of the judge, or of him who for the time being plays the judicial part. If we are parties in a debate or a suit, then nothing will hold good except to have the "conscience void of offence."

II. THE ADVANTAGE OF ARBITRATION. (Ver. 18.) The lot was the ancient mode of arbitration and settlement of disputes in a peaceful manner. Something corresponding to it in modern times may be adopted as a wise resource where other means of reconciliation have failed. Still better, the general lesson may be drawn—commit the decision to the wisdom of God.

III. THE MISERY OF DISSENSION. (Ver. 19.) The alienated brother or friend is compared to an impregnable fortress. "Oh how hard to reconcile the foes that once were friends!" The sweeter the wine, the sharper the vinegar; and the greater the natural love, the more violent the hate where that love has been injured.

IV. THE SATISFACTION OF WISE COUNSELS. (Ver. 20; comp. ch. xii. 14; xiii. 2.) The mode of expression is strange to a modern ear, but the thought is familiar and welcome. Words here stand for thoughts; the fruit of the lips comes from the root of the heart. When an intensely modern writer says, "Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of your principles," he puts the old truth in a new light.

V. LIFE AND DEATH IN THE TONGUE. (Ver. 21.) Here is another great principle, vast in its sweep. "Life and death are in the power of witnesses according to the testimony they bear, of judges according to the sentence they pass, of teachers according to the doctrine they preach, of all men who by their well or evil speaking bring death or life to themselves or to others" (Gill). Perhaps it is true that the tongue has slain its ten thousands where the sword has slain only its thousands. The employment of the tongue, whether for good or for evil, in blessing or in cursing (Jas. iii. 9; 1 Cor. xii. 3), brings its own fruit and reward to the speaker. "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."—J.

Vers. 22—24.—*Love in different relations.* I. CONJUGAL LOVE. (Ver. 22.) The blessing of a good wife. "Young men's mistresses; companions for middle age; and old men's nurses" (Lord Bacon). On the choice of a wife none but a recluse or a pedant would pretend to lay down infallible precepts or counsels. But every man who has been happy in the married relation will recognize his happiness as among the chiefest of blessings from above. It is indeed a good that is *found*, cannot be inherited nor deserved.

II. COMPASSION. (Ver. 23.) Here, as so often, the duty is suggested by means of a dark picture of the opposite, of its neglect. The rich man who "against the houseless stranger shuts the door," or who, like Dives, fares luxuriously while Lazarus lies in sores at his gate,—these revolt the heart and may more move the conscience than declamations on the positive duty. When chilled by the coldness and severity of selfish man, let the poor and afflicted turn to the "God of all compassion," and to the revelation of him in the "good Samaritan," in Jesus Christ.

III. FRIENDSHIP. (Ver. 24.) 1. The *spurious friendship.* The more correct rendering of the first half of the verse seems to be, "a man of many companions will prove himself to be worthless." Mere agreeableness may be a surface quality, may spring more from variety than anything else, will soon wear out, cannot be counted on. Number counts for little in friendship. 2. The *genuine friendship.* More tenacious than the mere natural love of kindred, because founded on the affinity of soul with soul. All the purest types of earthly affection and friendship are but hints of the eternal love of him who calls the soul into espousal, friendship, and eternal communion with himself.—J.

Ver. 2.—(See homily on ch. xvii. 16, 24.)—C.

Ver. 4.—*The utterances of wisdom.* Taking the sense of this passage to be continuous and not antithetical, and understanding it to refer to the utterances of the wisdom which is from above, we notice their constant characteristics, viz.—

I. THEIR DEPTH. The words which come from the mouth of wisdom are "as deep waters." How shallow is much, if not most, that is spoken in our hearing! It strikes no deeper than "the hour's event," than the mere gilding of our life; it only extends to the circumstances or to the conventionalities of life; it deals with tastes and customs, with regulation and proprieties; it goes no further than pecuniary or social expectations; it lies upon the surface and does not touch "the deep heart and reality of things." But the wisdom of the wise strikes deep; it goes down into the character; it touches first principles; it has to do with the sources and springs of human action; it concerns itself with the intrinsically true, the really beautiful, the solidly and permanently good.

II. THEIR SPONTANEITY. The utterances of men who are not truly wise are lacking in this. They can only repeat what they have learned; they have to consult their "authorities" in order to know what they should say; they have to labour and strive in order to express themselves. Not so the truly wise. Their words come from them as water from a well-spring; their speech is the simple, natural, unconstrained outflow

of their soul; they speak from the heart, not from the book. Their spirit is full of Divine wisdom; they "have understanding" (ch. xvii. 24); they have knowledge, insight, love of the truth; they "cannot but speak" the truth they have learned of God, the things they have heard and seen. And the spontaneity of their utterance is one real element in their eloquence and their influence.

III. THEIR COMMUNICATIVENESS. They are "as a flowing brook." As water that is not pent up like a reservoir, but flows on through the thirsty land, communicating moisture, and thus ministering to life and growth, so the words of the wise are continually flowing; they spread from heart to heart, from land to land, from age to age. And as they flow they minister to the life and the growth of men; they communicate those living truths which enlighten the mind, which soften and change the heart, which transform and ennoble the life. Their career is never closed, for from soul to soul, from lip to lip, from life to life, wisdom passes on in its blessed, unbroken course. 1. Be ever learning of God. He himself, in the book which he has "written for our learning," is the Divine Source of such wisdom as this. Only as we receive from him who is "the Wisdom of God" shall we be partakers and possessors of this heavenly wisdom. And therefore: 2. Come into the closest communion and connection with Jesus Christ himself. 3. Open your mind to all sources of truth whatsoever.—C.

Ver. 8.—(See homily on ch. xvii. 9.)—C.

Ver. 9.—*Needless destitution.* This strong utterance suggests—

I. THE PREVALENCE OF DESTITUTION. How much of human life is needlessly low! how many men live low down in the scale who might just as well be living high up it! how sadly do men bereave themselves of good! This applies to: 1. *Their circumstances:* their daily surroundings; the homes in which they live, their food and raiment, the occupations in which they are engaged; their companionships, etc. 2. *Their intelligence:* their intellectual activity, their knowledge, their acquaintance with their own complex nature and with the world in which they live, their familiarity with (or their ignorance of) men and things. 3. *Their moral and spiritual condition:* their capacity or incapacity to control their temper, to govern their spirit, to regulate their life, to form honourable and elevating habits, to worship God, to set their lives in accordance with the will and after the example of Christ.

II. THE TWO MAIN SOURCES OF IT. These are those which are indicated in the text. 1. *The absence of energy* in action; being "slothful [or, 'slack,' Revised Version] in work." Men who fail in their department, of whatever kind it may be, are usually those who do not throw any heart, any earnestness, any continuous vigour, into their work. They do what is before them perfunctorily, carelessly, or spasmodically. Hence they make no profits, they earn low wages, they have poor crops, they gain few customers or patients, they win no success; hence they read few instructive books, they make no elevating and informing friendships, they acquire no new ideas, they store up no new facts, they make no mental progress; hence they do not cultivate their moral and spiritual nature, they do not "build themselves up" on the foundation of truth; they are adding no stones to the living temple; they do not grow in wisdom, or in worth, or in grace. The other source is: 2. *The presence of prodigality.* He that is slothful in work is "brother to him that is a great waster." What sad wastefulness is on every hand! what dissipation of gathered treasure! what expenditure of means and of strength on that which does not profit! For these are the two forms of waste. (1) Allowing to depart that which it would be wise to hold in hand—money, goods, friends, supporters, resources. (2) Expending power on that which does not profit; letting our time, our strength, our mental forces, our moral energies, be employed upon those things which yield no return, or no adequate and proportionate return. Were men to spend their money on profitable and fruit-bearing labour, their brains on enlightening and enlarging study, their spiritual energies on intelligent worship or redeeming work, instead of wasting them as now they do, how would the desert become a fruitful field, in every sphere! But we must not overlook the fact that there is—

III. A SOLID REMAINDER, NOT THUS ACCOUNTED FOR. Although sloth and waste together explain a very large part indeed of the destitution on the earth, they leave

much still to be accounted for. And of this remainder part is due to simple and pure misfortune or incapacity, and part to the guilt of others who are not the sufferers. All this destitution is the proper field for Christian effort. It is the proper object of our genuine compassion, and of our strenuous endeavour toward removal. But to those who are culpably destitute we have to go and say—Your way upward is before you; you must exert yourselves if you would rise. No one can really enrich a human soul but himself. 1. Bring a sustained energy to bear on the work in which you are engaged. 2. Guard with a wise watchfulness what you have won. 3. Put out your powers upon that which is worthy of them and that which will repay them.—C.

Ver. 10.—*God our Refuge.* By "the Name of the Lord" we understand the Lord as he has revealed himself to us, the Lord as he has taught us to think and to speak of him. He is our strong Tower in the time of trouble.

I. OUR NEED OF A REFUGE IN THE BATTLE OF LIFE. There may be much in our life that may lead us to speak of it as a song or a tale, or as a march or pilgrimage; but there is much that compels us to consider it a battle or a struggle. Many are the occasions when we have to look about us for a refuge to which we may flee; for we have, at different times and under different circumstances, to confront: 1. *Oppression.* Ill treatment, severity; the injustice, or the inconsiderateness, or the assumption of those who can afflict us. 2. *Disaster.* The loss of that which is valuable or of those who are precious to us. 3. *Difficulty.* The uprising of great obstacles which seem to be insurmountable. 4. *Temptation.* Which may act upon us quietly but continuously, and therefore effectively, or which may come down upon us with almost overwhelming suddenness and force. Then we ask ourselves—What is the refuge, the high tower, to which we shall resort?

II. TWO RESOURCES WHICH ARE GOOD, BUT INSUFFICIENT. 1. *Our own fortitude.* This is that to which Stoicism, the noblest form of ancient philosophy, had recourse—our courage and determination as brave men, who are

"Strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and *not to yield.*"

2. *The sympathy and succour of our friends.* The kind heart and the helping hand of those who love us, with whom we have walked along the path of life, and who have linked their heart and hand with ours. Both of these are good; but, as all history and observation teach us, they do not suffice. We want another heart that comes nearer to us, another power that can do more for us than these. So we thankfully turn to—

III. THE REFUGE WE HAVE IN GOD. We know that with him is: 1. *Perfect sympathy.* He is "afflicted in all our affliction;" he is "touched with a feeling of our infirmity;" he "knows what is in" us—what pain of body, what desolateness of spirit, what wrestlings and agonies of the soul. 2. *Boundless wisdom.* He knows what to save us from, and what to let us suffer; how far and in what way he may relieve and restore us; how he can help us so as to bless us truly and permanently. 3. *Almighty power.* Our eyes may well be lifted up unto him, for he can "pluck our feet out of the net." "Our God is a Rock;" all the billows of human rebellion will break in vain upon his power. Into the "strong tower" of his Divine protection we may well "run and be safe." "Who is he that can harm us" there?—C.

Ver. 12.—(See homily on ch. xvi. 18.)—C.

Ver. 14.—*The wounded spirit.* How much is a man better than a sheep? By the whole range of his spiritual nature. The joys and sorrows of a man are those of his spirit; yet no inconsiderable proportion of his experiences come to him through the flesh. The text tells us—

I. THAT THE CONQUERING SPIRIT WITHIN US TRIUMPHS OVER THE BODILY INFIRMITY. There have been times when, and people by whom, the very worst bodily afflictions have been borne with lofty indifference or with still loftier and nobler resignation. Such was the Roman whose right hand was consumed in the fire without a groan; such were the Christian martyrs; such have been and such are they who are condemned to long years of privation or of suffering, and who wear the face of a holy contentment,

of even a beautiful cheerfulness of spirit. Beneath the infirmity of the flesh is the sustaining spirit: *but what of the wounded spirit itself?*

II. THAT IT IS THE WOUNDED SPIRIT FOR WHICH HELP IS NEEDED. There are many ways in which our spirit may be wounded. 1. There is the *merciful wound from the hand of God.* For God does wound; he wounds in part in order that he may heal altogether; for the moment, that he may make whole for ever. The weapon (or one weapon) with which he smites the soul is the human conscience. We have all felt the smart from its righteous blow. We have before us the alternative of either *blunting* the edge of the instrument or learning the lesson and turning away from the sin. To do the former is to take the path which leads to wrong and ruin; to do the latter is to walk in the way of life. 2. *The faithful wound from the hand of man.* There are circumstances under which, and there are relations in which, we are simply *bound* to wound one another's spirit. As Christ wounded the spirit of Peter with a reproachful glance (Luke xxii. 61, 62); as Paul wounded the Corinthian Christians (2 Cor. ii. 1—10); so will the faithful minister of Christ, the conscientious parent or teacher, the true and loyal friend, now administer rebuke, offer remonstrance, address an appeal which will fill the heart with compunction and regret. 3. *The cruel wound from the hand of man.* This includes (1) the wound of neglect,—often a very deep and sore wound is this, coming from the hand that should sustain and heal; (2) of hastiness and rashness; (3) of malice. 4. *Spare to wound another's spirit.* It is worse to hurt the feelings than to filch the purse; to cause a bad heart-ache than any suffering of the nerve. "The spirit of a man can sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit *who can bear?*" 5. *When your heart is wounded repair to the One who can heal it.* There is only One who can "heal the broken heart, and bind up its wounds."—C.

Ver. 17.—*Hear the other side.* There is no truer, as there is no homelier maxim, than that we should "hear the other side," or—what is virtually the same thing—"there are two sides to everything." This is the idea in the text; the lessons are—

I. WE SHOULD NOT EXPECT ABSOLUTE ACCURACY WHEN A MAN TELLS HIS OWN CASE. 1. He may intentionally misrepresent it. 2. He may unconsciously misstate it. How things shape themselves to our mind depends on our individual standpoint; and when two men regard a subject from different and even opposite points of view, they necessarily see it, and as necessarily state it, with considerable variation. Such are the limitations of our mental faculties, and such is our tendency to be biassed in our own favour, that no wise man will expect his neighbour to give him the whole case, without either addition, colouring, or omission, when he pleads his own cause.

II. WE SHOULD REMEMBER THE INEQUALITY IN MEN'S CAPACITY OF PRESENTMENT. Some men can make a very lame cause look like a sound one; but others cannot give to a good cause the appearance of justice to which it is entitled. Truth often yields to advocacy.

III. WE SHOULD INSIST ON HEARING THE OTHER SIDE. This is due to both sides. 1. *It is in the true interest of the complainant,* or he will persuade us to give him credence to which he is not morally entitled; he will then wrong his brother; he will be an oppressor or a defamer; from this evil end we should save him by our good sense. 2. *It is due to the defendant;* for otherwise he will have judgment passed when things have been left unspoken which certainly ought to be taken into the account. Justice imperatively demands that we should never condemn our neighbour until we have heard what he has to say for himself. 3. *It is due to ourselves;* otherwise we shall not be just, and it is our Saviour's express desire that we should "judge righteous judgment" (John vii. 24), and we shall not be like unto "him who judgeth righteously." Our Christian character will be incomplete and our life will be blemished. Moreover: 4. *It is due to the cause of Christ;* for if we condemn or acquit without full and impartial inquiry, we shall do injustice to many, and we shall certainly do injury in many ways to the cause and kingdom of our Lord.—C.

Ver. 19.—*Brethren at strife.* The reference in the text is to—

I. A DIFFICULTY EVERYWHERE ACKNOWLEDGED. It seems to have been universally felt that a "brother offended" is very hard indeed "to be won." It is more easy to effect a reconciliation between strangers than between those united by ties of blood.

Hence a family feud is usually a very long as well as a very sad one. This does not seem to be a local or a national peculiarity. What Solomon wrote in his land and age might be written by any English or continental moralist to-day. It is human.

II. ITS EXPLANATION. 1. It is an aggravated difficulty, inasmuch as the bitterness aroused is more intense. For always in proportion to the fulness of our love is the greatness of our wrath. Anger is love reversed. Whom we love the most we are in danger of disliking the most; it is against his own wife that the madman first turns his hand. And how should we love another with all the affection we feel for the companion of our childhood and our youth, the sharer of our joys and sufferings from the very cradle and under the parental roof? 2. We shrink with greatest sensitiveness from humbling ourselves before our kindred. Reconciliation usually means apology, and apology means a measure of humiliation. And we do not like to humble our hearts before one with whom we have had and may have so much to do. 3. We are inclined to "stand upon the order of our going;" each thinks the other should make the first move; the younger thinks the elder should because he *is* the elder, and the elder the younger because he *is* the younger. 4. We are apt to resent interposition as interference; to any peacemaker who would intervene we are inclined to say, "Do not intrude into our family secrets."

III. OUR DUTY IN VIEW OF THIS FACT. It is clearly this: 1. To avoid all serious differences with our near kindred; (1) to heal at once the first small breach that may occur, for while a rupture may be beyond remedy, a small difference is easily healed; (2) to consider that almost any sacrifice of money, or of position, or of goods is worth making to retain the love of the children of our own parents, the playmates of our childhood and our youth. 2. To make a determined effort, after earnest thought and prayer, to master the difficulty we find in our heart, and make the first overture to the offended brother. So shall we win a really noble victory over ourselves; so shall we gain the warm approval of the Prince of peace.—C.

Ver. 24.—*The unfailing Friend.* If these words had occurred in a book written any time A.D., we should unhesitatingly have referred them to our Lord; they are beautifully and perfectly applicable to him. For closer than any brother is he who is "not ashamed to call us brethren."

I. HE COMES NEARER TO US THAN ANY BROTHER CAN. A human brother can draw very near to us in his knowledge of us and his brotherly sympathy with us; but not as Christ, our Divine Friend, can and does. His *knowledge* of us is perfect—of our hopes and fears, of our struggles and our sorrows, of our aspirations and endeavours, of all that passes within us. And his *sympathy* with us and his *succour* of us are such as man cannot render. He can pity us with a perfect tenderness of spirit, and he can touch our hearts with a sustaining and healing hand as the kindest and wisest of men cannot.

II. HE IS ALWAYS THE SAME TO US; OUR BROTHER IS NOT. We can never be quite sure that our kindest brother will be in a mood or in a position to lend us his ear or his hand. But we have not to make this qualification or enter into this consideration when we think of Christ. We know we shall not find him too occupied to hear us, or indisposed to sympathize with us, or unable to aid us. He is always the same, and ever ready to receive and bless us (Heb. xiii. 8).

III. HIS PATIENCE IS INEXHAUSTIBLE; OUR BROTHER'S IS NOT. By our importunity, or by our infirmity, or by our unworthiness, we may weary the most patient human friend or brother; but we do not weary the Divine Friend; and even though we do that or be that which is evil and hurtful, which is painful and grievous in his sight, still he bears with us, and at our first moment of spiritual return he is prepared to welcome and restore us.

IV. HE EVER LIVETH; OUR BROTHER MAY BE TAKEN FROM US. 1. Seek the lasting favour and friendship of Jesus Christ. 2. Realize the honour of that friendship, and walk worthily of it. 3. Gain from it all the comfort, strength, and sanctity which a close and living friendship with him will surely yield. 4. Introduce all whom you can to him, that they may share this invaluable blessing.—C.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XIX.

Ver. 1.—**Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity.** The word for "poor" is, here and in vers. 7, 22, *rash*, which signifies "poor" in opposition to "rich." In the present reading of the second clause, **than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool**, there seems to be a failure in antithesis, unless we can understand the fool as a rich fool. This, the repetition of the maxim in ch. xxviii. 6 ("Than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich"), would lead one to admit. The Vulgate accordingly has, *Quam dives torquem labia sua, et insipiens*, "Than a rich man who is of perverse lips and a fool." With this the Syriac partly agrees. So that, if we take this reading, the moralist says that the poor man who lives a guileless, innocent life, content with his lot, and using no wrong means to improve his fortunes, is happier and better than the rich man who is hypocritical in his words and deceives others, and has won his wealth by such means, thus proving himself to be a fool, a morally bad man. But if we content ourselves with the Hebrew text, we must find the antithesis in the simple, pious, poor man, contrasted with the arrogant rich man, who sneers at his poor neighbour as an inferior creature. The writer would seem to insinuate that there is a natural connection between poverty and integrity of life on the one hand, and wealth and folly on the other. He would assent to the sweeping assertion, *Omnis dives aut iniquus aut iniqui heres*, "Every rich man is either a rascal or a rascal's heir."

Ver. 2.—**Also, that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good.** "Also" (*gam*), Wordsworth would render "even," "even the soul, *i.e.* life itself, without knowledge is not a blessing;" it is *βίος οὐ βιωτός*. At first sight it looks as if some verse, to which this one was appended, had fallen out; but there is no trace in the versions of any such loss. We have had a verse beginning in the same manner (ch. xvii. 26), and here it seems to emphasize what follows—folly is bad, so is ignorance, when the soul lacks knowledge, *i.e.* when a man does not know what to do, how to act in the circumstances of his life, has in fact no practical wisdom. Other things "not good" are named in ch. xviii. 5; xx. 23; xxiv. 23. **And he that hasteth with his feet sinneth**; misseth his way. Delitzsch confines the meaning of this hemistich to the undisciplined pursuit of knowledge: "He who hasteneth with the legs after it goeth astray," because he is neither intellectually nor morally clear as to his path or object. But the gnome is better taken in a more general sense. The ignorant man, who acts hastily without due deliberation, is sure to make grave mistakes, and to come to misfortune. Haste is opposed to knowledge, because the latter involves prudence and circumspection, while the former blunders on hurriedly, not seeing whither actions lead. We all have occasion to note the proverbs, *Festina lente;* "More haste, less speed." The history of Fabius, who, as Ennius said,

"Unus homo nobis cunctando restituit rem,"

shows the value of deliberation and caution. The Greeks recognized this—

*Προπέτεια πολλοῖς ἐστιν αἰτία κακῶν.*

"Rash haste is cause of evil unto many."

Erasmus, in his 'Adagia,' has a long article commenting on *Festinatio præpropera*. The Arabs say, "Patience is the key of joy, but haste is the key of sorrow." God is patient because he is eternal.

Ver. 3.—**The foolishness of man perverteth his way**; rather, *overturns*, turns from the right direction and causes a man to fall (ch. xiii. 6). It is his own folly that leads him to his ruin; but he will not see this, and blames the providence of God. **And his heart fretteth against the Lord.** Septuagint, "He accuseth God in his heart" (comp. Ezek. xviii. 25, 29; xxxiii. 17, 20). Ecclus. xv. 11, etc., "Say not thou, It is through the Lord that I fell away; for thou oughtest not to do the things that he hateth. Say not thou, He has caused me to err; for he hath no need of the sinful man," etc. The latter part of this important passage St. Augustine quotes thus: "Item apud Salomonem: Deus ab initio constituit hominem et reliquit eum in manu consilii sui: adjecit ei mandata et præcepta; si voles præcepta servare, servabunt te, et in posterum fidem placitam facere. Apposuit tibi aquam et ignem, ad quod vis porrige manum tuam. Ante hominem bonum et malum, vita et mors, paupertas et honestas a Domino Deo sunt" ('De Perf. Just. Hom.,' cap. xix. § 41). And again, "Manifestum est, quod si ad ignem manum mittit, et malum ac mors ei placet, id voluntas hominis operatur; si autem bonum et vitam diligit, non solum voluntas id agit, sed divinitus adjuvatur" ('De Gest. Pelag.,' cap. iii. § 7). Homer, 'Od.,' i. 32, etc.—

"Perverse mankind! whose wills, created free,
Charge all their woes on absolute decree;

All to the dooming gods their guilt translate,
And follies are miscalled the crimes of fate."

(Pope.)

**Ver. 4.—Wealth maketh many friends** (vers. 6, 7; ch. xiv. 20). A Greek gnome expresses the same truth—

Ἐὰν δ' ἔχωμεν χρήμαθ' ἕξομεν φίλους.

**The poor is separated from his neighbour.** But it is better to make the act of separation emanate from the friend (as the Hebrew allows), and to render, with the Revised Version, *The friend of the poor separateth himself from him.* The word for "poor" is here *dal*, which means "feeble," "languid;" so ver. 17; and the same word (*rea*), "friend" or "neighbour," is used in both clauses. The idea of man's selfishness is carried on in vers. 6 and 7. The Law of Moses had tried to counteract it (Deut. xv. 7, etc.), but it was Christianity that introduced the practical realization of the law of love, and the honouring of the poor as members of Christ. Septuagint, "But the poor is deserted even by his whilom friend."

Ver. 5.—This verse is repeated below (ver. 9). It comes in awkwardly here, interrupting the connection which subsists between vers. 4 and 6. Its right place is doubtless where it occurs below. The Law not only strictly forbade false witness (Exod. xx. 16; xxiii. 1), but it enacted severe penalties against offenders in this particular (Deut. xix. 16, etc.); the *lex talionis* was to be enforced against them, they were to receive no pity: "Life shall be for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot." **He that speaketh lies shall not escape.** The Septuagint confines the notion of this clause to false accusers, Ὁ δὲ ἐγκαλῶν ἀδίκως, "He who maketh an unjust charge shall not escape," which renders the two clauses almost synonymous. We make a distinction between the members by seeing in the former a denunciation against a false witness in a suit, and in the second a more sweeping menace against any one, whether accuser, slanderer, sycophant, who by lying injures a neighbour. The History of Susanna is brought forward in confirmation of the well-deserved fate of false accusers.

Ψευδὴς διαβολὴ τὸν βίον λυμαίνεται.

"A slander is an outrage on man's life."

Ver. 6.—**Many will intreat the favour of the prince**; literally, *will stroke the face of the prince*, of the liberal and powerful man, in expectation of receiving some benefit from him (ch. xxix. 26; Job xi. 19). **Every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts** (see on ch. xvii. 8). The LXX., reading כָּל־רֵעֵהוּ for כָּל־הֵרֵעַ, renders, "Every bad man is a reproach to a man," which may mean that a sordid, evil man brings only disgrace on himself; or that, while many truckle to and try to win the interest of a prince, bad courtiers bring on him not glory, but infamy and shame.

Ver. 7.—This is one of the few tristichs in the book, and probably contains the mutilated remains of two distichs. The third line, corrected by the Septuagint, which has an addition here, runs into two clauses (Cheyne). **All the brethren of the poor do hate him.** Even his own brothers, children of the same parents, hate and shun a poor man (ch. xiv. 20). **Much more do his friends go far from him.** There should be no interrogation. We have the expression (*aph-kî*) in ch. xi. 31; xv. 11, etc. Euripides, 'Medea,' 561—

Πένητα φεύγει πᾶς τις ἐκποδὼν φίλος.

"Each single friend far from the poor man flies."

Septuagint, "Every one who hateth a poor brother will be also far from friendship." Then follows an addition not found in the Hebrew, "Good thought draweth nigh to those who know it, and a prudent man will find it. He who doeth much evil brings malice to perfection (τελεσιουργεῖ κακίαν); and he who rouses words to anger shall not be safe." **He pursueth** them with words, yet **they** are **wanting** to him; or, *they are gone.* He makes a pathetic appeal to his quondam friends, but they hearken not to him. But the sense is rather, "He pursueth after, craves for, words of kindness or promises of help, and there is naught, or he gets words only and no material aid." Wordsworth quotes Catullus, 'Carm.,' xxxviii. 5—

"Quem tu, quod minimum facillimumque est,
Qua solatus es adlocutione?
Irascor tibi. Sic meos amores?"

Vulgate, *Qui tantum verba sectatur, nihil habebit*, "He who pursues words only shall have naught." The Hebrew is literally, "Seeking words, they are not." This is according to the Khetib; the Keri, instead of the negation אֵינָם, reads לוֹ, which makes the clause signify, "He who pursues words, they are to him;" *i.e.* he gets words and nothing else. Delitzsch and others, supplying the lost member from the Septuagint, read the third line thus: "He that hath many friends, or the friend of every one, is requited with evil; and he that seeketh (fair) speeches shall not be delivered." Cheyne also makes a distich of this line, taking the Septuagint as representing the

original reading. "He that does much evil perfects mischief: He that provokes with words shall not escape." That something has fallen out of the Hebrew text is evident; it seems that there are no examples of tristichs in this part of our book, though they are not unknown in the first and third divisions. The Vulgate surmounts the difficulty by connecting this third line with the following verse, which thus is made to form the antithesis, *Qui tantum verba sectatur, nihil habebit; Qui autem possessor est mentis, diligit animam suam, et custos prudentiæ inveniet bona.*"

Ver. 8.—**He that getteth wisdom loveth his own soul.** "Wisdom" is, in the Hebrew, *leb*, "heart:" it is a matter, not of intellect only, but of will and affections (see on ch. xv. 32). Septuagint, ἀγαπᾷ ἑαυτόν, "loveth himself." The contrary, "hateth his own soul," occurs in ch. xxix. 24. By striving to obtain wisdom a man shows that he has regard for the welfare of his soul and body. Hence St. Thomas Aquinas ('Sum. Theol.,' i. 2, qu. 25, art. 7, quoted by Corn. à Lapide) takes occasion to demonstrate that only good men are really lovers of themselves, while evil men are practically self-haters, proving his position by a reference to Aristotle's enumeration of the characteristics of friendship, which the former exhibit, and none of which the latter can possess ('Eth. Nic.,' ix. 4). **He that keepeth understanding shall find good** (ch. xvi. 20). A man must not only strive hard and use all available means to get wisdom and prudence, he must guard them like a precious treasure, not lose them for want of care or let them lie useless; and then he will find that they bring with themselves innumerable benefits.

Ver. 9.—A repetition of ver. 5, except that **shall perish** is substituted for "shall not escape." Septuagint, "And whosoever shall kindle mischief shall perish by it." The Greek translators have rendered the special reference in the original to slanderers and liars by a general term, and introduced the notion of Divine retribution, which is not definitely expressed in the Hebrew.

Ver. 10.—**Delight is not seemly for a fool** (comp. ch. xvii. 7; xxvi. 1). *Taanug*, rendered "delight," implies rather delicate living, luxury; τρυφή, Septuagint. Such a life is ruin to a fool, who knows not how to use it properly; it confirms him in his foolish, sinful ways. A man needs religion and reason to enable him to bear prosperity advantageously, and these the fool lacks. "Secundæ res," remarks Sallust ('Catil.,' xi.), "sapientium animos fatigant," "Even wise men are wearied and harassed by prosperity," much more must such good fortune try those who have no practical wisdom to guide and control their enjoyment. Vatablus explains the clause to mean that it is impossible for a fool, a sinner, to enjoy peace of conscience, which alone is true delight. But looking to the next clause, we see that the moralist is thinking primarily of the elevation of a slave to a high position, and his arrogance in consequence thereof. **Much less for a servant to have rule over princes.** By the unwise favouritism of a potentate, a slave of lowly birth might be raised to eminence and set above the nobles and princes of the land. The writer of Ecclesiastes gives his experience in this matter: "I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth" (Eccles. x. 7). The same anomaly is mentioned with censure (ch. xxx. 22 and Ecclus. xi. 5). What is the behaviour of unworthy persons thus suddenly raised to high position has formed the subject of many a satire. It is the old story of the "beggar on horseback." A German proverb declares, "Kein Scheermesser schärfer schiest, als wenn der Bauer zu Herrn wird." Claud., 'In Eutrop.,' i. 181, etc.—

"Asperius nihil est humili, quum surgit in altum;
Cuncta ferit, dum cuncta timet; desævit in omnes,
Ut se posse putent; nec bellua tetrior ulla
Quam servi rabies in libera colla furentis."

As an example of a different disposition, Cornelius à Lapide refers to the history of Agathocles, Tyrant of Syracuse, who rose from the humble occupation of a potter to a position of vast power, and, to remind himself of his lowly origin, used to dine off mean earthenware. Ausonius thus alludes to this humility ('Epigr.,' viii.)—

"Fama est fictilibus cœnasse Agathoclea regem,
Atque abacum Samio sæpe onerasse luto;
Fercula gemmatis cum poneret horrida vasis,
Et misceret opes pauperiemque simul.
Quærenti causam, respondit: Rex ego qui sum
Sicaniæ, figulo sum genitore satus.
Fortunam reverenter habe, quicunque repente
Dives ab exili progrodiere loco."

Ver. 11.—**The discretion of a man deferreth his anger**; *maketh him slow to anger.* "A merciful man is long-suffering," Septuagint; "The teaching of a man is known by patience," Vulgate. (See ch. xiv. 17, 29.) The Greek moralist gives the advice—

Νίκησον ὀργὴν τῷ λογίζεσθαι καλῶς.

"Thine anger quell by reason's timely aid."

The contrary disposition betokens folly (ch. xiv. 17). **It is his glory to pass over a transgression.** It is a real triumph and glory for a man to forgive and to take no notice of injuries offered him. Thus in his poor way he imitates Almighty God (Micah vii. 18, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy"). Here it is discretion or prudence that makes a man patient and forgiving; elsewhere the same effect is attributed to love (ch. x. 12; xvii. 9). The Septuagint Version is hard to understand: Τὸ δὲ καύχημα αὐτοῦ ἐπέρχεται παρανόμοις, "And his glorying cometh on the transgressors;" but, taken in connection with the former hemistich, it seems to mean that the patient man's endurance of the contradictions of sinners is no reproach or disgrace to him, but redounds to his credit and virtue. "Vincit qui patitur," "He conquers who endures."

Ver. 12.—**The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion,** which inspires terror, as preluding danger and death. The same idea occurs in ch. xx. 2 (comp. Amos iii. 4, 8). The Assyrian monuments have made us familiar with the lion as a type of royalty; and the famous throne of Solomon was ornamented with figures of lions on each of its six steps (1 Kings x. 19, etc.). Thus St. Paul, alluding to the Roman emperor, says (2 Tim. iv. 17), "I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." "The lion is dead," announced Marsyas to Agrippa, on the decease of Tiberius (Josephus, 'Ant.,' xviii. 6. 10). The moralist here gives a monition to kings to repress their wrath and not to let it rage uncontrolled, and a warning to subjects not to offend their ruler, lest he tear them to pieces like a savage beast, which an Eastern despot had full power to do. **But his favour is as dew upon the grass.** In ch. xvi. 15 the king's favour was compared to a cloud of the latter rain; here it is likened to the dew (comp. Ps. lxxii. 6). We hardly understand in England the real bearing of this comparison. "The secret of the luxuriant fertility of many parts of Palestine," says Dr. Geikie ('Holy Land and Bible,' i. 72, etc.), "lies in the rich supply of moisture afforded by the sea-winds which blow inland each night, and water the face of the whole land. There is no dew, properly so called in Palestine, for there is no moisture in the hot summer air to be chilled into dewdrops by the coolness of the night, as in a climate like ours. From May till October rain is unknown, the sun shining with unclouded brightness day after day. The heat becomes intense, the ground hard; and vegetation would perish but for the moist west winds that come each night from the sea. The bright skies cause the heat of the day to radiate very quickly into space, so that the nights are as cold as the day is the reverse. . . . To this coldness of the night air the indispensable watering of all plant-life is due. The winds, loaded with moisture, are robbed of it as they pass over the land, the cold air condensing it into drops of water, which fall in a gracious rain of mist on every thirsty blade. In the morning the fog thus created rests like a sea over the plains, and far up the sides of the hills, which raise their heads above it like so many islands. . . . The amount of moisture thus poured on the thirsty vegetation during the night is very great. Dew seemed to the Israelites a mysterious gift of Heaven, as indeed it is. That the skies should be stayed from yielding it was a special sign of Divine wrath, and there could be no more gracious conception of a loving farewell address to his people than where Moses tells them that his speech should distil as the dew. The favour of an Oriental monarch could not be more beneficially conceived than by saying that, while his wrath is like the roaring of a lion, his favour is as the dew upon the grass." רָצוֹן (*ratson*), "favour," is translated by the Septuagint, τὸ ἱλαρόν, and by the Vulgate, *hilaritas*, "cheerfulness" (as in ch. xviii. 22), which gives the notion of a smiling, serene, benevolent countenance, as contrasted with the angry, lowering look of a displeased monarch.

Ver. 13.—With the first clause we may compare ch. x. 1; xv. 20; xvii. 21, 25. **Calamity** in the Hebrew is in the plural number (*contritiones*, Pagn.), as if to mark the many and continued sorrows which a bad son brings upon his father, how he causes evil after evil to harass and distress him. **The contentions of a wife are a continual dropping** (comp. ch. xxvii. 15). The flat roofs of Eastern houses, formed of planks loosely joined and covered with a coating of clay or plaster, were always subject to leakage in heavy rains. The irritating altercations and bickering of a cross-grained wife are compared to the continuous drip of water through an imperfectly constructed roof. *Tecta jugiter perstillantia*, as the Vulgate has it. The Scotch say, "A leaky house and a scolding wife are two bad companions." The two clauses of the verse are co-ordinate, expressing two facts that render home life miserable and unendurable, viz. the misbehaviour of a son and the ill temper of a wife. The Septuagint, following a different reading, has, "Nor are offerings from a harlot's hire pure," which is an allusion to Deut. xxiii. 18.

Ver. 14.—**House and riches are an inheri-**

tance of (*from*) fathers. Any man, worthy or not, may inherit property from progenitors; any man may bargain for a wife, or give a dowry to his son to further his matrimonial prospects. **But a prudent wife is from the Lord.** She is a special gift of God, a proof of his gracious care for his servants (see on ch. xviii. 22). Septuagint, Παρὰ δὲ Κυρίου ἁρμόζεται γυνὴ ἀνδρί, "It is by the Lord that a man is matched with a woman." There is a special providence that watches over wedlock; as we say, "Marriages are made in heaven." But marriages of convenience, marriages made in consideration of worldly means, are a mere earthly arrangement, and claim no particular grace.

Ver. 15.—**Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep**; "causes deep sleep to fall upon a man" (comp. ch. vi. 9; xiii. 4). The word for "sleep" (תַּרְדֵּמָה, *tardemah*) is that used for the supernatural sleep of Adam when Eve was formed (Gen. ii. 21), and implies profound insensibility. Aquila and Symmachus render it, ἔκστασιν, "trance." Slothfulness enervates a man, renders him as useless for labour as if he were actually asleep in his bed; it also enfeebles the mind, corrupts the higher faculties, converts a rational being into a witless animal. *Otium est vivi hominis sepultura*, "Idleness is a living man's tomb." **An idle soul shall suffer hunger.** We have many gnomes to this effect (see ch. x. 4; xii. 24; xx. 13; xxiii. 21). The LXX. has introduced something of this verse at ch. xviii. 8, and here render, Δειλία κατέχει ἀνδρόγυνον, "Cowardice holdeth fast the effeminate, and the soul of the idle shall hunger." "Sloth," as the proverb says, "is the mother of poverty."

Ver. 16.—**Keepeth his own soul.** Obedience to God's commandments preserves a man's natural and spiritual life (comp. ch. xiii. 13; xvi. 17). So we read in Eccles. viii. 5, "Whoso keepeth the commandment (*mitsvah*, as here) shall feel no evil thing." **He that despiseth his ways shall die.** He that cares nothing what he does, whether his life pleases God or not, shall perish. Ἀπολεῖται, Septuagint; *mortificabitur*, Vulgate. The result is understood differently. The Khetib reads, יָמֹת (*iumath*), "shall be punished with death" according to the penalties enacted in the Mosaic Law. The Keri reads, יָמוּת (*iamuth*), "shall die," as in ch. xv. 10; and this seems more in agreement with what we find elsewhere in the book, as in ch. x. 21; xxiii. 13. This insensate carelessness leads to ruin, whether its punishment be undertaken by outraged law, or whether it be left to the Divine retribution.

Ver. 17.—**He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord.** English Church-people are familiar with this distich, as being one of the sentences of Scripture read at the Offertory. The word for "poor" is here *dal*, "feeble" (see on vers. 1 and 4). It is a beautiful thought that by showing mercy and pity we are, as it were, making God our debtor; and the truth is wonderfully advanced by Christ, who pronounces (Matt. xxv. 40), "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (see on ch. xi. 24; xxviii. 27). St. Chrysostom ('Hom.,' xv., on 1 Cor. v.), "To the more imperfect this is what we may say, Give of what you have unto the needy. Increase your substance. For, saith he, 'He that giveth unto the poor lendeth unto God.' But if you are in a hurry, and wait not for the time of retribution, think of those who lend money to men; for not even these desire to get their interest immediately; but they are anxious that the principal should remain a good long while in the hands of the borrower, provided only the repayment be secure, and they have no mistrust of the borrower. Let this be done, then, in the present case also. Leave them with God, that he may pay theo thy wages manifold. Seek not to have the whole here; for if you recover it all here, how will you receive it back there? And it is on this account that God stores thom up there, inasmuch as this present life is full of decay. But he gives even here also; for, 'Seek ye,' saith he, 'the kingdom of heaven, and all these things shall be added unto you.' Well, then, let us look towards that kingdom, and not be in a hurry for the repayment of the whole, lest we diminish our recompense. But let us wait for the fit season. For the interest in these cases is not of that kind, but is such as is meet to be given by God. This, then, having collected together in great abundance, so let us depart hence, that we may obtain both the present and the future blessings" (Oxford transl.). **That which he hath given will he pay him again**; *Vicissitudinem suam reddet ei*, Vulgate, "According to his gift will he recompense him." גְּמוּל (*gemul*), "good deed" (ch. xii. 14, where it is rendered "recompense"). Ecclus. xxxii. (xxxv.) 10, etc., "Give unto the Most High according as he hath enriched thee; and as thou hast gotten give with a cheerful eye. For the Lord recompenseth, and will give thee seven times as much." There are proverbs rife in other lands to the same effect. The Turk says, "What you give in charity in this world you take with you after death. Do good, and throw it into the sea: if the fish does not know it, God does." And the Russian, "Throw bread and salt behind you, you get them before you" (Lane).

Ver. 18.—**Chasten thy son while there is hope**; or, *seeing that there is hope.* Being still young and impressionable, and not confirmed in bad habits, he may be reformed by judicious chastisement. The same expression occurs in Job xi. 18; Jer. xxxi. 16. "For so he shall be well hoped of" (εὐελπις), Septuagint (comp. ch. xxiii. 13). **And let not thy soul spare for his crying.** "It is better," says a German apothegm, "that the child weep than the father." But the rendering of the Authorized Version is not well established, and this second clause is intended to inculcate moderation in punishment. Vulgate, *Ad interfectionem autem ejus ne ponas animam tuam;* Revised Version, *Set not thine heart on his destruction.* Chastise him duly and sufficiently, but not so heavily as to occasion his death, which a father had no right to do. The Law enjoined the parents who had an incorrigibly bad son to bring him before the judge or the elders, who alone had the power of life and death, and might in certain cases order the offender to be stoned (Deut. xxi. 18, etc.). Christianity recommended moderation in punishment (see Eph. vi. 4; Col. iii. 21). Septuagint, "Be not excited in the mind to despiteful treatment (εἰς ὕβριν);" *i.e.* be not led away by passion to unseemly acts or words, but reprove with gentleness, while you are firm and uncompromising in denouncing evil. This is much the same advice as that given by the apostle in the passages just cited.

Ver. 19.—Some connect this verse with the preceding, as though it signified, "If you are too severe in chastising your son, you will suffer for it." But there is no connecting particle in the Hebrew, and the statement seems to be of a general nature. **A man of great wrath**; literally, *rough in anger;* Vulgate, *impatiens;* Septuagint, κακόφρων ἀνήρ. Such a one **shall suffer punishment**; shall bear the penalty which his want of self-control brings upon him. **For if thou deliver him, yet must thou do it again.** You cannot save him from the consequences of his intemperance; you may do so once and again, but while his disposition is unchanged, all your efforts will be useless, and the help which you have given him will only make him think that he may continue to indulge his anger with impunity, or, it may be, he will vent his impatience on his deliverer.

Βλάπτει τὸν ἄνδρα θυμὸς εἰς ὀργὴν πεσών.

"Anger," says an adage, "is like a ruin, which breaks itself upon what it falls." Septuagint, "If he destroy (ἐὰν δὲ λοιμεύηται), he shall add even his life;" if by his anger he inflict loss or damage on his neighbour, he shall pay for it in his own person; Vulgate, *Et cum rapuerit, aliud apponet.* Another interpretation of the passage, but not so suitable, is this: "If thou seek to save the sufferer (*e.g.* by soothing the angry man), thou wilt only the more excite him (the wrathful): therefore do not intermeddle in quarrels of other persons."

Ver. 20.—(Comp. ch. viii. 10; xii. 15.) The Septuagint directs the maxim to children, "Hear, O son, the instruction of thy father." **That thou mayest be wise in thy latter end.** Wisdom gathered and digested in youth is seen in the prudence and intelligence of manhood and old age. Job viii. 7, "Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase." Ecclus. xxv. 6, "O how comely is the wisdom of old men, and understanding and counsel to men of honour! Much experience is the crown of old men, and the fear of God is their glory." "Wer nicht hören will," say the Germans, "muss fühlen," "He that will not hear must feel." Among Pythagoras's golden words we read—

Βουλεύου δὲ πρὸ ἔργου ὅπως μὴ μῶρα πέλῃται.

"Before thou doest aught, deliberate,
Lest folly thee befall."

Ver. 21.—The immutability of the counsel of God is contrasted with the shifting, fluctuating purposes of man (comp. ch. xvi. 1, 9; Numb. xxiii. 19; Mal. iii. 6). Aben Ezra connects this verse with the preceding, as though it gave the reason for the advice contained therein. But it is most natural to take the maxim in a general sense, as above. Wisd. ix. 14, "The thoughts of mortal men are miserable, and our devices are but uncertain." **The counsel of the Lord, that shall stand**; *permanebit,* Vulgate; εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα μενεῖ, "shall abide for ever," Septuagint (Ps. xxxiii. 11).

Ver. 22.—**The desire of a man is his kindness.** The Revised Version rather paraphrases the clause, *The desire of a man is the measure of his kindness;* i.e. the wish and intention to do good is that which gives its real value to an act. The word for "kindness" is *chesed,* "mercy;" and, looking to the context, we see the meaning of the maxim to be that a poor man's desire of aiding a distressed neighbour, even if he is unable to carry out his intention, is taken for the act of mercy. "The desire of a man" may signify a man's desirableness, that which makes him to be desired or loved; this is found in his liberality. But the former explanation is most suitable. Septuagint, "Mercifulness is a gain unto a man," which is like ver. 17; Vulgate, *Homo indigens misericors est,* taking a man's desire as evidencing his need and poverty, and introducing the idea that the experience of misery conduces to pity, as says Dido (Virgil, 'Æn.,' i. 630)—

"Non ignara mali miseris succurrere disco,"

**A poor man is better than a liar.** A poor man who gives to one in distress his sympathy and good wishes, even if he can afford no substantial aid, is better than a rich man who promises much and does nothing, or who falsely professes that he is unable to help (comp. ch. iii. 27, 28). Septuagint, "A poor righteous man is better than a rich liar." A Buddhist maxim says, "Like a beautiful flower, full of colours, but without scent, are the fine but fruitless words of him who does not act accordingly" (Max Müller).

Ver. 23.—**The fear of the Lord** tendeth to life (ch. xiv. 27). True religion, obedience to God's commandments, was, under a temporal dispensation, rewarded by a long and happy life in this world, an adumbration of the blessedness that awaits the righteous in the world to come. **And** he that hath it **shall abide satisfied.** The subject passes from "the fear" to its possessor. Perhaps better, *and satisfied he shall pass the night*, which is the usual sense of לין (*lun*), the verb here translated "abide" (so ch. xv. 31). God will satisfy the good man's hunger, so that he lays him down in peace and takes his rest (comp. ch. x. 3). Vulgate, *In plenitudine commorabitur*, "He shall dwell in abundance." **He shall not be visited with evil,** according to the promises (Lev. xxvi. 6; Deut. xi. 15, etc.). Under our present dispensation Christians expect not immunity from care and trouble, but have hope of protection and grace sufficient for the occasion, and conducive to edification and advance in holiness. The LXX. translates thus: "The fear of the Lord is unto life for a man; but he that is without fear (ὁ δὲ ἄφοβος) shall sojourn in places where knowledge is not seen;" *i.e.* shall go from bad to worse, till he ends in society where Divine knowledge is wholly absent, and lives without God in the world. The Greek interpreters read יד (*dea*), "knowledge," instead of רע (*ra*), "evil."

Ver. 24.—**A slothful man hideth his hand in** his **bosom**; Revised Version, *the sluggard burieth his hand in the dish.* The word *tsallachath*, translated "bosom" here and in the parallel passage, ch. xxvi. 15 (where see note), is rightly rendered "dish" (2 Kings xxi. 13). At an Oriental meal the guests sit round a table, on which is placed a dish containing the food, from which every one helps himself with his fingers, knives, spoons, and forks being never used (comp. Ruth ii. 14; Matt. xxvi. 23). Sometimes the host himself helps a guest whom he wishes to honour (comp. John xiii. 26). **And will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.** He finds it too great an exertion to feed himself, an hyperbolical way of denoting the gross laziness which recoils from the slightest labour, and will not take the least trouble to win its livelihood. An Arabic proverb says, "He dies of hunger under the date tree." Septuagint, "He who unjustly hideth his hands in his bosom will not even apply them to his mouth;" *i.e.* he who will not work will never feed himself.

Ver. 25.—**Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware**; *will learn prudence*, Revised Version (comp. ch. xxi. 11; and see note on ch. i. 22). The scorner is hardened to all reproof, and is beyond all hope of being reformed by punishment; in his case it is retribution for outraged virtue that is sought in the penalty which he is made to pay. Τιμωρία, not κόλασις—retributive, not corrective punishment. Seeing this, the simple, who is not yet confirmed in evil, and is still open to better influences, may be led to take warning and amend his life. So St. Paul enjoins Timothy, "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear" (1 Tim. v. 20). There is the trite adage—

"Felix quem faciunt aliena pericula cautum."
"Happy they
Who from their neighbours' perils caution learn."

Septuagint, "When a pestilent fellow is chastised, a fool will be cleverer (πανουργότερος)." So Vulgate, *Pestilente flagellato stultus sapientior erit.* **Reprove one that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge.** The scorner does not profit by severe punishment, but the intelligent man is improved by censure and admonition (comp. ch. xiii. 1; xv. 12). Says the adage, "Sapientem nutu, stultum fuste (corripe)," "A nod for the wise, a stick for the fool."

Ver. 26—ch. xxii. 16.—Fourth section of this collection.

Ver. 26.—**He that wasteth his father.** The verb *shadad*, used here and in ch. xxiv. 15, may be taken in the sense of "to spoil," "to deprive of property;" but it is better to adopt a more general application, and to assign to it the meaning of "to maltreat," whether in person or property. **Chaseth away his mother;** by his shameless and evil life makes it impossible for her to continue under the same roof with him; or, it may be, so dissipates his parents' means that they are driven from their home. **A son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach** (comp. ch. x. 5; xiii. 5; xvii. 2).

Ver. 27.—**Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.** This version fairly represents the terse original, if *musar*, "instruction," be taken in a bad sense, like the "profane and vain babblings and oppositions of the knowledge which is falsely so called," censured by St. Paul (1 Tim. vi. 20).

But as *musar* is used in a good sense throughout this book, it is better to regard the injunction as warning against listening to wise teaching with no intention of profiting by it: "Cease to hear instruction in order to err," etc.; *i.e.* if you are only going to continue your evil-doings. You will only increase your guilt by knowing the way of righteousness perfectly, while you refuse to walk therein. The Vulgate inserts a negation, "Cease not to hear doctrine, and be not ignorant of the words of knowledge;" Septuagint, "A son who fails to keep the instruction of his father will meditate evil sayings." Solomon's son Rehoboam greatly needed the admonition contained in this verse.

Ver. 28.—**An ungodly** (*worthless*) **witness scorneth judgment**; derides the Law which denounces perjury and compels a witness to speak truth (Exod. xx. 16; Lev. v. 1), and, as is implied, he bears false testimony, thus proving himself "a witness of Belial," according to the Hebrew term. Septuagint, "He who becometh security for a foolish child outrages judgment." **The mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity**; swallows it eagerly as a toothsome morsel (ch. xviii. 8). So we have in Job xv. 16, "A man that drinketh iniquity like water" (see on ch. xxvi. 6). Such a man will lie and slander with the utmost pleasure, living and battening on wickedness. Septuagint, "The mouth of the impious drinketh judgments (*κρίσεις*)," *i.e.* boldly transgresses the Law.

Ver. 29.—**Judgments are prepared for scorners** (see on ver. 25). The judgments here are those inflicted by the providence of God, as in ch. iii. 34. Scorners may deride and affect to scorn the judgments of God and man, but they are warned that retribution awaits them. **And stripes for the back of fools**; Vulgate, *Et mallei percutientes stultorum corporibus* (comp. ch. x. 13; xxvi. 3). We had the word here rendered "stripes" (מַהֲלֻמוֹת, *mahalumoth*) in ch. xviii. 6. The certainty of punishment in the case of transgressors is a truth often insisted on even by heathens. Examples will occur to all readers, from the old Greek oracle, Οὐδεὶς ἀνθρώπων ἀδικῶν τίσιν οὐκ ἀποτίσει, to Horace's "Raro antecedentem scelestum," etc. (See on ch. xx. 30, where, however, the punishment is of human infliction.)

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*Poverty and integrity.* I. IT IS POSSIBLE FOR POVERTY TO BE FOUND WITH INTEGRITY. We do not always see integrity leading to wealth. Circumstances may not open up an opportunity for attaining worldly prosperity. Illicit "short cuts" to riches may be within the reach of a person who refuses to use them on grounds of principle. A man may be honest and yet incapable, or he may refuse to pursue his own advantage, preferring to devote his energies to some higher end. No one has a right to suppose that God will interfere to heap up riches for him on account of his ntegrity. He may be upright, and yet it may please God that he shall also be poor.

II. IT IS POSSIBLE FOR INTEGRITY TO BE FOUND WITH POVERTY. We now approach the subject from the opposite side. Here we first see the poverty, and we then find that there is no reason why the character should be low because the outside circumstances are reduced. There is no more vulgar or false snobbishness than that which treats poverty as a vice, and assumes that a shady character must be expected with shabby clothes. We sometimes hear the expression, "Poor *but* honest," as though there were any natural antithesis between the two adjectives! It would be quite as just to think of an antithesis between wealth and uprightness. But experience shows that no one section of society holds a monopoly of virtue.

III. WHEN INTEGRITY AND POVERTY ARE FOUND TOGETHER, THE ONE IS A CONSOLATION FOR THE OTHER. It may be said that a hungry man cannot feed upon his honesty. But when pressing wants are supplied, it is possible to endure a considerable amount of hardship if a person is conscious of being upright and true. The sturdy independence of the honest man will lift him out of the shame of penury. If he feels that he is walking in the path of duty, he will have a source of strength and inward peace that no wealth can bestow. The gold of goodness is better than the guineas of hoarded wealth.

IV. INTEGRITY WITH ANY EXTERNAL DISADVANTAGES IS BETTER THAN CORRUPTION OF CHARACTER WITH ALL POSSIBLE WORLDLY PROFIT. Here is the point of the subject. It is not affirmed that poverty is good in itself—the natural instincts of man lead him to endeavour to escape from it as an evil. It is not even asserted that it is right for

upright men to be poor, for surely one would desire that the power of wealth should be in the hands of those people who would use it most justly. But when we have to compare integrity joined to the disadvantages of poverty with an unworthy character in no matter what circumstances, the infinite superiority of moral to material worth should lead us to prefer the former. In higher regions, the Christian character is itself a source of blessedness, whatever be the condition of the outer life. Character and conduct are the essentials of life; all other things are but the accidents.

Ver. 3.—*Fretting against the Lord.* This is a condition of inward rebellion, or at best of grieving over the will of God instead of submitting to it in silence if it is not yet within our power to embrace it with affection. Consider this condition in its various relations.

I. IT IS POSSIBLE. It might be supposed that, however one fretted against his circumstances, he would not carry his complainings back to God. But Moses told the Israelites that when they murmured against him they were really murmuring against God (Exod. xvi. 8). If we resist God's ordinances we resist God himself. He who fires on the meanest sentry is really making war on that sentry's sovereign. We may not intend to act the proud part of Milton's Satan, and wage war against Heaven. Overt blasphemy and rank rebellion may be far from our thoughts. Yet complaints of our lot and resistance to Providence have the same essential character. We may even try to confine our rebellious thoughts to our own breasts, and simply fret inwardly. But to God, who reads hearts and dwells within, this is real opposition.

II. IT SPRINGS FROM VARIOUS SOURCES. 1. *Trouble.* It is easy for Dives to talk of submission to Providence; the difficulty is with Lazarus. Job in prosperity offers glad sacrifices without constraint: will Job in adversity "curse God and die"? 2. *Self-will.* We naturally desire to follow the way of our own choice, and when that is crossed by God's will we are tempted to fret, as the stream frets itself against an obstruction, though it may have been flowing silently and placidly so long as it had a free course. It is just this crossing of wills that is the test of obedience, which is easy so long as we are required only to follow the path of our own inclinations. But that cannot be always allowed. 3. *Sin.* Direct sinfulness resists God's will of set purpose, just because it is his will. The evil heart will fret against God in all things.

III. IT IS FOOLISH. "The foolishness of man" is at the root of this mistake. 1. *We do not know what is best.* It is but foolish for the fractious child to fret against his father's commands, for he is not yet able to judge as his father judges. All rebellion against God implies that the soul is in a position to determine questions that lie in the dark, and which only he who is resisted can answer. 2. *We cannot succeed in rebellion.* The poor heart that frets itself against God can but wear itself out, like the wave that breaks on the rock it can never shake. How foolish to raise our will in opposition to the Almighty!

IV. IT IS CULPABLE. We must never forget that "foolishness" in the Bible stands for a defect that is more moral than intellectual. It is next door to perversity. This fretting of the heart against the Lord is foolish in the biblical sense; it is sinful. 1. *He is our Master.* It is our duty to obey him, whether we like it or not. When we resist ordinances of man we may be fighting for rights of liberty. But we have no liberty to claim against the Lord of all. 2. *He is our Father.* This murmuring against him is a sign of domestic ingratitude. Impatience under the rod is even sinful, for we know that it can only smite in love.

V. IT IS DANGEROUS. 1. *It means present unrest.* There is peace of soul in submission; to rebel is to be plunged into turmoil and distress. 2. *It leads to future ruin.* The foolishness of man not only "perverteth his way," but, as the phrase may be better rendered, "hurls his way headlong to destruction." It is like the avalanche that sweeps the mountain-path, and carries all on it to an awful death.

Ver. 11.—*Deferred anger.* I. DEFERRED ANGER IS SAVED FROM FATAL ERROR. "Anger," says the familiar Latin proverb, "is a short madness." While it lasts a man loses full control of himself. Then he utters strong, hot words without weighing the meaning of them or considering how they may strike their object. He is tempted to hit out wildly, and to do far more mischief than he would ever approve of in

calmer moments. The words and deeds of anger are but momentary; yet their fatal effects are irrevocable. These effects endure and work harm long after the fierce flame of passion out of which they sprang has died down into grey ashes of remorse. Inasmuch as it is not possible to reason calmly when under a fit of anger, the only safe expedient is to hold back and wait for a more suitable occasion of speaking and acting.

II. DEFERRED ANGER WILL MOST PROBABLY BURN ITSELF OUT. Anger is like

> "A full-hot horse, who, being allow'd his way,
> Self-mettle tires him."
>
> (Shakespeare.)

It is of the nature of anger to be more fierce than the occasion demands. Therefore it is to be expected that time for reflection will moderate it. Now, if it is modified by time, its earlier excess is demonstrated, and it is made evident that delay saved us from disaster. For it is not simply the case that we tire of anger, that we have not energy enough to be perpetually angry, that well-earned wrath expires of its own feebleness. The fact is we are all tempted to show needless anger against those who in any way injure us. Time may reveal unexpected excuses for their conduct, or lead us to see the better way of forgiveness. We do but need an opportunity to go into our chamber, and shut to the door, and pray to our Father in secret, to discover how wrong and foolish and dangerous our hasty wrath was, and to learn the wisdom of meekness and patience.

III. DEFERRED ANGER MAY YET BE EXERCISED. There are circumstances under which we should do well to be angry; for, as Thomas Fuller says, "Anger is one of the sinews of the soul." Christ was "moved with indignation" when his disciples forbad the mothers of Israel to bring their children to him (Mark x. 14), and he showed great anger against the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. It is not right that we should witness cruel injustice and oppression with equanimity. It may reveal a culpable weakness, cowardice, or selfishness in us for sights of wrong-doing not to move us to anger. But such anger as is earned and needed by justice can bear to be reflected on. Even with this justifiable wrath haste may lead to disaster. Thus the violent explosion of popular indignation that follows the discovery of some foul crime or some grievous wrong is in great danger of falling into fatal blunders; sometimes it makes a victim of an innocent person, simply for want of consideration. There is no excuse for "lynch law." "The courts are open," and calm investigation and orderly methods will not lessen the equity of the punishment they deliberately bring on an offender. Justice is not to behave like a ravenous beast raging for its prey. There is room for calmness and reflection in connection with those great waves of popular indignation that periodically sweep over the surface of society. When the anger has been wisely deferred, and yet has been ultimately justified, its outburst is the more terrible; it is the flowing out of wrath "treasured up against the day of wrath." Dryden says—

> "Beware the fury of a patient man."

Ver. 16.—*Soul-keeping.* The "Power that makes for righteousness," though not impersonal, as Mr. Matthew Arnold assumed, is nevertheless active as by a constant law. It is so ordered in nature and providence that goodness preserves life, and badness tends to ruin and death. Let us endeavour to see how the process is worked out.

I. THE GREAT RESULT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IS SOUL-KEEPING. 1. *It may not be wealth.* We cannot assume that goodness tends to riches. Keeping the commandments does not always result in a man's making his fortune. Christ was a poor man. 2. *It may not be earthly happiness.* Other things being equal, a clear conscience should bring peace and inward joy. But there are troubles that fall upon us independently of our conduct. There are distresses that come directly from doing right. Christ was a "Man of sorrows." 3. *It may not be long life on earth.* No doubt this was expected in Old Testament times, for then but dim notions of any existence beyond the grave ever entered the minds of men. On the whole, no doubt, goodness tends to health of body and mind. Still, very good people may die young. Christ died at thirty-three years of age. 4. *It will be the real preservation of the soul.* The true life will be safe. The self will abide. Now, all our being really resides in our personal self. If this continues in safety, we have the highest personal security. But if not, all other gain is but a

mockery; for "what is a man profited if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul—his life, himself?" (Matt. xvi. 26).

II. RIGHTEOUSNESS LEADS TO SOUL-KEEPING BY NATURAL LAWS. It is a matter of Divine ordering that obedience should be followed by life, disobedience by death. This was seen in the trial of Adam (Gen. iii. 3). It lies at the root of the great sanctions of the Mosaic Law (Ezek. iii. 18). He who gave the commandments also gives life. Our life is in the hand of our Lawgiver. It is in his power to withhold the life if we break the law. But we may look more closely into this process. God's commandments are not arbitrary. They follow the natural lines of spiritual health. His prohibitions are really the warnings against the course that leads naturally and inevitably to death. Goodness is itself vitality, and badness has a deadening effect on the soul. The faculties are quickened by use in the service of what is right, and they are dwarfed, perverted, paralyzed, and finally killed by reckless, lawless conduct. The profligate is a suicide.

III. CHRISTIANITY HELPS US TO TRUE SOUL-KEEPING BY LEADING US TO RIGHTEOUSNESS. We find ourselves in the unhappy condition of those who have not kept the commandments. Therefore we are in danger of death. We have "despised our ways." The law and the promise are not addressed to us as to new beings; but they meet us in our sin and on our road to ruin. Therefore, if there were no gospel, there would be no hope. Hence the need of a Saviour. But when we enter the realm of Christian truth we cannot turn our backs on the principles of the older economy. We cannot regard them as the laws of another planet, out of the reach of which we have escaped. They are eternal truths, and we are still within their range. Christ helps us, not by teaching us to despise moral considerations as though they were irrelevant to those who had entered into the covenant of grace, but by giving us his own righteousness to be *in* us as well as *on* us. He puts us in the way of obedience, while he cancels the consequences of the old disobedience. Thus he saves our souls by helping us to preserve them in a new fidelity to the ancient, eternal right.

Ver. 17.—*Lending unto the Lord.* I. IN WHAT LENDING TO THE LORD CONSISTS. It is having pity upon the poor. This is more than almsgiving. Doles of charity may be given to the needy from very mixed motives. Inasmuch as "the Lord looketh at the heart," the thoughts and feelings that prompt our charity are of primary importance with him. In the same way, also, sympathy is prized by our suffering brethren on its own account, and the gifts that are flung from an unfeeling hand bring little comfort to the miserable. Therefore, both for God's sake and for the sake of our suffering brethren, the first requirement is to cultivate a spirit of sympathy with the helpless. When this spirit is attained, the application of practical remedies will require thought. It is easy to toss a sixpence to a beggar, but the inconsiderate act may work more harm than good. True sympathy will lead us to inquire into the unfortunate man's circumstances, and to see whether there may not be some wiser way of helping him. This is one of the most pressing problems of our complicated condition of society. It is not so easy to be wisely helpful to the poor as it was in the simpler circumstances of ancient times. A true Christian sympathy must lead us to study the deep, dark problem of poverty. How can the lowest classes be permanently raised? How can they be really saved? How can we help people to help themselves?

II. HOW THIS COMES TO BE LENDING TO THE LORD. In the olden times people thought to offer to God in material, visible sacrifices by slaying animals on the altar. Now money and service given to a Christian Church and to directly missionary agencies for spreading the kingdom of heaven, and so glorifying God, are regarded as devoted to God. Thus we are to see that we can serve him by ministering directly to the well-being of our fellow-men. 1. *Men are God's children.* He who helps the child pleases the father. 2. *God has pity on the suffering.* Therefore for us to have pity is to be like God, and so to please him; it is to do his will, to do the thing he would have us do, and so to render him service. 3. *This is within our reach.* The difficulty is to see how we can do anything to help the Almighty, or give anything to enrich the Owner of all things. The cattle upon a thousand hills are his. But the poor we have always with us. Inasmuch as we do a kindness to one of the least of these, Christ's brethren, we do it unto him (Matt. xxv. 40). All real love to man is

also love to God. The noblest liturgy is the ministry of human charity. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (Jas. i. 27).

III. WHY THIS IS ONLY LENDING TO THE LORD. It is returned to the giver. Such a thought seems to lower the tone of the subject. To give, hoping for no return, is Christ's method, and this lifts us to a higher level. Love asks for no payment. The pity that calculates its recompense is a false and selfish sentiment. Assuredly we must learn to love for love's sake, and to pity because we are moved with compassion, irrespective of returns. 1. *Yet the fact that there is a return remains.* It may be well for selfish men who refrain from showing sympathy for the needy to reflect on this. Their selfishness is short-sighted. 2. *The return is spiritual.* We are not to look for our money back again. That would involve no real giving. The return is different in kind. It is of a higher character, and comes in peace of soul, in enlargement of affection, in the satisfaction of seeing good results flowing from our sympathy.

Ver. 18.—*Timely chastisement.* I. CHASTISEMENT SHOULD BE TIMELY. "Prevention is better than cure." If we wait till the weeds run to seed it is in vain for us to pull them up—they will have sown another and larger crop. The lion's cub may be caught and caged; the full-grown beast is dangerous to approach, and out of our power. Consider some practical applications of these truths. 1. *They show us the importance of early home-training.* The first seeds are sown at home. If an evil disposition reveals itself there, it should be checked before it develops into a fatal habit. Foolishly fond parents laugh at exhibitions of bad temper and other faults in very young children, amused at the quaintness and pitying the helplessness of these miniature sins. But surely a wiser course would be to nip the evil in the bud. 2. *They enhance the value of Sunday school work.* Five million children were under Sunday school teaching in England during the year 1888. The great mass of the population passes through this instruction. Surely more should be made of the golden opportunity thus afforded of giving a right course to the lives of the people. Most working men will not go to church. But they will permit their children to attend Sunday school. We have the working classes with us in their childhood. 3. *They point to an enlargement of the agency of industrial schools.* Already juvenile crime has been reduced by one-half—this is one of the most cheering signs of the times. But still there are multitudes of children who breathe an atmosphere of crime from their cradles. There is no more Christian work than the effort to save these victims of the vices of their parents. The juvenile offender should be an object of peculiar solicitude to one who has the well-being of society at heart.

II. CHASTISEMENT SHOULD BE HOPEFUL. There is hope for all in their youth. We may not be able to recover the degraded, besotted wrecks of humanity in their more advanced years. But the children are amenable to saving influences, and the treatment of them should be inspired with a belief that they may be trained. Directly any parent or teacher despairs of a child he proves himself no longer competent to have the charge of him. Reading the second clause of the verse in the language of the Revisers, we are warned against vindictive chastisement: "And set not thy heart on his destruction." The old notion of punishment was purely retributive; the newer notion of it is more disciplinary. We want fewer prisons and more reformatories. But for encouragement in such efforts we must have grounds of hope. Observe some of these. 1. *The elasticity of youth.* The young are capable of great changes and of large development. 2. *The Divine direction.* The providence of God overruling our attempts at correction is needed to bring them to a successful issue. But we have a right to look for this end, for God desires the salvation and recovery of his children. 3. *The power of love.* We can never correct to good purpose unless we do so from motives of love. When these motives are felt they cannot but make themselves effective in the end. Then, though the chastisement may have been resented at first, the good purpose that instigated it will be ultimately recognized, and may rouse the better nature of the wrong-doer.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—7.—*The lowly and gentle life.* He who is truly humble before his God will be sweet, kind, and peaceable in his relations to men.

I. THE ATTRIBUTES OF THIS LIFE. (Vers. 1—3.) 1. It is the life of *innocence*, in the seeking to have a conscience "void of offence toward God and toward men." This makes poverty rich and privation blessed, for the kingdom of heaven is for such. The consciousness of being dear to God is the true wealth of the soul; the sense of being alienated from him darkens and distresses even amidst wealth and luxury. In addition to this, let us recollect the paradox of the apostle, "Poor, yet making many rich." It is such lives that have indeed enriched the world. 2. It is the life of *thoughtfulness*. 3. It is the life of *content*.

II. ITS TRIALS AND CONSOLATIONS. 1. It often incurs the *coldness of the world* (ver. 4). A man who goes down in the scale of wealth finds, in the same degree, the circle of ordinary acquaintances shrink. 2. But there is *consolation*—a sweetness even in the heart of this bitter experience, for the soul is thrown the more entirely upon God. When friends, when even father and mother forsake, the Lord takes up. *Deus meus et omnia!* We are naturally prone to rely more upon man than upon God; and have to rewrite upon our memories the old biblical maxim, "Put not your trust in man." Poverty may separate us from so-called friends, but "who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

III. THE REPULSIVE CONTRAST TO THIS LIFE. A victim of vice and moral poverty amidst outward wealth. 1. *Folly and untruth.* (Ver. 1.) The words and the thoughts are interchangeable. The godless, selfish rich man's life is a *living lie.* The outward parts of Dives and Lazarus are in the sight of Heaven reversed. 2. *Thoughtless rashness.* (Ver. 2.) The "making haste to be rich," so strong a passion of our day, may be chiefly thought of. But any excessive eagerness of ambitious desire, or sensual pleasure which blinds the soul to thought, and indisposes for serious reflection, comes under this head. But the unreflective life is neither *safe* nor *happy.* It is to such thoughtless ones the solemn warning comes, "Thou fool! thy *soul* shall be required of thee." 3. *Murmuring discontent.* (Ver. 3.) The source of the vicious kind of discontent is a conscience at war with itself, and perversely mistaking the true nature of the satisfaction it needs. The "Divine discontent" which springs from the sense of our inward poverty carries in it the seed of its own satisfaction. It is the blessed hunger and thirst which shall be fed. 4. *False social relations.* (Ver. 4.) Of the friends made by riches it is true that "riches harm them, not the man" (Bishop Hall). And the great man lives amidst illusions; and, in moments of insight, doubts whether among the obsequious crowd there be a heart he can claim as his own. In such an atmosphere, false witness and lies, in all their forms of scandal, slander, destruction, spring up (ver. 5). It is a *hollow* life, and the fires of judgment murmur beneath it. Yet the *fulsome flattery* which rises like a cloud of incense before the rich man, and the throng of easily bought "friends," still hide from him the true state of the case. Well may Divine Wisdom warn of the difficulty which attends the rich man's entrance into the kingdom. Here there are great lessons on compensation. God hath set the one thing over against the other, to the end that we should seek nothing after him (Eccles. vii. 14). The gentle and humble poor may convert their poverty into the fine gold of the spirit; while the rich man too dearly buys "position" at the expense of the soul.—J.

Vers. 8—17.—*Maxims of intelligence.* I. THE WORTH OF INTELLIGENCE. 1. It is *self-conservative* (ver. 8). We all love our own soul or life in any healthy state of body and mind. We all want to live as long as possible. It is natural to desire to live again beyond the grave. Then let us understand that there is no way to these ends except that of intelligence, in the highest and in every sense. 2. *It is the source of happiness.* (Ver. 8.) The truth is very general and abstract, like the truth of the whole of these proverbs. It does not amount to this—that good sense will in every case *procure* happiness, but that there is no true happiness without it.

II. SOME MAXIMS OF INTELLIGENCE. 1. *The sorrow that falsehood brings.* (Ver. 9.) It is *certain.* Many a lie is not immediately *found out* in the ordinary sense of these

words; but it is always *found in* the man's mind. It vitiates the intelligence, undermines the moral strength. The rest must follow in its time—*somewhere, somehow.* 2. *Vanity stands in its own light.* (Ver. 10.) Those who have given way to overweening self-esteem and arrogance of temper—like Rehoboam, or like Alexander the Great, or Napoleon—become only the more conceited and presumptuous in success. The opposite of vanity is not grovelling self-disparagement, but the sense which teaches us to *know our place.* 3. *The prudence of toleration and of conciliation.* (Vers. 11, 12.) Socrates was a noble example of these virtues in the heathen world. We who have "learned Christ" should not at least fall behind him. To bear our wrongs with patience is the lower degree of this virtue. Positively to "overcome evil with good" stands higher. Highest of all is the Divine art to turn persecutors into friends (1 Pet. ii. 19; Matt. v. 44, *sqq.*). 4. *The arcana of domestic life.* (Vers. 13, 14.) (1) *The foolish son.* "Many are the miseries of a man's life, but none like that which cometh from him who should be the stay of his life." "Write this man childless" would have been a boon in comparison. (2) *The tiresome spouse. Wearing* the heart that is firm as stone by her continual contentions. (3) *The kind and good wife.* No gift so clearly shows the tender providence of God. 5. *The inevitable fate of idleness.* (Ver. 15.) (1) *It produces a lethargy in the soul.* (Ch. vi. 9, 10.) The faculties that are not used become benumbed and effete. (2) Thus *it leads to want.* Although these are general maxims of a highly abstract character, still how true on the whole—if not without exception—they are to life! "He that will not work, neither let him eat." 6. *The wisdom of attention to God's commands.* (Ver. 16.) (1) To every man his soul is dear; *i.e.* his life is sweet. (2) The great secret, in the lower sense of self-preservation, in the higher of salvation, is *obedience to law.* (3) Inattention is the chief source of calamity. In the lower relation it is so. The careless crossing of the road, the unsteady foot on the mountain-side, seems to be *punished* instantly and terribly. And this is the type of the truth in higher aspects. 7. *The reward of pity and benevolence.* (Ver. 17.) Sir Thomas More used to say there was more rhetoric in this sentence than in a whole library. God looks upon the poor as his own, and satisfies the debts they cannot pay. In spending upon the poor the good man serves God in his designs with reference to men.—J.

Vers. 18—21.—*The true prudence.* I. IN THE PARENTAL RELATION. (Ver. 18.) 1. *The necessity of discipline.* The exuberance of youth needs the hand of the pruner; the wildness of the colt must be early tamed, or never. Weak indulgence is the worst unkindness to children. 2. *The unwisdom of excessive severity.* Cruelty is not discipline; too great sharpness is as bad as the other extreme. Children are thus made base, induced to take up with bad company, and to surfeit and run to excess when they become their own masters.

II. IN THE RELATION OF SELF-GOVERNMENT. 1. *The folly and injuriousness of passion.* (Ver. 19.) Not only in the harmful deeds and words it may produce towards others, but in the havoc it produces in one's own bosom. How fine the saying of Plato to his slave, "I would beat thee, but that I am angry"! "Learn of him who is meek and lowly of heart." 2. *The wisdom of a teachable spirit.* (Ver. 20.) Never to be above listening to proffered advice from others, and to find in every humiliation and every failure an admonition from the Father of spirits,—this is life-wisdom. And thus a store is being laid up against the time to come, that we may lay hold on eternal life.

III. PRUDENCE BUT A FINITE WISDOM. (Ver. 21.) God is our best Counsellor; without him our prudence avails not, and along with all prudence there must be the recognition of his overruling, all-controlling wisdom. To begin with God is the true secret of success in every enterprise. May he *prevent*, or go before, us in all our doings!—J.

Vers. 22—29.—*Mixed maxims of life-wisdom.* I. HUMAN KINDNESS. (Ver. 22.) There is no purer delight than in the feelings of love and the practical exercise of universal kindness. If the mere *pleasure* of the selfish and the benevolent life be the criterion, without question the latter has the advantage.

II. TRUTHFULNESS. (Vers. 22, 28.) So the honest poor outweighs the rich or successful liar in intrinsic happiness as well as in repute. The worthless witness is a pest to society, an abomination to God.

III. PIETY. (Ver. 23.) It is a *living* principle in every sense of the word—hath the promise of life in both worlds. It provides for the soul satisfaction, rest, the consciousness of present and eternal security.

IV. IDLENESS. (Ver. 24.) Exposed by a vivid picture of the idle man's attitude. It reminds one of the saying concerning a certain distinguished writer's idleness, that were he walking through an orchard where the fruit brushed against his mouth, he would be too idle to open it to bite a morsel. No moral good can be ours without seeking.

V. SCOFFING FOLLY CONTRASTED WITH SIMPLICITY AND SENSE. (Vers. 25, 29.) He that places himself above instruction ends by bringing himself beneath contempt. Scorn for good has, like every sin, its own determined punishment. And "God strikes some that he may warn all."

VI. FILIAL IMPIETY. (Vers. 26, 27.) The shame and sorrow that it brings to parents is constantly insisted on as a lesson and a warning to the latter. If these bitter experiences are to be avoided, let children be timely trained to obedience, respect, and reverence for God. God's Word is the true rule and guide of life, and he who departs from it is a corrupt and seductive teacher.—J.

Ver. 2.—*The evil of ignorance.* Manifold are the evils of ignorance. All evil of all kinds has been resolved into error; but, if we do not go so far as this, we may truly say—

I. THAT IGNORANCE OF GOD IS FATAL. "This is life eternal, to *know God*;" and if the knowledge of God is life, what must the ignorance of him be? History and observation only too fully assure us what it is: it is spiritual and moral death; the departure of the soul from all that enlightens and elevates, and its sinking down into grovelling and debasing superstitions. To be without the knowledge of God is simply fatal to the soul of man.

II. THAT IGNORANCE OF OUR HUMAN NATURE IS PERILOUS. 1. Not to know its nobler possibilities is to be without the needful incentive to lofty aspiration and strenuous endeavour. 2. Not to know its weaknesses and its possibilities of evil is to go forward into the midst of bristling dangers, unarmed and undefended.

III. THAT IGNORANCE OF THE WORLD (OF MEN AND THINGS) IS HIGHLY UNDESIRABLE. 1. To study, and thus to be acquainted with nature as God has fashioned it, to be familiar with the ways and with the arts and sciences of man,—is to be braced and strengthened in mind, is to be far better able to understand and to apply the truth of God as revealed in his Word. 2. To be ignorant of all this is to be correspondingly weak and incapable. Knowledge is power, and ignorance is weakness, in every direction. To go on our way through the world, failing to acquire the grasp of fact and truth which intelligent observation and patient study would secure,—this is to leave untouched one large part of the heritage which our heavenly Father is offering to us. There is one particular consequence of ignorance which the wise man specifies; for he reminds us—

IV. THAT PRECIPITANCY IN WORD AND DEED IS POSITIVELY GUILTY. "He that hasteth with his feet sinneth." An unwise and hurtful precipitancy is the natural accompaniment of ignorance. The man who knows only a very little, does not know when he has heard only one-half of all that can be learnt; hence he decides and speaks and acts off-hand, without waiting for additional, complementary, or qualifying particulars. And hence he judges falsely and unjustly; hence he acts unrighteously and foolishly, and often cruelly; he takes steps which he has laboriously and ignominiously to retrace; he does harm to the very cause which he is most anxious to help. It is the man of wide knowledge and expanded view, it is the large-minded and well-informed soul, that bears the best testimony, that does the worthiest and most enduring work, that lives the largest and most enviable life.—C.

Ver. 3.—*Disquietude and complaint.* We have—

I. GOD'S RIGHTEOUS WAY. The way in which God intended man to walk was that way of wisdom, all of whose paths are peace. This divinely appointed way is that of holy service. Man, like every other being above him, and every other creature below Him in the universe, was created to serve. We were created to serve our God and our

kind; and in this double service we should find our rest and our heritage. This, which is God's way, should have been our way also.

II. MAN'S PERVERTED WAY. Man, in his sin and his folly, has "perverted his way;" he has attempted another path, a short cut to happiness and success. He has turned out of the high-road of holy service into the by-path of selfishness; he has sought his satisfaction and his portion in following his own will, in giving himself up to worldly ambitions, in indulging in unholy pleasure, in living for mere enjoyment, in making himself the master, and his own good the end and aim of his life.

III. HIS CONSEQUENT DISQUIETUDE. When anything is in its wrong place, there is certain to be unrest. If in the mechanism of the human body, or in the machinery of an engine, or in the working of some organization, anything (or any one) is misplaced, disorder and disquietude invariably ensue. And when man puts his will above or against that of his Divine Creator, that of his heavenly Father, there is a displacement and reversal such as may well bring about disturbance. And it does. It is hardly saying too much to say that all the violence, disease, strife, misery, poverty, death, we see around us arise from this disastrous perversion—from man trying to turn God's way of blessedness into his own way. Man's method has been utterly wrong and mistaken, and the penalty of his folly is heart-ache, wretchedness, ruin.

IV. HIS VAIN AND GUILTY COMPLAINT. He "fretteth against the Lord." Instead of smiting himself, he complains of God. He fails to see that the source of his unrest is in his own heart; he ascribes it to his circumstances, and he imputes these to his Creator. So, either secretly or openly, he complains of God; he thinks, and perhaps says, that God has dealt hardly with him, has denied to him what he has given to others; in the dark depths of his soul is a guilty rebelliousness.

V. THE ONE WAY OF REST. This is to return unto the Lord in free and full submission. 1. To recognize God's righteous claim upon us, as our Creator, Preserver, Redeemer. 2. To acknowledge to ourselves and to confess to him that we have guiltily withheld ourselves from him, and sinfully complained of his holy will. 3. To ask his mercy in Jesus Christ our Saviour, and offer our hearts to himself and our lives to his service. This is the one way of rest and joy; it is "the path of life."—C.

Vers. 8, 16.—*Making the most of ourself and our life.* How shall we most truly "love our own soul" but by making all we can make of the nature and the life God has entrusted to our care! And how shall we do this? Surely by "getting wisdom" and "keeping understanding." To look at the subject negatively and, beginning at the bottom, to take an upward path, we remark—

I. THAT CONTEMPTUOUS CARELESSNESS MEANS CERTAIN RUIN. "He that despiseth his ways shall die." The man who never pauses to consider what he can accomplish, how he shall spend his days and his powers, but who goes aimlessly onward, letting youth and manhood pass without any serious thought at all, and content to snatch the enjoyment of the passing hour,—is a man of folly, and he can expect nothing, as he certainly will find nothing, but the most meagre portion and a very speedy end of everything. He sows to the flesh, and of the flesh he reaps corruption. To "despise our way" in this fashion is to forfeit our inheritance and come to utter destitution. Moving higher up, but still failing to reach the right standard, we remark—

II. THAT ANY COUNSEL WHICH IS NOT OF GOD WILL PROVE DISAPPOINTING. There is much cleverness and keenness that is not wisdom; there is much concern about ourself and our future which is not a true "love for our own soul." There are many counsellors who will advise us to seek certain pleasures, or to aim at certain honours, or to climb to a certain position, or to seek entrance into some particular society, or to secure a certain treasure,—and it will be well with us. But any counsel which falls short of telling us the will of God, which leaves untold the wisdom which is from above, will certainly prove to be unsound. A point will come in our experience where it will break down. It will not meet the deeper necessities of our nature nor the darker passages of our life. We must take higher ground—that on which we see—

III. THAT DIVINE WISDOM WILL LEAD US TO TRUE AND LASTING BLESSEDNESS. "The fear of the Lord, *that* is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding" (Job xxviii. 28; see ch. i. 7; ix. 10). And surely: 1. To know God is, in itself, a real and a great blessing (Jer. ix. 24). To know God as he is revealed in Jesus Christ is

to be enriched in the most precious and valuable knowledge; it is "to be wiser than the ancients;" it is to have that in our mind which is of more intrinsic worth than all that men can put into their pockets. 2. To know God in Jesus Christ is to have rest of heart (Matt. xi. 28, 29). Those who love themselves will surely care for spiritual rest—for a peace which no favouring circumstances can confer. 3. To learn of Christ and keep his commandments is to be preserved in moral and spiritual integrity; he that "keepeth the commandments" by consulting the will of Christ will certainly "keep his own soul" from all that stains and slays a human spirit and a human life —from impurity, insobriety, untruthfulness, dishonesty, profanity, selfishness; he will "keep his soul" in the love of God, in the light of his countenance, under his guardian care. To remain loyal to the wisdom of God (to "keep understanding") is to find every good that is open to us. It is to move along that path which is evermore ascending; which conducts to the loftier heights of moral excellency, of exalted spiritual joy, of holy and noble service; which leads to the very gates of heaven and the near presence of God.—C.

Ver. 17 (see also ch. x. 14, 31; xvii. 5).—*Valuable kindness.* We gather—

I. THAT HAUGHTY UNKINDNESS IS A HEINOUS SIN. To mock the poor or to oppress the poor is to reproach our Maker. For he that made us made them; and, in many instances, made them to be as they are. The Son of man himself was poor, having nowhere to lay his head; and although it is true that poverty is very often the consequence and penalty of sin, yet, on the other hand, it is often (1) the accompaniment of virtue and piety; and (2) frequently it has been the penalty of faithfulness to conviction, and therefore the sign of peculiar worth. To treat with disdain a condition which God himself has associated with piety and even with nobility of character is to mock our Maker. And to oppress such is to be guilty of a flagrant sin; it is to take advantage of weakness in order to do a neighbour wrong; this is to add meanness to cruelty and injustice. It is, moreover, to do that which our Lord has told us he will consider to be directed against himself (Matt. xxv. 42, 43).

II. THAT PRACTICAL PITIFULNESS IS A MUCH-REWARDED VIRTUE. 1. It is accepted by our Divine Lord as a service rendered to himself (text; Matt. xxv. 35, 36). How gladly would we minister to Jesus Christ were we to recognize in some weary and troubled neighbour none other than the Redeemer himself clothed in human form again! But we need not long for such an opportunity; nor need we wait for it. It is ours. We have but to show practical kindness to "one of the least" of his brethren, and we show it unto him, the Lord himself (Matt. xxv. 40). And what we do shall be rendered unto us again; *i.e.* we shall receive in return from our Father that which will fully compensate us. Our reward will include not only this gracious acceptance, but: 2. We shall earn the gratitude of thankful hearts; and if (as is likely enough) we go sometimes unblessed of man, yet at other times we shall not want the cordial, loving, prayerful gratitude of a human heart; and what better treasure could we hold than that? 3. God will bless us in our own hearts for every kindness we render. He has so made our spirits that they are affected for good or evil by everything we do. Each thought, each deed, leaves us other than we were; stronger, wiser, worthier, or else weaker, less wise, less excellent, than before. Our character is the final result of everything that we have ever done, both in mind and in the flesh. So that each gracious word we speak, each kindly service we render to any one in need, is one more stroke of the chisel which is carving a beautiful character, fair in the sight of God himself. 4. We gain the present favour of our Divine Lord, and may look for his strong succour in our own time of need. 5. We shall receive his word of honour in the day "when every man shall have praise of God" (1 Cor. iv. 5).—C.

Ver. 18.—(See homily on ch. xiii. 24.)—C.

Ver. 20.—*Ready at the end.* The wise man always shows his wisdom by looking well before him. It is the sure mark of a fool to content himself with the immediate present. We do not wonder that proverbs should deal much with the future. "Passion and Patience" is the picture which is always being exhibited before the eyes of men.

I. THE NEED OF READINESS AT THE END. "How shall we enjoy the present time?" asks one; "How shall we make ready for the end?" asks another and a wiser soul. The question presents itself to the *youth*, as he looks forward to the end of the term and the coming of the examination or the writing of the report; to the *young man*—the apprentice, the articled clerk, the student—as he considers how he shall go through his trial-hour and be prepared for his business or profession; to the *man in middle life*, as he foresees the time coming when he can no longer do as he is doing now, and must have something to fall back upon in his declining days; to the *man in later life*, as he is compelled to feel that his powers are fast failing, and that the hour is not distant when he will stand on the very verge of life and confront the long and solemn future. It should also be present in the mind of those who are *soon to go forth* into the sterner conflict of life, to meet alone, away from home-influences, the serious and strong temptations of an evil world. Whatever the stage through which we are now passing, it moves towards its close—an end which is sure to open out into something beyond, and, most likely, something more important, weighted with graver responsibilities and leading to larger issues. Are we so living, the wise will ask, that we shall be ready for that end when it comes?

II. THE CONSEQUENT NEED TO LEARN OF GOD. "Hear counsel," etc. 1. There is much need to *learn of men*—from our parents, from our teachers, from every form of instructive literature, from all that the experiences of men, as we watch their life, are saying to us. Whoso would be wise at the end of his career should have an open mind that every one and everything may teach him. Lessons are to be learnt from every event, however simple and humble it may be. The wide world is the school which the wise will never "leave." 2. There is much more need *to learn of God, to learn of Christ.* For: (1) He can speak *authoritatively*, as man cannot. (2) He gives us *wisdom unmingled with error*, as man does not. (3) He can tell us how to find his Divine favour and how to reach his nearer presence, as no man can. Let us learn of Christ and be wise.—C.

Ver. 21.—*The mind of man and the mind of God.* Here is a contrast which we do well to consider. Between our human spiritual nature and that of the Divine Spirit it is possible to find resemblances and contrasts. Both are interesting and instructive.

I. THE THOUGHTS OF MAN'S MIND. We know how fugitive these are; how they come and go like the flash of the lightning; and even those which linger are but short-lived, they soon give place to others. Even those thoughts which become "fixed," which settle down into plans and purposes, have but a brief tenure in our brain; they, too, pass away and make room for others in their turn. Our thoughts are: 1. *Fluctuating and therefore many.* We care for one pleasure, we pursue one object now; but in a few weeks, or even days, we may weary of the one, we may be compelled to turn our attention from the other. 2. *Feeble and therefore many.* We propose and adopt one method, but it fails; and then we try another, and that fails; then we resort to a third, which also fails. We pass from thought to thought, from plan to plan; our very feebleness accounting for the manifoldness of our devices. 3. *False and therefore many.* We hold certain theories to-day; to-morrow they will be exploded, and we shall entertain another; before long that will yield to a third. 4. *Sinful and therefore many.* Nothing that is wrong can last; it must be dethroned, because it is evil, immoral, guilty. 5. *Selfish and therefore many.* We are concerning ourselves supremely about our own affairs or those of our family; but these are passing interests, changing with the flitting hours.

II. THE THOUGHTS WHICH ARE IN THE MIND OF GOD. His counsel stands (text). "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations" (Ps. xxxiii. 11). God's purpose holds from age to age. For: 1. He rules in righteousness. He is governing the world by Divine and unchanging principles. "With him is no variableness," because he ever loves what is righteous and hates what is unholy and impure and unkind. He cannot change his course, because he cannot change his character. 2. He is working out one great beneficent conclusion. He is redeeming a lost world, reconciling it unto himself, uprooting the multiform sources of wrong and wretchedness, establishing the blessed kingdom of Christ, the kingdom of

heaven on the earth. 3. He has ample time and power at his command; he has no need to change his plan, to resort to "devices."

"His eternal thought moves on
His undisturbed affairs;'

and is working out a glorious consummation which nothing shall avail to avert. 4. His perfect wisdom makes quite unnecessary the adoption of any other course than that which he is employing. (1) Steadfastness is one sign of wisdom. If we see a man or a Church perpetually changing its methods, we may be sure that it is weak. (2) Let us make God's great and holy purpose ours; (*a*) for it is that with which our eternal interest is bound up; (*b*) it is certain to be victorious. 3. Let us work on for our Lord and with him, in the calmness that becomes those who are confident of ultimate success.—C.

Ver. 23.—*The praise of piety.* What could be said more than is said here in praise of piety? What more or better could anything do for us than—

I. ENSURE OUR SAFETY. So that we shall not be visited with evil. But is not the good man visited with evil? Do not his crops fail, his vessels sink, his shares fall, his difficulties gather, his children die? Does not his health decline, his hope depart, his life lessen? Yes; but: 1. From the *worst* evils his piety secures him. The "fear of the Lord," that Holy One before whom he stands and with whom he walks, keeps him from folly, from fraud, from vice, from moral contamination, from that "death in life" which is *the* thing to be dreaded and avoided. 2. And the troubles and sorrows which do assail him lose all their bitterness as they wear the aspect of a heavenly Father's discipline, who, in all that he sends or suffers, is seeking the truest and the lasting well-being of his children. The man who is living in the fear of God, and in the love of Jesus Christ, may go on his homeward way with no anxiety in his heart, for he has the promise of his Saviour that all things shall work together for good—those things that are the least pleasant as well as those that are the most inviting.

II. SATISFY OUR SOUL. "Shall abide satisfied." Certainly it is only the man of real piety of whom this word can be used. Discontent is the mark which "the world and the things which are in the world" leave on the countenance and write on the heart of man. Nothing that is less than the Divine gives rest to the human spirit. Mirth, enjoyment, temporary happiness, may be commanded, but not abiding satisfaction. That, however, is found in the devoted service of a Divine Redeemer. Let a man yield himself, his whole powers and all his life, to the Saviour who loved him unto death, and in following and serving him he will "find rest unto his soul." Not half-hearted but whole-hearted service brings the joy which no accident can remove and which time does not efface or even lessen. The secret of lifelong blessedness is found, not in the assertion of an impossible freedom from obligation, but in an open, practicable, elevating service of the living God, our Divine Saviour.

III. CONSTITUTE OUR LIFE AND CONDUCT TO A STILL HIGHER FORM OF IT. "The fear of the Lord tendeth to life." It is not merely that a regard for God's will conduces to health and leads to long life (Ps. xci. 16); it is not only that it tends to secure to its possessor an honourable and estimable life among men. It is much more than this; it is that it *constitutes* human life. "This *is* life eternal, to know thee, the only true God." For man to live in ignorance or in forgetfulness of his Divine Father is to miss or to lose his life while he has it (or seems to have it). On the other hand, to live a life of reverence, of trustfulness in God, of love to him, of filial obedience and submission, of cheerful and devoted co-operation with him in the great redemptive work he is outworking, to be attaining more and more to his own spiritual likeness,—this *is* life itself, life in its excellency, its fulness, its beauty. Moreover, it itself, with all its worth, is but the prelude of that which is to come. It is the "fair beginning" of that which shall realize a glorious consummation a little further on. With all that hinders and hampers taken away, and with all that facilitates and enlarges bestowed upon us, we enter upon the nobler life beyond, which we have no language to describe because we have no faculty that can conceive its blessedness or its glory. 1. Let the perils of human life point to a Divine Refuge. 2. Let the weariness of earthly good

lead to the Divine Source of rest and joy. 3. In the midst of the deathfulness of sin, lay hold on eternal life.—C.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XX.

Ver. 1.—**Wine is a mocker**; or, *scorner*, the word (*luts*) being taken up from the last chapter. The liquor is, as it were, personified, as doing what men do under its influence. Thus inebriated persons scoff at what is holy, reject reproof, ridicule all that is serious. Septuagint, Ἀκόλαστον οἶνος, "Wine is an undisciplined thing;" Vulgate, *Luxuriosa res, vinum.* **Strong drink is raging**; *a brawler*, Revised Version. *Shekar*, σίκερα (Luke i. 15), is most frequently employed of any intoxicating drink not made from grapes, *e.g.* palm-wine, mead, etc. The inordinate use of this renders men noisy and boisterous, no longer masters of themselves or restrained by the laws of morality or decency. Septuagint, Τὸ βρωτικὸν μέθη, "Drunkenness is insolent." Theognis has some sensible lines on this matter ('Paræn.,' 479)—

Ὃς δ' ἂν ὑπερβάλλῃ πόσιος μέτρον, οὐκέτι κεῖνος
Τῆς αὐτοῦ γλώσσης καρτερὸς, οὐδὲ νόου·
Μυθεῖται δ' ἀπάλαμνα, τὰ νήφοσι γίγνεται αἰσχρά·
Αἰδεῖται δ' ἔρδων οὐδὲν, ὅταν μεθύῃ,
Τὸ πρὶν ἐὼν σώφρων τότε νήπιος.

**Whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.** No one who reels under the influence of, is overpowered by, wine is wise (Isa. xxviii. 7). Septuagint, "Every fool is involved in such." Says a Latin adage—

"Ense cadunt multi, perimit sed crapula plures."

"More are drowned in the wine-cup than in the ocean,' say the Germans (comp. ch. xxiii. 29, etc.; Eph. v. 18).

Ver. 2.—**The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion** (see ch. xix. 12). The terror which a king causes when his anger is rising is like the roar of a lion, which betokens danger. Septuagint, "The threat of a king differeth not from the wrath of a lion." **Whoso provoketh him to anger sinneth against his own soul**; imperils his life, which he has no right wilfully to jeopard. Septuagint, "He who enrageth him (ὁ παροξύνων αὐτόν)." The Complutensian and some Greek versions introduce the words, καὶ ἐπιμιγνύμενος, "and has intercourse with him;" *i.e.* he who having aroused a king's resentment does not avoid his presence, exposes himself to certain death.

Ver. 3.—**It is an honour to a man to cease from strife**; or better, as Delitzsch and others, *to remain far from strife.* A prudent man will not only abstain from causing quarrel, but will hold himself aloof from all contention, and thus will have due care for his own honour and dignity. How different is this from the modern code, which makes a man's honour consist in his readiness to avenge fancied injury at the risk of his own or his neighbour's life! Septuagint, "It is a glory to a man to hold himself aloof from revilings." **Every fool will be meddling** (see on ch. xvii. 14; xviii. 1). Delitzsch, "Whoever is a fool showeth his teeth," finds pleasure in strife. Septuagint, "Every fool involves himself in such," as in ver. 1.

Ver. 4.—**The sluggard will not plough by reason of the cold**; *propter frigus*, Vulgate. But חֹרֶף (*choreph*) denotes the time of gathering—the autumn; so we would translate, "At the time of harvest the sluggard ploughs not"—just when the ground is most easily and profitably worked. "The weakness of the coulter and other parts of the plough requires that advantage be taken, in all but the most friable soils, of the softening of the surface by the winter or spring rains; so that the peasant, if industrious, has to plough in the winter, though sluggards still shrink from its cold, and have to beg in the harvest" (Geikie, 'Holy Land and Bible,' ii. 491). Therefore **shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing.** So the Vulgate, *Mendicabit ergo æstate, et non dabitur illi.* But this does not accurately represent the meaning of the clause. If ever the prosperous are disposed to relieve the needy, it would be at the time when they have safely garnered their produce; an appeal to their charity at such a moment would not be made in vain. Rather the sentence signifies that the lazy man, having neglected to have his land ploughed at the proper time, "when he asks (for his fruits) at harvest-time, there is nothing." He puts off tilling his fields day after day, or never looks to see if his labourers do their duty, and so his land is not cultivated, and he has no crop to reap when autumn comes. "By the street of By-and-by one arrives at the house of Never" (Spanish proverb). Taking a different interpretation of the word *choreph*, the LXX. renders, "Being reproached, the sluggard is not ashamed, no more than he who borrows corn in harvest."

Ver. 5.—**Counsel in the heart of man is** like deep water. The thoughts and pur-

poses of a man are hidden in his breast like deep water (ch. xviii. 4) in the bosom of the earth, hard to fathom, hard to get. **But a man of understanding will draw it out.** One who is intelligent and understands human nature penetrates the secret, and, by judicious questions and remarks, draws out (ἐξαντλήσει, Septuagint) the hidden thought.

Ver. 6.—**Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness**; *chesed*, "kindness," "mercy," "liberality," as in ch. xix. 22. So Ewald and others. Hitzig and Kamphausen translate, "Many a man one names his dear friend;" Delitzsch and Nowack prefer, "Most men meet a man who is gracious to them;" *i.e.* it is common enough to meet a man who seems benevolent and well disposed. Vulgate, "Many men are called merciful;" Septuagint, "Man is a great thing, and a merciful man is a precious thing." The renderings of most modern commentators imply the statement that love and mercy are common enough, at least in outward expression. The Authorized Version pronounces that men are ready enough to parade and boast of their liberality, like the hypocrites who were said proverbially to sound a trumpet when they performed their almsdeeds (Matt. vi. 2). Commenting on the Greek rendering of the clause given above, St. Chrysostom observes, "This is the true character of man to be merciful; yea, rather the character of God to show mercy. . . . Those who answer not to this description, though they partake of mind, and are never so capable of knowledge, the Scripture refuses to acknowledge them as men, but calls them dogs, and horses, and serpents, and foxes, and wolves, and if there be any animals more contemptible" ('Hom. iv. in Phil.' and 'Hom. xiii. in 1 Tim.,' Oxford transl.). The contrast between show, or promise, and performance is developed in the second clause. **But a faithful man who can find?** The faithfulness intended is fidelity to promises, the practical execution of the vaunted benevolence; this is rare indeed, so that a psalmist could cry, "I said in my haste, All men are liars" (Ps. cxvi. 11; comp. Rom. iii. 4). Lesètre refers to Massillon's sermon, 'Sur la Gloire Humaine,' where we read (the preacher, of course, rests on the Latin Version), "Ces hommes vertueux dont le monde se fait tant d'honneur, n'ont au fond souvent pour eux que l'erreur publique. Amis fidèles, je le veux; mais c'est le goût, la vanité ou l'intérêt, qui les lie; et dans leur amis, ils n'amient qu' eux-mêmes. . . . En un mot, dit l'Ecriture, on les appelle miséricordieux, ils ont toutes les vertus pour le public; mais n'étant pas fidèles à Dieu, ils n'en ont pas une seule pour eux-mêmes."

Ver. 7.—**The just man walketh in his integrity.** It is better to connect the two clauses together, and not to take the first as a separate sentence, thus: "He who as a just man walketh in his integrity"—**Blessed are his children after him** (comp. ch. xiv. 26). So the Septuagint and Vulgate. The man of pure life, who religiously performs his duty towards God and man, shall bring a blessing on his children who follow his good example, both during his life and after his death. The temporal promise is seen in Exod. xx. 6; Deut. iv. 40; Ps. cxii. 2, etc. Some see here an instance of utilitarianism; but it cannot be supposed that the writer inculcates virtue for the sake of the worldly advantages connected with it; rather he speaks from experience, and from a faithful dependence on Providence, of the happy results of a holy life.

Ver. 8.—A royal and right noble maxim. **A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes.** The king, sitting on the tribunal and executing his judiciary office, sees through all devices and pretences which cloak evil, and scatters them to the winds, as the chaff flies before the winnowing-fan. Nothing unrighteous can abide in his presence (comp. ver. 26; ch. xvi. 10, etc.). See here an adumbration of the characteristic of the Messiah, the great King whose "eyes behold, whose eyelids try, the children of men" (Ps. xi. 4): who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil" (Hab. i. 13); who "with righteousness shall judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall slay the wicked" (Isa. xi. 4; comp. Matt. iii. 12). Septuagint, "When the righteous king shall sit upon his throne, nothing that is evil shall offer itself before his eyes."

Ver. 9.—**Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?** The question implies the answer, "No one." This is expressed in Job xiv. 4, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." At the dedication of the temple, Solomon enunciates this fact of man's corruption, "There is no man that sinneth not" (1 Kings viii. 46). The prophet testifies, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is desperately sick: who can know it?" (Jer. xvii. 9). And St. John warns, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John i. 8). The heart is cleansed by self-examination and repentance; but it is so easy to deceive one's self in this matter, sins may lurk undetected, motives may be overlooked, so that no one can rightly be self-righteous, or conceited, or proud of his spiritual state. The "my sin" at the end of the clause is rather possible than actual sin; and the

expression means that no one can pride himself on being secure from yielding to temptation, however clean for a time his conscience may be. The verse, therefore, offers a stern corrective of two grievous spiritual errors—presumption and apathy.

Ver. 10.—**Divers weights, and divers measures;** literally, *stone and stone, ephah and ephah.* The stones were used for weighing; dishonest traders kept them of different weights, and also measures of different capacities, substituting one for the other in order to defraud unwary customers. The Septuagint makes this plain by rendering, "A weight great and small, and measures double" (see on ch. xi. 1 and xvi. 11; and comp. ver. 23). The ephah was a dry measure, being one-tenth of the homer, and occupying the same position in solids as the bath did in liquids. It equalled about three pecks of our measure. **Both of them are alike abomination to the Lord** (ch. xvii. 15; comp. Lev. xix. 36; Deut. xxv. 13, etc.); Septuagint, "Are impure before the Lord, even both of them, and he who doeth them." Pseudo-Bernard ('De Pass. Dom.,' xvii.), applying the passage mystically, teaches that a man may be said to keep a double measure, who, being conscious of his own evil character, endeavours to appear righteous to others; who, as he puts it, "Suo judicio terræ proximus est, et aliis cupit elevatus videri." Others, connecting this verse in thought with the preceding, see in it a warning against judging a neighbour by a standard which we do not apply to ourselves. The Septuagint Version arranges the matter from ver. 10 onwards differently from the Hebrew, omitting vers. 14—19, and placing vers. 10—13 after ver. 22.

Ver. 11.—**Even a child is known** (*maketh himself known*) **by his doings.** (For "even" (*gam*), see on ch. xvii. 26.) A child is open, simple, and straightforward in his actions; he has not the reserves and concealments which men practise, so you see by his conduct what his real character and disposition are. Ewald takes מעלליו in the sense of "play," "games;" but it seems never to have this meaning, and there is no need to change the usual signification. The habits of a life are learned in early age. The boy is father of the man. Delitzsch quotes the German proverbs, "What means to become a hook bends itself early," and "What means to become a thorn sharpens itself early;" and the Aramæan, "That which will become a gourd shows itself in the bud." **Whether his work be pure** ("clean," as ver. 9 and ch. xvi. 2), **and whether it be right.** His conduct will show thus much, and will help one to prognosticate the future. Septuagint (according to the Vatican), "In his pursuits (ἐπιτηδεύμασιν) a young man will be fettered in company with a holy man, and his way will be straight," which seems to mean that a good man will restrain the reckless doings of a giddy youth, and will lead him into better courses.

Ver. 12.—**The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them.** This apothegm, which seems to be nothing but a trite truism, brings to notice many important consequences. First, there is the result noted in Ps. xciv. 9, "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see?" Hence we learn the sleepless providence of God. So 'Pirke Aboth,' "Know that which is above thee, an eye that seeth all, an ear that heareth all." We learn also that all things are directed and overruled by God (comp. ch. xv. 3; xvi. 4). Then there is the thought that these powers of ours, being the gift of God, should be used piously and in God's service. "Mine ears hast thou opened . . . Lo, I come . . . I delight to do thy will, O my God" (Ps. xl. 6, etc.). The eye should be blind, the ear deaf, to all that might defile or excite to evil (see Isa. xxxiii. 15). But it is the Lord alone that enables the spiritual organs to receive the wondrous things of God's Law; they must be educated by grace to enable them to perform their proper functions. "God hath given us eyes," says St. Chrysostom ('Hom. xxii. in 1 Cor.'), "not that we may look wantonly, but that, admiring his handiwork, we may worship the Creator. And that this is the use of our eyes is evident from the things which are seen. For the lustre of the sun and of the sky we see from an immeasurable distance, but a woman's beauty one cannot discern so far off. Seest thou that for this end our eye was chiefly given? Again, he made the ear, that we should entertain not blasphemous words, but saving doctrines. Wherefore you see, when it receives anything dissonant, both our soul shudders and our very body also. And if we hear anything cruel or merciless, again our flesh creeps; but if anything decorous and kind, we even exult and rejoice." "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Septuagint, "The ear heareth and the eye seeth, and both are the works of the Lord."

Ver. 13.—**Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty** (see ch. vi. 9, etc.). The fate of the sluggard is handled again in ch. xxiii 21, as often before; *e.g.* ch. xii. 11; xix. 15 The LXX., taking שְׁנָה (*shenah*), "sleep," as perhaps connected with the verb שָׁנָה (*shanah*), translate, "Love not to rail, that thou be not exalted (ἵνα μὴ ἐξαρθῇς)," *i.e.* probably, "Do not calumniate others in order to raise yourself;" others translate, "lest thou be out off." **Open thine eyes,**

and **thou shalt be satisfied with bread.** These words seem to connect this clause with ver. 12. God gives the faculty, but man must make due use thereof. The gnomist urges, "Do not slumber at your post, or sit down idly waiting; but be up and doing, be wakeful and diligent, and then you shall prosper."

Ver. 14.—**It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer.** The purchaser depreciates the goods which he wants, in order to lower the price demanded—a practice as common now as in old time. "I don't want it, I don't want it," says the Spanish friar; "but drop it into my hood." The Scotch say, "He that lacks (disparages) my mare would buy my mare" (Kelly). **But when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.** When he has completed his purchase and obtained the goods at his own price, he boasts how he has tricked the seller. The LXX. omits vers. 14—19.

Ver. 15.—**There is gold, and a multitude of rubies.** For *peninim*, which is rendered "rubies," "pearls," or "coral," see on ch. iii. 15. There is gold which is precious, and there is abundance of pearls which are still more valuable. **But the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel, and worth more than all.** We had the expression, "lips of knowledge," in ch. xiv. 7; it means lips that utter wisdom. *Keli*, often translated "jewel" in the Authorized Version, also bears the meaning of "vessel," "utensil." So here the Vulgate, *vas pretiosum;* and the wise man's lips are called a vessel because they contain and distribute the wisdom that is within. (On the excellence and value of wisdom, see ch. iii. 14, etc.; viii. 11, etc.) Connecting this with the preceding verse, we are led to the thought of buying, and the Lord's parable of the merchant seeking goodly pearls, and bartering all his wealth to gain possession of a worthy jewel (Matt. xiii. 45, etc.).

Ver. 16.—**Take his garment that is surety for a stranger.** The maxim is repeated in ch. xxvii. 13; and warnings against suretyship are found in ch. vi. 1, etc.; xi. 15; xvii. 18; xxii. 26, etc. The second portion of the clause is translated also, "For he is surety for another." If a man is so weak and foolish as to become security for any one, and is unable to make good his engaged payment, let him lose his garment which the creditor would seize; his imprudence must bring its own punishment. **And take a pledge of him for a strange woman.** The Authorized Version probably adopts this rendering in conformity with ch. xxvii. 13, where it occurs in the text, as here in the margin (the Kerī). But the Khetib has, "for strangers," which seems to be the original reading; and the first words ought to be translated, "hold him in pledge;" *i.e.* seize his person for the sake of the strangers for whom he has stood security, so as not to suffer loss from them. The Law endeavoured to secure lending to needy brethren without interest (see Ps. xv. 5; Ezek. xviii. 8, 13, etc.; xxii. 12); but it allowed the creditor to secure himself by taking pledges of his debtor, while it regulated this system so as to obviate most of its severity and oppressiveness (see the restrictions in Exod. xxii. 26, etc.; Deut. xxiv. 6, 12, etc.). "Where the debtor possessed nothing which he could pledge, he gave the personal security of a friend. This was a very formal proceeding. The surety gave his hand both to the debtor and to the creditor before an assembly legally convened, he deposited a pledge, and, in accordance with this twofold promise, was regarded by the creditor in just the same light as the debtor himself, and treated accordingly. If the debtor, or in his place the surety, was unable to pay the debt when it fell due, he was entirely at the mercy of the creditor. The authorities troubled themselves but little about these relations, and the law, so far as it is preserved to us, gave no directions in the matter. We see, however, from many allusions and narratives, what harsh forms these relations actually took, especially in later times, when the ancient national brotherly love which the Law presupposed was more and more dying out. The creditor could not only forcibly appropriate all the movable, but also the fixed property, including the hereditary estate (this at least till its redemption in the year of jubilee), nay, he could even (if he could find nothing else of value) carry off as a prisoner the body of his debtor, or of his wife and child, to employ them in his service, though this could only be done for a definite period" (Ewald, 'Antiquities,' p. 184, etc., transl.).

Ver. 17.—**Bread of deceit is sweet to a man;** Revised Version, *bread of falsehood;* i.e. bread gained without labour, or by unrighteous means (comp. ch. x. 2). This is agreeable because it is easily won, and has the relish of forbidden fruit. "Wickedness is sweet in his mouth" (Job xx. 12). **But afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.** He will find in his "bread" no nourishment, but rather discomfort and positive injury (comp. Job xx. 14). The expression, "to eat gravel," is intimated in Lam. iii. 16, "He hath broken my teeth with gravel-stones;" it implies grievous disappointment and unprofitableness. See here a warning against evil pleasures—

*Φεῦγ' ἡδονὴν φέρουσαν ὕστερον βλάβην.*

"Sperne voluptates: nocet empta dolore voluptas."

Oort supposes that the gnome in the text is derived from a riddle, which asked, "What is sweet at first, but afterwards like sand in the mouth?"

Ver. 18.—**Every purpose is established by counsel** (comp. ch. xv. 22, where see note). The Talmud says, "Even the most prudent of men needs friends' counsels;" and none but the most conceited would deem himself superior to advice, or would fail to allow that, as the Vulgate puts it, *cogitationes consiliis roborantur*. This is true in all relations of life, in great and small matters alike, in peace, and, as our moralist adds, in war. **With good advice make war**; Vulgate, *Gubernaculis tractanda sunt bella*; Revised Version, *By wise guidance make thou war*. The word here used is *takebuloth*, for which see note, ch. i. 5. It is a maritime metaphor, rightly retained by the Vulgate, and might be rendered "pilotings," "steerings." War is a necessary evil, but it must be undertaken prudently and with a due consideration of circumstances, means, etc. Our Lord illustrates the necessity of due circumspection in following him by the case of a threatened conflict between two contending kings (Luke xiv. 31, etc.). Grotius quotes the gnome—

Γνῶμαι πλέον κρατοῦσιν ἢ σθένος χερῶν.

"Than strength of hands availeth counsel more."

To which we may add—

Βουλῆς γὰρ ὀρθῆς οὐδὲν ἀσφαλέστερον.

"Good counsel is the safest thing of all."

(Comp. ch. xxiv. 6, where the hemistich is re-echoed.)

Ver. 19.—**He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets.** Almost the same proverb occurs in ch. xi. 13. The gadding gossiper is sure to let out any secret entrusted to him; therefore, it is implied, be careful in what you say to him. **Meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips**; rather, *that openeth wide his lips*—that cannot keep his mouth shut, a babbler, as ch. xiii. 3 (where see note). The Vulgate erroneously makes one sentence of the verse, "With him who reveals secrets, and walketh deceitfully, and openeth wide his lips, have no dealings." Talmud, "When I utter a word, it hath dominion over me; but when I utter it not, I have dominion over it." Says the Persian poet, "The silent man hath his shoulders covered with the garment of security." Xenocrates used to say that he sometimes was "sorry for having spoken, never for having kept silence" (Cahen).

Ver. 20.—This is an enforcement of the fifth commandment, by denouncing the punishment which the moral government of God shall exact from the unnatural child. The legal penalty may be seen (Exod. xxi. 17; Lev. xx. 9); but this was probably seldom or never carried into execution (comp. Matt. xv. 4; Mark vii. 10). **His lamp shall be put out in obscure** (*the blackest*) **darkness** (comp. ch. xiii. 9). The expression is peculiar; it is literally, according to the Khetib, *In the apple of the eye of darkness*, as in ch. vii. 9; *i.e.* in the very centre of darkness; he will find himself surrounded on all sides by midnight darkness, without escape, with no hope of Divine protection. "Lamp" is a metaphor applied to the bodily and the spiritual life, to happiness and prosperity, to a man's fame and reputation, to a man's posterity; and all these senses may be involved in the denunciation of the disobedient and stubborn child. He shall suffer in body and soul, in character, in fortune, in his children. His fate is the exact counterpart of the blessing promised in the Law. Septuagint, "The lamp of him that revileth father and mother shall be extinguished, and the pupils of his eyes shall behold darkness." Talmud, "Whosoever abandons his parents means his body to become the prey of scorpions." Cato, 'Dist.,' iii. 23—

"Dilige non ægra caros pietate parentes;
Nec matrem offendas, dum vis bonus esse parenti."

One of the evil generations denounced by Agur (ch. xxx. 11) is that which curseth parents.

Ver. 21.—**An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning**—or, *which in the beginning is obtained in haste*—**but the end thereof shall not be blessed**; or, *its end shall not be blessed*. The Khetib gives מְבֹהָלֶת, which (comp. Zech. xi. 8) may mean "detested," but this gives no sense; it is better, with the Keri, to replace *kheth* with *he*, and read מְבֹהֶלֶת (*meboheleth*), "hastened," "hastily acquired" (see ch. xiii. 11, Septuagint). The maxim, taken in connection with the preceding verse, may apply to a bad son who thinks his parents live too long, and by violence robs them of their possessions; or to one who, like the prodigal in the parable, demands prematurely his portion of the paternal goods. But it may also be taken generally as denouncing the fate of those who make haste to be rich, being unscrupulous as to the means by which they gain wealth (see on ch. xxiii. 11; xxviii. 20, 22). A Greek gnome says roundly—

Οὐδεὶς ἐπλούτησεν ταχέως δίκαιος ὤν.

'No righteous man e'er grew rich suddenly."

Ver. 22.—**Say not thou, I will recompense**

evil (ch. xxiv. 29). The *jus talionis* is the natural feeling of man, to do to others as they have done unto you, to requite evil with evil. But the moralist teaches a better lesson, urging men not to study revenge, and approaching nearer to Christ's injunction, which gives the law of charity, "Whatsoever *ye would* (ὅσα ἂν θέλητε) that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matt. vii. 12). The Christian rule is expounded fully by St. Paul (Rom. xii. 14, 17, etc.). It was not unknown to the Jews; for we read in Tobit iv. 15, "Do that to no man which thou hatest;" and Hillel enjoins, "Do not thou that to thy neighbour which thou hatest when it is done to thee." Even the heathens had excogitated this great principle. There is a saying of Aristotle, preserved by Diogenes Laertius, "Act towards your friends as you would wish them to act towards you." The Chinese have a proverb, "Water does not remain on the mountain, or vengeance in a great mind." **Wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee.** The pious writer urges the injured person to commit his cause to the Lord, not in the hope of seeing vengeance taken on his enemy, but in the certainty that God will help him to bear the wrong and deliver him in his own good time and way. The Christian takes St. Peter's view, "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" (1 Pet. iii. 13), knowing that "all things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. viii. 28; comp. Eccles. ii. 2, 6). Septuagint, "Say not, I will avenge myself on my enemy, but wait on the Lord, that (ἵνα) he may help thee." The last clause may be grammatically rendered thus, but it is more in accordance with the spirit of the proverb, as Delitzsch observes, to regard it as a promise. Vulgate, *et liberabit te.*

Ver. 23.—This is a repetition, with a slight variation, of ver. 10 and ch. xi. 1 (where see notes). **Is not good.** A *litotes*, equivalent to "is very evil," answering to "abomination" in the first member. Septuagint, "is not good before him" (comp. ch. xxiv. 23).

Ver. 24.—**Man's goings** are of the Lord. In the first clause the word for "man" is *geber*, which implies "a mighty man;" in the second clause the word is *adam*, "a human creature." So the Septuagint has ἀνὴρ in one clause and θνητὸς in the other. The proverb says that the steps of a great and powerful man depend, as their final cause, upon the Lord; he conditions and controls results. Man has free-will, and is responsible for his actions, but God foreknows them, and holds the thread that connects them together; he gives preventing grace; he gives efficient grace; and man blindly works out the designs of Omnipotence according as he obeys or resists. A similar maxim is found in Ps. xxxvii. 23, "A man's goings are established of the Lord," but the meaning there is that it is God's aid which enables a man to do certain actions. Here we have very much the same intimation that is found in ch. ii. 6 and xix. 21; and see note on ch. xvi. 9. Hence arises the old prayer used formerly at prime, and inserted now (with some omissions) at the end of the Anglican Communion Service: "O almighty Lord, and everlasting God, vouchsafe, we beseech thee, to direct, sanctify, and govern, both our hearts and bodies, our thoughts, words, and actions, in the ways of thy laws, and in the works of thy commandments; that through thy most mighty protection we may be preserved both here and for ever." If man cannot see all sides, as God does, cannot comprehend the beginning, middle, and end in one view, **how then can a man** (a weak mortal) **understand his own way?** How can he find out of himself whither he should go, or what will be the issue of his doings (comp. ch. xvi. 25; Jer. x. 23)? St. Gregory, "It is well said by Solomon [Eccles. ix. 1], 'There are righteous and wise men, and their works are in the hand of God; and yet no man knoweth whether he is deserving of love or of hatred; but all things are kept uncertain for the time to come.' Hence it is said again by the same Solomon, 'What man will be able to understand his own way?' And any one doing good or evil is doubtless known by the testimony of his own conscience. But it is said that their own way is not known to men, for this reason, because, even if a man understands that he is acting rightly, yet he knows not, under the strict inquiry, whither he is going" ('Moral.,' xxix. 34).

Ver. 25.—**It is a snare to the man** who **devoureth** that which is **holy.** This verse, which is plainly a warning against rash vows, has received more than one interpretation. The Vulgate has, *Ruina est homini devorare sanctos*, which is explained to mean that it is destruction for a man to persecute the saints of God. But the word *devorare* is not certain, as the manuscripts vary between this and four other readings, viz. *devotare*, *denotare*, *devovere*, and *devocare*. The Authorized Version signifies that it is a sin to take for one's own consumption things dedicated to God, as firstfruits, the priests' portions, etc.; or a man's snare, *i.e.* his covetousness (1 Tim. vi. 9), leads him to commit sacrilege. So Wordsworth. But it is best, with Delitzsch, to take יָלַע (*yala*) as the abbreviated future of לוּע or לָעַע, "to

speak rashly;" and then *kodesh*, "holiness," will be an exclamation, like *korban* (Mark vii. 11). The clause will then run, "It is a snare to a man rashly to cry, Holiness!" equivalent to "It is holy!" *i.e.* to use the formula for consecrating something to holy purposes. Septuagint, "It is a snare to a man hastily to consecrate something of his own" (comp. Eccles. v. 2, 4, etc.). **And after vows to make inquiry**; *i.e.* after he has made his vow, to begin to consider whether he can fulfil it or not. This is a snare to a man, strangles his conscience, and leads him into the grievous sins of perjury and sacrilege. Septuagint, "For after vowing ensueth repentance."

Ver. 26.—**A wise king scattereth the wicked** (ver. 8). The verb is *zarah*, which means "to winnow, or sift." The king separates the wicked and the good, as the winnowing fan or shovel divides the chaff from the wheat. The same metaphor is used of Christ (Matt. iii. 12), "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (comp. Jer. xv. 7). Septuagint, "A winnower (λικμήτωρ) of the ungodly is a wise king." **And bringeth the wheel over them.** The threshing-wheel is meant (see Isa. xxviii. 27; Amos i. 3). This was a wooden frame with three or four rollers under it armed with iron teeth. It was drawn by two oxen, and, aided by the weight of the driver, who had his seat upon it, it crushed out the grain, and cut up the straw into fodder. Another machine much used in Palestine was made of two thick planks fastened together side by side, and having sharp stones fixed in rows on the lower surface. It is not implied that the king employed the corn-drag as an instrument of punishment, which was sometimes so used in war, as possibly may be inferred from 2 Sam. xii. 31; 1 Chron. xx. 3; and Amos i. 3. The idea of threshing is carried on, and the notion is rather of separation than of punishment, though the latter is not wholly excluded. The wise ruler will not only distinguish between the godless and the good, but will show his discrimination by visiting the evil with condign punishment. Septuagint, "He will bring the wheel upon them;" the Vulgate has curiously, *Incurvat super eos fornicem*, "He bends an arch over them," which Latin commentators explain as a triumphal arch, meaning that the king conquers and subdues the wicked, and celebrates his victory over them. A patent anachronism which needs no comment!

Ver. 27.—**The spirit of man is the candle** (*lamp*) **of the Lord.** *Neshamah*, "spirit," or "breath," is the principle of life breathed into man by God himself (Gen. ii. 7), distinguishing man from brutes—the conscious human soul. We may consider it as equivalent to what we Christians call conscience, with its twofold character of receiving light and illumination from God, and sitting as judge and arbiter of actions. It is named "the Lord's lamp," because this moral sense is a direct gift of God, and enables a man to see his real condition. Our Lord (Matt. vi. 23) speaks of the light that is in man, and gives a solemn warning against the danger of letting it be darkened by neglect and sin; and St. Paul (1 Cor. ii. 11) argues, "Who among men knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of the man, which is in him?" As Elihu says (Job xxxii. 8), "There is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty giveth them understanding." And Aristotle speaks of practical wisdom (φρόνησις) combined with virtue as "the eye of the soul (ὄμμα τῆς ψυχῆς)." **Searching all the inward parts of the belly**; *i.e.* the very depths of the soul, probing thoughts, desires, affections, will, and approving or reproving, according as they are in conformity with or opposition to God's Law. We must remember that Eastern houses, before the introduction of glass, had very scanty openings to admit light, and lamps were necessary if for any purpose the interior had to be thoroughly illuminated. Hence the metaphor used above would strike an Oriental more forcibly than it strikes us. Septuagint, "The breath (πνοή, as ch. xi. 13) of man is a light of the Lord, who searches the chambers of the belly." St. Gregory ('Moral.,' xii. 64), "We ought to bear in mind that in holy Writ by the title of the 'belly,' or the 'womb,' the mind is used to be understood. For the light of grace, which comes from above, affords a 'breathway' to man unto life, which same light is said to 'search all the inward parts of the belly,' in that it penetrates all the secrets of the heart, that the things which were hidden in the soul touching itself it may bring back before the eyes thereof" (Oxford transl.).

Ver. 28.—**Mercy and truth preserve the king.** (For "mercy and truth," see note on ch. iii. 3.) The love and faithfulness which the king displays in dealing with his subjects elicits the like virtues in them, and these are the safeguard of his throne. **His throne is upholden by mercy**; or, *love*. So the king is well called the father of his people, and in modern times the epithet "gracious" is applied to the sovereign as being the fountain of mercy and condescension. Sallust, 'Jugurtha,' x., "Non exercitus neque thesauri præsidia regni sunt, verum amici, quos neque armis cogere neque auro parare queas; officio et fide pariuntur." Septuagint,

"Mercy (ἐλεημοσύνη) and truth are a guard to a king, and will surround his throne with righteousness." "The subject's love," says our English maxim, "is the king's life-guard."

Ver. 29.—**The glory of young men is their strength.** That which makes the ornament (*tiphereth*) of youth is unimpaired strength and vigour, which can only be attained by due exercise combined with self-control. The moralist (Eccles. xi. 9) bids the young man rejoice in his youth, and let his heart cheer him in those happy days, but at the same time remember that he is responsible for the use which he makes of his powers and faculties, for for all these things God will bring him to judgment. The Greek gives a needful warning—

Μέμνησο νέος ἂν ὡς γέρων ἔσῃ ποτέ.

"In youth remember thou wilt soon be old."

Septuagint, "Wisdom is an ornament to young men." But *koach* is bodily, not mental, power. **The beauty of old men is the grey head** (ch. xvi. 31). That which gives an honourable look to old age is the hoary head, which suggests wisdom and experience (comp. Ecclus. xxv. 3—6). On the other hand, the Greek gnomist warns—

Πολιὰ χρόνου μήνυσις οὐ φρονήσεως.

"Grey hairs not wisdom indicate, but age."

Ver. 30.—**The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil.** So the Vulgate, *Livor vulneris absterget mala. Chaburoth* means "stripes," and the proverb says that deep-cutting stripes are the only effectual cure of evil; *i.e.* severe punishment is the best healing process in cases of moral delinquency (ch. xix. 29). Painful remedies, incisions, cauteries, amputations, are often necessary in the successful treatment of bodily ailments; spiritual sickness needs sterner, more piercing, remedies. So do **stripes the inward parts of the belly**; or better, *and strokes that reach*, etc. The stings of conscience, warnings and reproofs which penetrate to the inmost recesses of the heart, chastisement which affects the whole spiritual being,—these are needful to the correction and purification of inveterate evil. Aben Ezra connects this verse with the preceding thus: as strength gives a glory to young men, and hoar hairs adorn an old man, so wounds and bruises, so to speak, ornament the sinner, mark him out, and at the same time heal and amend him. It may also be connected with ver. 27. If a man will not use the lamp which God has given him for illumination and correction, he must expect severe chastisement and sternest discipline. Septuagint, "Bruises (ὑπώπια) and contusions befall bad men, and plagues that reach to the chambers of the belly." St. Gregory, 'Moral.,' xxiii. 40, "By the blueness of a wound he implies the discipline of blows on the body. But blows in the secret parts of the belly are the wounds of the mind within, which are inflicted by compunction. For as the belly is distended when filled with food, so is the mind puffed up when swollen with wicked thoughts. The blueness, then, of a wound, and blows in the secret parts of the belly, cleanse away evil, because both outward discipline does away with faults, and compunction pierces the distended mind with the punishment of penance. But they differ from each other in this respect, that the wounds of blows give us pain, the sorrows of compunction have good savour. The one afflict and torture, the others restore when they afflict us. Through the one there is sorrow in affliction, through the other there is joy in grief" (Oxford transl.).

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*Wine the mocker.* Intemperance was not so common a vice in biblical times as it has become more recently, nor did the light wines of the East exercise so deleterious an effect as the strong drink that is manufactured in Europe is seen to produce. Therefore all that is said in the Bible against the evil of drunkenness applies with much-increased force to the aggravated intemperance of England to-day.

I. WINE IS A MOCKER BECAUSE IT ALLURES THE WEAK. It makes great promises. Strong drink is pleasant to the palate. The effect of it on the nervous system is at first agreeably stimulating. In weakness and weariness it seems to give comfortable relief. The associations connected with it are made to be most attractive. It goes with genial companionship, and it appears to favour the flow of good fellowship. In sickness it promises renewed strength; it offers consolation in sorrow; at festive seasons it pretends to heighten the joy and to take its place as a cheering friend of man. Moreover, all these attractive traits are aggravated with the weak. The need of the stimulus is more keenly felt by such persons; the early effects of it are more readily and pleasantly recognized; there is less power of will and judgment to resist its alluring influence.

II. WINE IS A MOCKER BECAUSE IT DECEIVES THE UNWARY. The danger that lurks in the cup is not seen at first, and the sparkling wine looks as innocent as a divine

nectar. The evil that it produces comes on by slow and insidious stages. No one thinks of becoming a drunkard on the first day of tasting intoxicating drink. Every victim of the terrible evil of intemperance was once an innocent child, and, whether he began in youth or in later years, every one who has gone to excess commenced with moderate and apparently harmless quantities. Happily, the majority of those who take a little are wise or strong enough not to abandon themselves to the tyranny of drinking habits. But the difficulty is to determine beforehand who will be able to stand and who will not have sufficient strength. Under these circumstances, it is a daring piece of presumption for any one to be quite sure that he will always be so wary as to keep out of the snare that has been fatal to many of his brethren who once stood in exactly the same free and healthy position in which he is at present. It is far safer not to tempt our own natures, and to guard ourselves against the mockery of wine, by keeping from all use of the strong drink itself.

III. WINE IS A MOCKER BECAUSE IT BRINGS RUIN ON ITS VICTIMS. It has no pity. It hounds its dupes on to destruction, and then it laughs at their fate. When once it holds a miserable wretch it will never willingly release him. Too late, he discovers that he is a slave, deceived by what promised to be his best friend, and flung into a dungeon from which, by his unaided powers, he can never effect an escape. There is a peculiar mockery in this fate. The victim is disgraced and degraded. His very human nature is wretched, insulted, almost destroyed. His social position is lost; his business scattered to the winds; his family life broken up and made unutterably wretched; his soul destroyed. This is the work of the wine that sparkles in the cup. We should allow no quarter to so vile a deceiver.

Ver. 3.—*The honour of peace.* The old world looked for glory in war; the Christian ideal—anticipated in Old Testament teaching—is to recognize honour in peace. It is better to keep peace than to be victorious in war, better to make peace than to win battles. Consider the grounds of this higher view of conflict and its issues.

I. THE HONOUR OF PEACE MAY BE SEEN IN SELF-SUPPRESSION. It is much more easy to give the reins to ill will and hasty passion. Men find it harder to fight their own temper than to do battle with alien foes. It is the same with nations when the spirit of war has maddened them. Heedless of consequences to themselves, and blind to the rights of their neighbours, they hurl themselves headlong into the horrors of battle. But if men could learn to curb their own strong feelings, they would really show more strength than by raging in unrestrained fury.

II. THE HONOUR OF PEACE MAY BE RECOGNIZED IN MAGNANIMITY. It may be that we are in the right, and our foes unquestionably in the wrong. Still, it is not essential that we should fight to the bitter end. We may forego our right. It may be a generous and noble thing to suffer wrong without resisting it. We cannot but see how much more harm is done in asserting just claims by force than would result from silent submission after a dignified protest. Often the more magnanimous conduct will result in the very end that would have been sought through violent measures. For it is possible to appeal to the generous instincts of opponents.

III. THE HONOUR OF PEACE MAY BE OBSERVED IN CHARITY. We should ever remember that even those who behave to us as enemies are still our brethren. We have their welfare to consider even while they may be plotting evil against us. Christ prayed for his persecutors (Luke xxiii. 34). So did St. Stephen (Acts vii. 60). Indeed, our Lord died for his enemies. He came to make an end of the fearful strife between man and God. But while he did so, he suffered from the fray. The Peacemaker was the victim of the passions of the rebellious. By suffering in meek dignity he made peace. If the mind that was in Christ is found in us, we shall be the earnest advocates of peace for the good of the very people who delight in war.

IV. THE HONOUR OF PEACE MAY BE RECOGNIZED IN HUMILITY. The special form in which the recommendation of peace is thrown is that of a *cessation of strife*. This implies a case in which there has been warfare; but one of the parties refrains from prosecuting the quarrel any further, although he has neither been worsted nor won the victory. This means a change of policy. Now, it is particularly difficult to effect such a change in the midst of a conflict. One's motives are likely to be suspected, and what is done from love of peace is likely to be set down to cowardice. It needs

humility thus to withdraw and sacrifice one's pretensions. Having taken a certain position we are tempted to hold it at all hazards from sheer pride. This is especially true in the soul's conflict with God. Here we are called upon to humble ourselves enough to confess ourselves entirely in the wrong. When the "fearful striving" has ceased there is honour in repentance and the new life of peace with God.

Ver. 9.—*Universal sinfulness.* We must distinguish between the idea of universal sinfulness and that of total depravity. We may hold that there is some gleam of goodness in a human heart without maintaining its immaculate purity. It is possible to believe that there are great varieties of character, many different degrees of sin, and yet to see that the highest saint has his faults.

I. NO ONE CAN CLEAR HIMSELF FROM THE CHARGE OF SINFULNESS. Who can say, "I have made my heart clean from all imputations of guilt '? 1. *The best confess that they are sinful.* Canonized by their admiring brethren, they cast themselves down in humility and shame before the holiness of God. No men have so deep a sense of the sinfulness of their own hearts as those who live most near to God. 2. *The most skilful cannot excuse themselves.* It is possible to formulate specious pleas that will deceive unwary men; but we have to do with the great Searcher of hearts, before whose piercing gaze all sophistries and pretences melt as the mists before the sun. 3. *The deceitfulness of the heart blinds many to their own guilt.* Men naturally desire to defend themselves; they are excellent advocates of themselves to themselves. The familiar sin is softened by habit. The conventional sin is condoned by custom. 4. *False standards of holiness confuse men's estimate of their own sinfulness.* Some people seem to take a feeling of placidity as an assurance of inward perfection, as though not to be conscious of strife were to be assured of peace with God. But it is possible to slumber under the influence of spiritual narcotics. A keener conscience might rouse a new, unlooked-for sense of sin and shame. It is thought that there is no shortcoming simply because the surrounding mists hide the far-off goal. Or it may be that negative correctness is mistaken for a satisfactory condition, while many positive active duties are left undone. Perhaps the soul that thinks its aspiration after purity satisfied is wanting in charity, or in the very act of claiming sinlessness it may be puffed up with pride. The most dangerous delusion is that which denies the ownership of guilt because sin is supposed to be relegated to bodily infirmity, while the true self is spotless. This is a most deadly snare of the devil.

II. NO ONE CAN CLEAR HIMSELF FROM THE SINS WHICH HE HAS COMMITTED. Who can say, "I have purged my own conscience, cleansed my own heart, cleared off my record of guilt?" 1. *It is impossible to undo sins.* Deeds are irrevocable. What has been committed is stereotyped in the awful book of the changeless past. What I have written, spoken, done—I have written, spoken, done. 2. *It is impossible to compensate for past sins by future service.* The future service is all owing; at our best we are "unprofitable servants"—there is no margin of profit—for "we have only done that which it was our duty to do." 3. *It is impossible to atone for our sins by any sacrifice.* The hardest penance can be of no value with God. Its only use could be in self-discipline. For God is not pleased with the sufferings of his children. We can offer him nothing; for "the cattle on a thousand hills" are his. 4. *It is impossible to change our own inner sinfulness by ourselves.* We cannot create clean hearts in our own breasts. We cannot kill our own love of sin. 5. *It is only possible for sin to be cleansed in the blood of Christ.* "There is a fountain opened for all uncleanness." The admission of guilt, the repentance that turns from the old sin and seeks forgiveness, the renunciation of all claims but that of the grace of God in Christ,—these things open the door to the true way of making the heart clean, both in pardon and in purification.

Ver. 11.—*A child and his doings.* I. A PICTURE OF CHILDHOOD. First, let this picture be regarded on its own account. Childhood is worthy of study. 1. *A child has his character.* Very early in life varieties of disposition may be seen in the several members of a young family. One is hot-tempered, another patient; one demonstrative, another reserved; one energetic, another inactive. Moral distinctions are painfully and glaringly apparent. As childhood advances these varieties of disposition merge

in deeper differences of character. Though the character is supple and mobile, it is nevertheless real. There are good and bad children—children who are pure, true, honest, kind; and children who are marked with the reverse of these qualities. 2. *A child is responsible for his deeds.* Unless he is crushed by tyranny, within the scope of a reasonable child-liberty he has room in which to play his small part on the stage of life. He must not be brought up with the notion that he is an irresponsible agent because he is young and weak. Conscience needs to be enlightened, trained, and strengthened in early days. 3. *A child's character is revealed in his deeds.* The character may be slight and feeble; and the deeds may be simple and insignificant. Yet even in the nursery cause and effect are at work; fruits reveal the nature even of saplings. Even children cannot be judged by outward appearance. With them innocent looks may cover sinful thoughts. Children also may deceive themselves, or make false pretences, though we do not see the hardened hypocrisy of the world in the simpler deception of the nursery. Still, it is to the conduct of children that we must look for indications of their true characters.

II. A LESSON FOR ALL AGES. If even a child is to be known by his doings, the inference is that much more may a man be known in a similar way. 1. *Character ripens with years.* If it begins to appear in childhood, it will be much more vigorous in manhood. There is something dolefully prophetic in the vices of infancy. Though often laughed at by foolish observers, these vices are the early sprouts of terrible evils that will increase with growing strength and enlarging opportunities. The more clearly we are able to detect differences of character even in childhood, the more certain is it that similar differences are aggravated in manhood. 2. *Responsibility grows with opportunity.* The deeds of children are to be regarded as characteristic—as either culpable or praiseworthy according to their moral tone. How much more must this be the case with grown men and women, who know more, have larger powers, and suffer from fewer restrictions! If the child who has continual restraint upon him, and who lives under perpetual tutelage, yet manifests characteristic conduct, the free man cannot escape from the responsibility of his doings. 3. *Conduct is always a sure sign of character.* It is so even with children who know little, and who are constantly hampered by superior authority. It must be so with double certainty in the case of adults. It is vain, indeed, for men and women to pretend that the index hand does not point truly. In the freedom of adult age there is no excuse to be urged against the inference that our deeds are the fruits of our character. Therefore, if the conduct is evil, the heart needs to be renewed.

Ver. 14.—*The buyer.* I. THE CONDUCT OF THE BUYER CALLS FOR CONSIDERATION. It is usual to discuss questions of trade morality chiefly in regard to the conduct of the man who sells. Deception, adulteration, dishonest work, the grinding of *employés*, etc., are denounced by indignant onlookers. But the conduct of the customer is less severely handled. Yet there are many reasons why it should not be overlooked. All are not sellers, but everybody buys. Therefore when commercial morality is discussed in regard to buying, the subject does not only apply to traders, it concerns all people. Moreover, if men cheat and do wrong in their business when selling, though there is no fair excuse for their conduct, it may be urged that they are driven to extremes by the pressure of competition and by the difficulty of earning a livelihood. But when many people are making ordinary purchases they are not in the same position and under the same temptation. Traders, of course, are buyers in the way of business. But people of affluent circumstances are also buyers without any consideration of business exigencies, but solely for their own convenience. If such people do not behave honourably they are doubly guilty.

II. THE BUYER IS SUBJECT TO MORAL OBLIGATIONS. 1. *He owes justice to the seller.* He has no right to squeeze the unfortunate trader's profit by the pressure of undue influence, threatening to withdraw his custom or to injure the connection among his friends, taking advantage of the fact that the seller is in want of money, etc. It is his duty to pay a fair price, even though by the stress of circumstances he might force a sale at a lower rate. 2. *He owes truth to the seller.* He may misrepresent the absolute value of his purchase, perhaps knowing more of its true worth than the seller, but trying to deceive him. Thus the skilled connoisseur may take an unfair advantage of

the ignorance of the trader from whom he buys some rare article of *vertu*. Or a person may pretend not to want what he secretly covets most eagerly. Such a device is false and unworthy of a Christian profession. 3. *He owes humanity to the seller.* It is a gross abuse of trade to make it a condition of warfare. A man is not necessarily one's enemy because one does business with him. The unfortunate person who must needs sell at a great loss rather than not sell at all, is not the legitimate prey of the first greedy customer who is able to pounce upon him. The curse of trade is hard, cruel, brutal selfishness. Christianity teaches us to regard the man with whom one does business as a brother. The buyer should learn to treat the seller as he desires to be treated in turn, and so to fulfil the law of Christ. The same principle requires kindliness of manner.

III. THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE BUYER ARE COMMONLY NEGLECTED. The causes of this negligence are manifold; *e.g.*: 1. *Inconsiderateness.* Often there is no intention of doing an injustice. The buyer simply forgets the rights of the seller. This inconsiderateness does harm in various ways. Careless customers give needless trouble to shop-people. Some order for view more goods than they need to effect a purchase; some persist in shopping late in the evening, etc. 2. *Selfishness.* The chief cause of the evil is a sole regard for self. People who are reasonable and kind in their own homes will manifest the most tyrannical spirit, the most cynical selfishness, in their shopping. When the veneer of social habits is broken this ugly vice is more visible in the most polished society than among rougher people. 3. *Sinfulness.* The evil heart is seen here as elsewhere. For the buyer to force injustice and to cheat the seller is for him to reveal himself as a slave of sin as truly as if he broke out in wanton violence and open robbery.

Ver. 22.—*Revenge and its antidote.* I. THE SIN AND FOLLY OF REVENGE. This passion appears to spring from a natural instinct; it pretends to justify itself as the fair return for some wrong, and it offers a compensation for the wrong suffered in the triumph which it gains over the wrong-doer. But it is both culpable and foolish. 1. *It is culpable.* Even if revenge were desirable, we have no right to wreak it on the head of the offender. We are not his judge and executioner. God says, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." We have no excuse for antedating the Divine vengeance in our impatience by taking the law of retribution into our own hands. If another has hurt us, that fact is no excuse whatever for our hurting him. Two wrongs do not make one right. The spirit of vengeance in man is a spirit of hatred, and therefore one for which there is no excuse. Much as an enemy may have injured us, he is still our fellow-man to whom we owe charity and forgiveness. 2. *It is foolish.* At best it can offer but a gloomy compensation. Unless our nature delights in malignity, there can be no real satisfaction in seeing an enemy suffer. Though a natural passion may seem to be satisfied with a gleam of fierce joy in the moment of triumph, this must be succeeded by a dismal sense of the vanity of any such feelings. The after-thought of revenge must be bitter. Moreover, the exercise of vengeance will not cure enmity, but only intensify it. Therefore it may just provoke a second and greater wrong than that which it is avenging. There is no prospect before it but increasing rancour, hatred, strife, misery.

II. THE ANTIDOTE TO REVENGE. We are not to be left to suffer wrong without compensation or hope. We may find a prospect of something better than the bitter harvest of vengeance if we turn from sinful man to God. Then we shall see the true antidote. 1. *It springs from faith.* We have to be assured that God can and will help us. We can thus afford to ignore the wrong that has been done us, or, if that be impossible, we can learn to look above it and feel confident that, if God undertakes our cause, all will be well in the end. This faith will not desire the ruin of our enemy. It is not an entrusting of vengeance to God, though he must see justice done to the wrong-doer. But it is a quiet confidence in God's saving grace. It is better to be delivered from the trouble brought on us by the misconduct of others than to remain in that trouble and see the guilty persons punished. We can afford to be magnanimous and forget the unkindness of man when we are enjoying the kindness of God. 2. *It is realized through prayer, patience, and hope.* (1) *Prayer.* We must wait on the Lord. Vengeance is lost in prayer. We shall cease to feel the boiling of rage against our foe when on our knees before God. There we cannot but remember how utterly we

depend upon mercy. (2) *Patience.* Waiting on God generally implies some delay. We must *wait* for the answer. Deliverance does not come at once. Hasty revenge must be restrained by patience in prayer. (3) *Hope.* God will save at last, if not immediately. The prospect of this deliverance is a pleasing substitute for the hideous vision of revenge on an enemy.

Ver. 29.—*Young men and old.* I. EVERY TIME OF LIFE HAS ITS OWN PECULIAR EXCELLENCE. 1. *Every age of man has some excellence.* Youth appears vain in the grave vision of age, and age looks gloomy to the bright eyes of youth. Yet both youth and age have their mead of praise. It is possible for a man to miss all excellence in life and to live in dishonour from youth to age. But that depends upon his own conduct, and he only will be to blame for spoiling every age of his life if he does thus live in dishonour. There are honourable and desirable conditions for life throughout its whole length. 2. *The excellences of the various ages of man are different.* The glory of a young man is not identical with the beauty of an old man. The common mistake is that in the narrowness of our personal experience we judge of other periods of life by the standards that only apply to those in which we are severally living. Hence either undue admiration or unreasonable disgust. It is cheering to know that a very different condition from that which floats before us as our ideal may be equally happy and honourable.

II. THE PECULIAR EXCELLENCE OF YOUTH IS FOUND IN ITS ENERGY AND THE USE IT MAKES OF IT. 1. *Energy is a characteristic of youth.* Then the fresh unfaded powers are just opening out to their full activity. This is the time for service. The young men go to the wars. "It is well for a man to bear the yoke in his youth." All kinds of fresh activities spring out of the fertile soil of youth. An indolence in youth is simply disgraceful. 2. *Youthful energy is admirable.* (1) *Physical strength.* This is a gift of God. It is a natural perfection of bodily life. It carries with it possibilities of manly work. "Muscular Christianity" may be as holy as feeble asceticism. (2) *Mental strength.* The intellectual feats of brain-athletics indicate noble energies and arduous industry. The mind is from God, and its ripened powers render him glory. (3) *Moral strength.* Daniel was stronger than Samson. The chief glory of youthful strength is here—the power to resist temptation, to live a true life, to fight all lies and shameful thoughts and deeds, and stand up firmly for the right. 3. *Youthful energy should be used in the service of Christ.* Then its glory is radiant. A lower use of it dims its lustre. Degradation to purposes of sin turns its splendour into shame.

III. THE SPECIAL EXCELLENCE OF AGE IS TO BE SEEN IN ITS RIPENED EXPERIENCE. 1. *Experience ripens with years.* The suggestion of that fact may be seen in the picture of the grey head, the beauty of which chiefly resides in the thought of the harvest of years that it represents. Strength may be lost, but experience is gained. There is an exchange, and it is not for any to say on which side the real advantage lies. 2. *The experience of years has a beauty of its own.* We usually associate youth and beauty, and we think of beauty declining with advancing years. Painful signs of life's stern battle break the fair charms of youth. But old age brings a new beauty. This is often seen even in the countenance, finely chiselled with delicate lines of thought and feeling into a rare grace and dignity. But the higher beauty is that of soul, the beauty of Simeon when he held the infant Saviour in his arms. The crowning beauty of age is in a perfected saintliness. To attain to this is to go beyond the glory of youth. Yet there must accompany it a certain melancholy at the thought of the lost energy of earlier years, until the old man can look forward to the renewed youth, the eternal energy of the life beyond.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—5.—*Evils to be avoided.* I. SOME SPECIAL EVILS AND DANGERS. 1. *Drunkenness.* (Ver. 1.) The spirit or demon of wine is spoken of as a personal agent. It leads to frivolity, scoffing, profane and senseless mirth. To be drunk with wine, as St. Paul points out (Eph. v. 18), is the opposite of being "filled with the Spirit" (see F. W. Robertson's sermon on this subject). 2. *The wrath of kings.* (Ver. 2.) In those

times of absolute rule, the king represented the uncontrollable arbitration of life and death. As in the case of Adonijah, he who provoked the king's wrath sinned against his own soul. What, then, must the wrath of the eternal Sovereign be (Ps. xc. 11)? To invoke the Divine judgment is a *suicidal* act. 3. *Contentiousness.* (Ver. 3.) Quick-flaming anger is the mark of the shallow and foolish heart. The conquest of anger by Christian meekness is one of the chiefest of Christian graces. "Let it pass for a kind of sheepishness to be meek," says Archbishop Leighton; "it is a likeness to him that was as a sheep before his shearers." 4. *Idleness.* (Ver. 4.) The idle man is unseasonable in his repose, and equally unseasonable in his expectation. To know our time, our opportunity in worldly matters, our day of grace in the affairs of the soul, all depends on this (Rom. xii. 11; Eph. v. 15—17).

II. THE SAFEGUARD OF PRUDENCE. (Ver. 5.) The idea is that, though the project which a man has formed may be difficult to fathom, the prudent man will bring the secret to light. "There is nothing hidden that shall not be made known." 1. Every department of life has its principles and laws. 2. These may be ascertained by observation and inquiry. 3. In some sense or other, all knowledge is power; and that is the best sort of knowledge which arms the mind with force against moral dangers, and places it in constant relation to good.—J.

Vers. 6—11.—*The frailty of mankind.* I. THE RARITY OF TRUE FRIENDSHIP. (Ver. 6.) Many are ready to promise, few willing to perform. Many eager to say, "Lord, Lord!" comparatively few to do the will of the Father in heaven. There is no want of good notions in the world; but, according to the Italian proverb, many are so good that they are good for nothing. The spirit may be willing, the flesh is weak. Inclination to good needs to be fortified by faith in God.

II. THE JUST AND GOOD MAN. (Ver. 7.) We cannot but feel that he is an ideal character. Poets and preachers have delighted to describe him, have surrounded him with a halo, depicted the safety and blessedness of his life. But how seldom does he appear on the actual scene! Our being is a struggle and a series of failures. The one thing needful is to have a lofty ideal before us, and never to despair of approaching a little nearer to it with every right effort.

III. THE IMPARTIAL JUDGE. (Ver. 8.) The earthly judge upon his seat reminds us of the mixed state of human nature—of the need of a process of sifting, trial, purification, ever going on. Judgment is an ever-present fact, a constant process. We are being tried, in a sense, every day, and "must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ." Let us "labour that we may be accepted of him."

IV. THE CLEAN CONSCIENCE. (Ver. 9.) This pointed question silences our boasting, and checks the disposition to excuse ourselves. By unwise comparison with others we may seem to stand well; but in the light of his own mere standard of right and duty, who is not self-condemned? "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John i. 8, 9).

V. EQUITABLE CONDUCT. (Ver. 10.) How common are the tricks and evasions of trade! And there is something more in this than mere desire for gain. The general experience of the world is so strong against dishonesty, as seen in common proverbs, as "bad policy," that we must look to a deeper cause of its existence, viz. the perversity of man's heart.

VI. EARLY SYMPTOMS OF CHARACTER. (Ver. 11.) Tendencies of evil and (never let us omit to acknowledge) tendencies of good are seen very early in children. The Germans have a quaint proverb, "What a thorn will become may easily be guessed." How much depends on Christian culture; for "as the twig is bent, so is the tree inclined."—J.

Vers. 12—19.—*Religion, industry, prudence, and honesty.* I. GOD THE SOURCE OF ALL GOOD. 1. Of all bodily good. The eye, the ear, with all their wondrous mechanism, with all their rich instrumentality of enjoyment, are from him. 2. Of all spiritual faculty and endowment, the analogues of the former, and "every good and perfect gift" (Jas. i. 16). The new heart, the right mind, should, above all, be recognized as his gifts. 3. In domestic and in public life. Good counsels of Divine wisdom, and willing obedience of subjects to them, are the conditions of the weal of

the state; and it may be that these are designed by the preacher under the figures of the eye and the ear.

II. VIRTUES INDISPENSABLE TO HAPPINESS. 1. *Laboriousness.* (Ver. 13.) This is a command of God: "If any man will not work, neither let him eat;" for which the seeing eye and hearing ear are needed. Viewed in one light, of imagination, labour may appear as a curse; for it thwarts our natural indolence, our love of ease, and our sentimental views in general. But viewed in the light of actual experience, the law of labour is one of the divinest blessings of our life-constitution. 2. *Honesty.* (1) *Craft and trickiness exposed.* (Vers. 14, 17.) Here the cunning tricks of trade are struck; in particular the arts of disparagement, by which the buyer unjustly cheapens the goods he desires to invest in. The peculiar manner in which trade is still conducted in the East, the absence of fixed prices, readily admits of this species of unfairness. But the rebuke is general. (2) *The deceptiveness of sinful pleasures.* (Ver. 17.) There *is*, no doubt, a certain pleasure in dishonesty, otherwise it would not be so commonly practised in the very teeth of self-interest. There is a peculiar delight in the exercise of skill which outwits others. But this is only while the conscience sleeps. When it awakes, unrest and trouble begin. The stolen gold burns in the pocket; the Dead Sea fruits turn to ashes on the lips. 3. *Sense and prudence.* (Vers. 15, 16, 18.) (1) *Sense is compared to the most precious things.* What in the affairs of life is comparable to judgment? Yet compared only to be contrasted. As the common saying runs, "There is nothing so uncommon as common sense." The taste for material objects of price may be termed universal and vulgar; that for spiritual qualities is select and refined. (2) *Good sense is shown by caution and avoidance of undue responsibility.* This has been before emphasized (ch. vi. 1—5; xi. 15; xvii. 18). We have enough to do to answer for ourselves. (3) *Prudence in war.* There are justifiable wars; but even these may be carried on with folly, reckless disregard of human life, etc. "The beginning, middle, and end, O Lord, turn to the best account!" was the prayer of a prudent and pious general. 4. *Reserve with the tongue, or caution against flatterers.* (Ver. 19.) The verse may be taken in both these senses. In all thoughtless gossip about others there is something of the malicious and slanderous spirit; there is danger in it. As to the listener, rather let him listen to those who point out his faults than to those who flatter.—J.

Vers. 20—23.—*Smitten sins.* I. HATRED TO PARENTS. (Ver. 20.) 1. It is unnatural beyond most vices, like hating the hand that lifts food to the mouth. 2. It is disobedience to a primary Divine command. 3. It incurs the Divine curse and the darkest doom.

II. THE VICE OF GRASPING. (Ver. 21.) It springs from excessive, irregular, disordered desire, and generally from an ill-led life. We must wait upon God's order; must distinguish the necessary from the superfluous and the luxurious, and seek no enterprises that lie out of our proper vocation, if we would arm ourselves against this unholy temptation, and avoid the curse which attends compliance with it. For ill-gotten wealth can never prosper.

III. THE REVENGEFUL SPIRIT. (Ver. 22.) It costs more to avenge injuries than to endure them. "He that studieth revenge keepeth his wounds open." Let us recall the lessons of the sermon on the mount, and if there is any one who has aroused our dislike, pray for him (not in public, but in the privacy of the heart).

IV. IN EQUITY, WHETHER IN COMMERCE OR IN GENERAL RELATIONS. (Ver. 23; see ver. 10.) What is shameful when detected is no less hideous in the sight of God, though concealed from men.—J.

Vers. 24—30.—*The truth of life in diverse aspects.* We may divide the matter as follows.

I. DIVINE PROVIDENCE. (Ver. 24.) It is needful, for human wisdom is short-sighted, and human direction inadequate. It is a gracious fact, and, if acknowledged, brings blessing to the trustful mind and heart. Each man has a life-vocation. God appoints it, and will reveal the means for the attainment of it. We cannot enter the kingdom except through the guidance of Christ.

II. HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY. (Ver. 27.) There is a light within us, or conscience

in the most comprehensive sense. By the help of reason we may judge other men; by that of conscience, ourselves. It is in another statement the power of reflection, the inner mirror of the soul.

III. GENERAL RELATED TRUTHS. 1. *The necessity of pondering well our wishes.* (Ver. 25.) We should think thrice before we act once. To act first and reflect afterwards is foolish and helpless; thus we reap the good of neither thought nor action. 2. *The necessity of discrimination in rulers.* (Ver. 26.) The figure is borrowed from agriculture, from the process of sifting and threshing—the latter in a *penal* sense (2 Sam. xii. 31; 1 Chron. xx. 3; Amos i. 3). It is carried into the gospel. The Divine Judge's "fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor." We must submit to law or be crushed by its penal action. 3. *The necessity of love and faithfulness in government.* (Ver. 28.) For human government, to be sound, stable, and respected, must be a reflection of the Divine government. And the eternal features of the latter are love and faithfulness. Clemency and severity are but two sides of the one living and eternal love which rules men only for their salvation. 4. *The beauty of piety in youth and age.* (Ver. 29.) Let the young man in Christ approve his strength by manful self-conquest, and the old man by riper wisdom and blameless conversation (1 John ii. 13, 14). 5. *The necessity of inward purification.* (Ver. 30.) And to this end the necessity of chastisement. In bodily disease we recognize the struggle of life against that which is inimical to it; and in the afflictions of the soul the struggle of the God-awakened soul against its evils. Luther says, "Evil is cured, not by words, but by blows; suffering is as necessary as eating and drinking."—J.

Ver. 1.—*Strong drink: four delusions.* That may be said to mock us which first professes to benefit us, and then proceeds to injure and even to destroy us. This is what is done by strong drink. First it cheers and brightens, puts a song into our mouth, makes life seem enviable; then it weakens, obfuscates, deadens, ruins. How many of the children of men has it deceived and betrayed! how many has it robbed of their virtue, their beauty, their strength, their resources, their peace, their reputation, their life, their hope! There are—

I. FOUR DELUSIONS IN WHICH MEN INDULGE REGARDING IT. 1. That it is necessary to health. In ordinary conditions it has been proved to be wholly needless, if not positively injurious. 2. That it is reliable as a source of pleasure. It is a fact that the craving for intoxicants and anodynes continually increases, while the pleasure derived therefrom continually declines. 3. That it renders service in the time of heavy trial. Woe be unto him who tries to drown his sorrow in the intoxicating cup! He is giving up the true for the false, the elevating for the degrading, the life-bestowing for the death-dealing consolation. 4. That it is a feeble enemy that may be safely disregarded. Very many men and women come into the world with a constitution which makes any intoxicant a source of extreme peril to them; and many more find it to be a foe whose subtlety and strength require all their wisdom and power to master. An underestimate of the force of this temptation accounts for many a buried reputation, for many a lost spirit.

II. THE CONCLUSION OF THE WISE. 1. To avoid the use of it altogether, if possible and thus to be quite safe from its sting. 2. To use it, when necessary, with the most rigorous carefulness (ch. xxxi. 6; 1 Tim. v. 23). 3. To discourage those social usages in which much danger lies. 4. To act on the principle of Christian generosity (Rom. xiv. 21).—C.

Ver. 3.—(See homily on ch. xxix. 11.)—C.

Vers. 6, 7.—*The blessings of goodness.* Here are brought out again, in proverbial brevity, the blessings which belong to moral worth.

I. THE DOUBTFUL VALUE OF SELF-PRAISE. "Most men will proclaim," etc. 1. On the one hand, nothing is better than the approval of a man's own conscience. "Populus me sibilat, at mihi plaudo," says the Roman writer. Let a man have the commendation of his own conscience, and he can hear the hisses of the people with very little concern. It has been in this spirit that the very noblest things have been done by honourable and even heroic men. 2. On the other hand, there is a vast

amount of self-congratulation amongst men which is nothing more or better than mere complacency. It is self-flattery, and that is not beautiful, but ugly; it is not true, but false. And such is the tendency in man to assure himself that he is right, even when he is thoroughly and lamentably wrong, that we have to wait and to inquire before we take men's word about themselves. Between the heroic spirit of a Luther, or a Columbus, or a Galileo, and the miserable self-satisfaction of some petty tyrant gloating over his tyranny, there is the entire breadth of the moral world. It is well for us all to be able to do without the honour that cometh from man only; it is well for us also to recognize the truth that our own commendation, so far from being the voice of God within us, may be nothing but the very unsightly crust of a dangerous and even deadly complacency.

II. THE EXCELLENCY OF FAITHFULNESS. Solomon seemed to find fidelity a rare thing. "Who can find it?" he asked. With Christian truth sown in so many hearts, we do not feel the lack of it as he did. We thank God that in the home and the school, in the shop and the factory, in the pulpit and the press, in all spheres of honourable activity, we find instances of a solid and sound fidelity—men and women occupying their post and doing their work with a loyalty to those whom they serve, which is fair indeed in the sight both of heaven and of earth. There is abundance of unfaithfulness also, it has to be owned and lamented; and this is sometimes found where it is simply disgraceful—among those who wear the name of that Master and Exemplar who was "faithful in all his house." It is required of us, who are all stewards, that we be found faithful (1 Cor. iv. 2); and we must not only expect to give account to our brother here, but to the Divine Judge hereafter.

III. THE WORTH OF GUIDING PRINCIPLES. "A just man walketh in his integrity." What fairer sight is there beneath the sun? A just or upright man, a man who is (1) yielding to God that which is due to his Creator and his Redeemer, viz. his heart and his life; who is (2) giving to his neighbours what is due to them; and who is (3) honouring himself as is his due;—this man is "walking" along the path of life in his integrity, every step directed by righteous principles and prompted by honourable impulses; his way is never crooked, but lies straight on; it is continuously upward, and moves to noble heights of virtue and wisdom and piety. Who would not be such as he is—a man God owns as his son, and the angels of God as their brother, and all his fellow-men as their helper and their friend?

IV. THE CROWN OF HUMAN BLESSEDNESS. "His children are blessed after him." Then is a good man crowned with an honour and a joy which no diadem, nor rank, nor office, nor emolument, can confer, when his children are found "walking in the truth" of God, their affections centred in that Divine Friend who will lead them in the path of heavenly wisdom, their life governed by holy principles, themselves enriched and encircled by a holy and beautiful character, their influence felt on every hand for good—"a seed which the Lord hath blessed."—C.

Ver. 9.—*Purity of heart.* A subject that stretches back and looks onward as far as the limits of human history. But Jesus Christ has introduced into the world a power for purity which is peculiar to his gospel.

I. THE UTTER UGLINESS OF IMPURITY. To the eye of holy men there is an unspeakable offensiveness in any form of impurity—selfishness, worldliness, covetousness, sensuality, whatever it may be. And how much more hideous and intolerable must it be in the eyes of the Holy One himself (Hab. i. 13; Ps. v. 5)! This is one explanation of choosing leprosy as a type and picture of sin, viz. its fearful loathsomeness in the sight of God.

II. ITS EXCLUSION FROM THE PRESENCE AND KINGDOM OF GOD. (See Ps. l. 16; lxvi. 18; ch. xv. 29; xxviii. 9; Isa. i. 10—17; Matt. v. 8; Heb. xii. 14.)

III. THE ONE WAY OF RETURN. When the heart sees, and is ashamed of, its corruption, and returns in simple penitence to God, then there is mercy and admission. But sincere repentance is the only gateway by which impurity can find its way to the favour and the kingdom of God.

IV. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF INWARD PURITY. When the heart, conscious of guilt, has sought and found mercy of God in Jesus Christ, and is "cleansed of its iniquity," so that there is "a clean heart and a right spirit" before God, all is not yet done that

has to be accomplished. What Christian man can say, "I have made my heart clean; I am pure from my sin"? "If *we* [who are in Christ Jesus] say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John i. 8). "In many things we offend all" (Jas. iii. 2). We are washed, but we "need to wash our feet" (John xiii. 10). There yet lingers within the heart of the humble and the pure that which needs purification before they will be "holy as he [the Lord] is holy." What are these cleansing forces which will best do this much-needed and most desirable work? Are they not: 1. The avoidance of that which defiles; the deliberate turning away of the eyes of the soul (so far as duty to others will allow) from all that stains and soils? 2. Much fellowship with Jesus Christ the Holy One, and much intercourse with his true friends and followers? 3. The earnest, determined pursuit of that which is noblest in man, especially by the study of the worthiest lives? 4. Prayer for the cleansing influences which come direct from the Holy Spirit of God (Ps. li. 10; cxxxix. 23, 24; 2 Thess. ii. 17; Heb. xiii. 20, 21)?—C.

Ver. 10.—(See homily on ch. xvi. 11.)—C.

Ver. 11.—*Childhood: a transparency, a prophecy, a study.* It is not apparent why Solomon says, "*Even* a child is known." It is a familiar fact, at which we may glance, and which seems to be the main thought of the text.

I. THE TRANSPARENCY OF CHILDHOOD. Some men are full of guile and of hypocrisy; they have acquired the power of concealing their real thought and feeling beneath their exterior, and you are never quite sure what they mean. You dare not trust them; for their words, or their demeanour, or their present action may entirely belie them. Not so the child. He means what he says. If he does not love you, he will not affect any liking for you. You will soon find from his behaviour what he thinks about men and things, about the studies in which he is occupied, about the service in which you want him to engage. And whether he is living a pure and faithful life, whether he is obedient and studious, or whether he is obstinate and idle, you will very soon discover if you try. It requires but very little penetration to read a child's spirit, to know a child's character. But the truth which is not so much on the surface respecting the knowledge we have of or from the child relates to—

II. THE PROPHECY OF CHILDHOOD. "Even a child" will give some idea of the man into whom he will one day grow. "The child is father to the man." In him are the germs of the nobility or the meanness, the courage or the cowardice, the generosity or the selfishness, the studiousness or the carelessness, the power or the weakness, that is to be witnessed later on. He that has eyes to see *may* read in the child before him the future—physical, mental, moral—that will be silently but certainly developed. Hence we may regard—

III. CHILDHOOD AS A STUDY. If men have found an insect, or a flower, or a seed, or a stone well worth their study, how much more is the little child! For, on the one hand, *ignorant assumption* may spoil a life. To conclude hastily, and therefore falsely, respecting the temper, the tastes, the capacities, the inclinations, the responsibilities, the culpability or praiseworthiness of the child, and to act accordingly, may lead down into error and unbelief and despair the spirit that might, by other means, have been led into the light of truth and the love of God. And, on the other hand, *a conscientious and just conclusion* on these most important characteristics of childhood may make a life, may save unimaginable misery, may result in an early, instead of a late, unfolding of power and beauty, may make all the difference in the history of a human soul. And only the Father of spirits can tell *what that difference is.*—C.

Ver. 12.—*God our Maker.* Truly we are "wonderfully made;" and "the hand that made *us* is Divine." The human ear and eye are—

I. INSTANCES OF DIVINE SKILL AND POWER. That we should be able, by means of this small apparatus included in "the ear," to detect such a variety of notes, to distinguish sounds from one another so readily, through so many years, to perceive the faintest whisper in the trees, and to enjoy the roll of the reverberating thunder; that we should be able, by means of two small globes in our face, to see things as minute as a bud or a dewdrop and as mighty as a mountain or as the "great wide sea," to detect

that which is dangerous and to gaze with delight and even rapture on the beauties and glories of the world;—this is a very striking instance of the wonderful skill and power of our Creator.

II. EVIDENCES OF DIVINE GOODNESS. For what sources of knowledge, of power, of pure gladness of heart, of mental and moral cultivation and growth, has not God given to us in sculpturing for us "the hearing ear," in fashioning for us "the seeing eye"?

III. SUGGESTIVE OF THE DIVINE KNOWLEDGE. "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?" (Ps. xciv. 9). The wonderful Worker who has supplied us, his finite and feeble creatures, with such power of hearing and of vision, with such sources of knowledge,—how great, how perfect, how boundless, must be his own Divine perception! How certainly must he hear the whisper we would fain make inaudible to him! how inevitably must he see the action we would gladly hide from his searching sight! How absolute must God's knowledge be, both of our outward life and of the inner workings of our soul!

IV. OPPORTUNITY FOR DIVINE SERVICE. For here are the means we want of learning of God, of knowing, that we may do, his holy will. Our eye not only conveys to us the sight of the beautiful, the richly stored, the glorious world that God has made for us, but it enables us to read "the book he has written for our learning," wherein we can find all that we need to know of his nature, his character, and his will. And our ear not only conveys to us the melodies of the outer world, but it places within the reach of our spirit the Divine truths which are uttered in our presence. These, as they come from the lips of parent, or teacher, or pastor, can "make us wise unto salvation," can fill our hearts with holy purpose, with true and pure emotion, with abiding peace. And we may add that the speaking lips are also that which "the Lord hath made;" and what an opportunity these give us of uttering his truth, of helping his children, of furthering his cause and kingdom! Such excellent service can our bodily organs render to our immortal spirit; and so may they be impressed into the holier service of their Divine Author.—C.

Ver. 17.—(See homily on ch. xxi. 6—8.)—C.

Ver. 22 (ch. xxiv. 29).—*Resentment and forgiveness.* The Christian doctrine of forgiveness finds here a distinct anticipation; but that doctrine was not found in the highway, but rather in the byway of pre-Christian morals. It made no mark. It did not find its way into the thought and the feeling of the people.

I. WE MUST EXPECT TO BE WRONGED, OR TO BELIEVE OURSELVES WRONGED, AS WE GO ON OUR WAY. So conflicting are our interests, so various our views, so many are the occasions when an event or a remark will wear an entirely different aspect according to the point of view from which it is regarded, that it is utterly unlikely, morally impossible, that we should not be often placed in a position in which we seem to be wronged. It may be some sentence spoken, or some action taken, or some purpose settled upon, slight or serious, incidental or malevolent, but we may take it that it is one part of the portion and burden of our life.

II. BITTER RESENTMENT IS DISTINCTLY DISALLOWED. It is natural, it is human enough. As man has become under the reign of sin, it finds a place in his heart if not in his creed, everywhere. *It seems to be right.* It has one element that *is* right—the element of indignation. But this is only one part of the feeling, and by no means the chief part. A bitter animosity, engendered by the thought that something has been done *against us*, is the main ingredient. And this is positively disallowed. "Say not, I will recompense evil;" "It hath been said, . . . hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, Love your enemies . . . do good to them that hate you;" "Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath;" "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger . . . be put away from you, with all malice" (Matt. v. 43, 44; Rom. xii. 19; Eph. iv. 31).

III. WE HAVE AN ADMIRABLE ALTERNATIVE. We can "wait on the Lord," and he will "save us." We can: 1. Go to God in prayer; take our wounded spirit to him; cast our burden upon him; seek and find a holy calm in communion with him. 2. Commit our cause unto him; be like unto our Leader, "who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him

that judgeth righteously" (1 Pet. ii. 23). We shall thus ask God to save us *from ourselves*, from indulging thoughts and feelings toward our neighbour which shame rather than honour us, which separate us in spirit from our great Exemplar (1 Pet. ii. 21); and to save us *from those who would injure us*, working out for us, in his own way and time, our deliverance and recovery.

IV. WE WIN THE TRUE VICTORY. To be avenged on our enemy is a victory of a certain kind; the moment of success is a moment of triumph, of exultation. But: 1. *That is a victory which is greatly and sadly qualified.* When we regard the matter disinterestedly and dispassionately, can we really envy such triumph? Should we like to have in our heart the feelings which are surging and swelling in the breast of the victor—feelings of bitter hatred, and of positive delight in a brother's humiliation, or suffering, or loss? 2. *The victory of forgiveness is pre-eminently Christian.* It places us by the side of our gracious Lord himself (Luke xxiii. 34), and of the best and worthiest of his disciples (Acts vii. 60; 2 Tim. iv. 16). 3. *It gives to us a distinct spiritual resemblance to our heavenly Father himself.* (Matt. v. 45.)—C.

Ver. 23.—(See homily on ch. xvi. 11.)—C.

Ver. 27.—*The inward light.* Man may be said to be governed from above, from without, and also from within; by the power which is from heaven, by human society, and also by the forces which are resident in his own spiritual nature.

I. OUR SPIRITUAL NATURE. God created man in his own image; *i.e.* he created him a spirit. God is a spirit; so also is man, his offspring, his human child. Our spiritual nature is endowed with the faculties of perception, of memory, of imagination, of reason. These include—some would say that to these there has to be added—the power which is usually called conscience, the exercise of our spiritual faculties directed to all questions of morality. This moral judgment, or conscience, of ours: 1. *Distinguishes between right and wrong.* Decides what is good and what evil, what is just and what unjust, what is pure and what impure, what is true and what false, what is kind and what cruel. It is an inward light; it is "the candle of the Lord," etc. 2. *Approves of the one and disapproves of the other.* 3. *Acts with such force* that, on the one hand, there is a distinct satisfaction, and even joy; that, on the other hand, there is distinct dissatisfaction, and even pain, sometimes amounting to an intolerable agony. There is hardly any delight we can experience which is so worthy of ourselves as the children of God, as is that which fills our heart when we know that, regardless of our own interests and prospects, we have *done the right thing;* there is no wretchedness so unbearable as remorse, the stinging and smarting of soul when our conscience rebukes us for some sad transgression. 4. *Is a profoundly penetrating power.* It "searches all the inward parts" of the soul; it considers not only what is on the surface, but what is far beneath. It deals with thoughts, with feelings, with purposes and desires, with the motives which move us, and with the spirit that animates us.

II. THE INJURY OUR NATURE SUFFERS FROM OUR SIN. He that sinneth against Divine wisdom, and therefore against the Divine One, does indeed "wrong his own soul." Every wrong action tends to weaken the authority of conscience, and, after a while, it disturbs its judgment, so that its decision is not as true and straight as it was. This is the saddest aspect of the consequence of sin. When the inward light, the candle of the Lord, begins to grow dim, and ultimately becomes darkened, then the soul is confused and the path of life is lost. If our eye is evil, our whole body is full of darkness; if the light that is in us be darkness, how great must the darkness be (Matt. vi. 23)! When that which should be directing us into the truth and wisdom of heaven is misleading us, and is positively directing us to folly and wrong, we are far on the road to spiritual ruin. We have to mourn the fact that this is no rare occurrence; that sin does so confuse and blind our souls that men do very frequently fall into the moral condition in which they "call evil good, and good evil." The light that is in them is darkness.

III. OUR RESTORATION THROUGH CHRIST OUR LORD. Jesus Christ offers himself to us as the Divine Physician; he says to us, "Wilt thou be made whole?" And he who so graciously and mightily healed the bodies heals also the souls of men. He does so by recalling our affection to God our Father, by *setting our heart right.* Then loving

him, we love his Word, his truth; we study and we copy the life of our Lord. And as the *heart* is renewed and the *life* is changed, the *judgment* also is restored; we see all things in another light; we "see light in God's light." The candle of the Lord is rekindled, the lamp is trimmed; it gives a new light to all that are in the house—to all the faculties that are in the house of our nature. Let us yield ourselves to Christ our Lord, let us study his truth and his life, and our conscience will become more and more true in its decisions, and in its peaceful light we shall walk "all the day long," truly happy in heart, enjoying the constant favour of "the Father of lights."—C.

Ver. 28.—(See homily on ch. xvi. 12.)—C.

Ver. 29.—*The glory of young manhood.* A weak young man is not a sight that we like to see. Between young manhood and weakness there is no natural agreement; the two things do not accord with one another. In young men we look for strength, and delight to see it there. Moreover, youth itself is proud of the strength of which it is conscious, and "glories" in it. We look at—

I. THAT WHEREON WE CONGRATULATE IT. We look with satisfaction, and perhaps with pride, upon the young man who possesses: 1. *Physical strength.* Well-developed muscular power and skill, the attainment of the largest possible share of bodily vigour and capacity, this is one element of manliness, and, although it is not the highest, it is good in itself, and so far as it goes. 2. *Intellectual power.* The possession of knowledge, of mental vigour and grasp, of reasoning faculty, of business shrewdness and capacity, of imaginative power, of strength of will; but especially: 3. *Moral and spiritual strength.* Power to resist the evil forces which are around us; to put aside, without hesitation, the solicitations to unholy pleasure or unlawful gain; to decline the fellowship and friendship which might be pecuniarily or socially advantageous, but which would be morally and spiritually injurious; to move onward in the way of duty, unscathed by the darts and arrows of evil which are in the air; to undertake and to execute beneficent work; to range one's self with the honourable and holy few against the unworthy multitude; to bear a brave witness on behalf of truth, purity, sobriety, righteousness, whatever the forces that are in league against it;—this is the noblest element of strength, and this is pre-eminently the glory of young manhood.

II. ITS PECULIAR TEMPTATION. The temptation of the strong is to disregard and even to despise the weak, to look down with a proud sense of superiority on those who are less capable than themselves. This is both foolish and sinful. For comparative weakness is that from which the strong have themselves come up, and into which they will themselves go down. It is a question of time, or, if not of time, of privilege and bestowment (see *infra*), and a proud contempt is quite misplaced. The young should clearly understand that strength, when it is modest, is a beautiful thing, but when haughty and disdainful, is offensive in the sight both of God and man.

III. ITS CLEAR OBLIGATION. The first thing that human strength should do is to recognize the source whence it came, and to let its recognition find expression in devout and reverent action. "Thy God hath commanded thy strength." As, ultimately, all strength of every kind proceeds from God; and as he constantly sustains in power, and the strong as much as the weak are dependent on his fatherly kindness; and as the strong owe more to his goodness than the weak (inasmuch as they have received more at his hand);—the first thing they should ask themselves is—*What can we render unto the Lord?* And they will find that to devote their strength to the service of their Saviour and of their kind is to find a source of blessedness immeasurably higher, as well as far more lasting, than that which comes from the sense of power. It is not *what we have*, but *what we give*, that fills the soul with pure and abiding joy.—C.

Ver. 29 (latter clause).—(See homily on ch. xvi. 31.)—C.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XXI.

Ver. 1.—**The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water.** We are to think of the little channels used for irrigation. As these are altogether under the gardener's control, so the heart of the king, who might seem to have no superior, is directed by God. **He turneth it whithersoever he will.** By hidden influences and providential arrangements God disposes the monarch to order his government so as to carry out his designs, to spread around joy and plenty. The system of irrigation signified in this passage is still to be seen in Eastern lands. "Flower-beds and gardens of herbs are always made at a little lower level than the surrounding ground, and are divided into small squares, a slight edging of earth banking the whole round on each side. Water is then let in, and floods the entire surface till the soil is thoroughly saturated; after which the moisture is turned off to another bed, by simply closing the opening in the one under water, by a turn of the bare foot of the gardener, and making another in the same way with the foot, in the next bed, and thus the whole garden is in due course watered. . . . Only, in this case, the hand is supposed to make the gap in the clay bank of the streamlet, and divert the current" (Geikie, 'Holy Land and Bible,' i. 9). So in Virgil we find ('Ecl.,' iii. 111)—

"Claudite jam rivos, pueri; sat prata biberunt."

"Now close the cuts; enough the meads have drunk."

Ver. 2.—This is similar to ch. xvi. 2 (where see note. Comp. also ch. xiv. 12; xvi. 25; xx. 24). See here a warning against self-deception and that silly self-complacency which thinks its own ways the best. Septuagint, "Every man appears to himself righteous, but the Lord directs the hearts."

Ver. 3.—**To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.** The superiority of moral obedience to ceremonial worship is often inculcated (see note on ch. xv. 8, and below, ver. 27; and comp. Micah vi. 6—8 and Matt. xii. 7). "Justice" and "judgment" (*tsedakah* and *mishpat*) are combined in Gen. xviii. 19; 2 Sam. viii. 15; Job xxxvii. 23; Isa. lvi. 1, etc. They imply equity and justice proceeding, not from bare regard to law, but from the principle of love. Septuagint, "To do justly and to speak the truth are more pleasing to God than the blood of sacrifices."

Ver. 4.—**An high look and a proud heart;** Vulgate, *exaltatio oculorum est dilatatio cordis*, "The lifting up of the eyes is a swelling of the heart." But it is best to make the whole verse one idea, as in the Authorized Version. The lifting of the eyes is a term implying pride, as shown in supercilious looks, as if other people were of inferior clay and not worthy of notice. So we have "haughty eyes" in ch. vi. 17 (where see note); and in ch. xxx. 13 we read, "There is a generation, oh how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up." "The enlargement of the heart" is the cause of the proud look, for it signifies the evil affections and concupiscence of the will, wholly filled up with self, and controlling the actions and expression of the body. Septuagint, "A high-minded man (*μεγαλόφρων*) is stout-hearted in his pride." **And the ploughing of the wicked is sin.** The Authorized Version takes the reading נִר (*nir*), which means "tillage" (ch. xiii. 23), or, as Delitzsch supposes, "land ploughed for the first time" (*novale*). The proverb, taken thus, will mean, "high look, proud heart, even all the field which the godless cultivate, all that they do, is sin." "Pride," says the Talmud, "is worse than sin." But another pointing gives a different and very appropriate (comp. ch. xiii. 9; xxiv. 20) meaning. נֵר (*ner*) signifies "a lamp." Thus the Vulgate, *Lucerna impiorum peccatum*, "The lamp of the wicked is sin;" and the Septuagint, *Λαμπτὴρ δὲ ἀσεβῶν ἁμαρτία*. "Lamp" is, as often, a metaphor for prosperity and happiness (comp. 2 Sam. xxii. 29; 1 Kings xi. 36); and it is here said that the sinner's outward prosperity and joyousness, springing from no good source, being founded in self, and not resting on virtue and godliness, are in themselves sinful and displeasing to God.

Ver. 5.—**The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness.** Patient industry is rewarded by a certain increase (comp. ch. xii. 11; xiii. 11; xiv. 23). Says an English maxim, "Diligence is a fair fortune, and industry a good estate." The Greek gnomists have said tersely—

*Ἅπαντα τὰ καλὰ τοῦ πονοῦντος γίγνεται.*
*Τῷ γὰρ πονοῦντι καὶ Θεὸς συλλαμβάνει.*

"To him who labours all good things accrue.
The man who labours God himself assists."

**But of every one that is hasty only to want.** Diligence is contrasted with hastiness. The hasting to be rich by any, even nefarious, means (ch. xx. 21; xxviii. 20) will bring a man to poverty. There are numerous pro-

verbs warning against precipitancy, which will occur to every one: *Festina lente;* "More haste, less speed;" "Eile mit Weile."

Προπέτεια πολλοῖς ἐστιν αἰτία κακῶν.

(See a long dissertation on *Festinatio præpropera* in Erasmus's 'Adagia.') This verse is omitted in the chief manuscripts of the Septuagint.

Ver. 6.—**The getting of treasures by a lying tongue**—the acquisition of wealth by fraud and falsehood—**is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death.** The latter clause is variously rendered and interpreted. The Hebrew is literally, *a fleeting breath, those seeking death.* The Revised Version makes the last words a separate proposition, "They that seek them seek death." But this seems unnecessary, and somewhat opposed to the gnomic style, which often combines two predicates in one construction; and there is no reason why we should not render the words, as in the Authorized Version, "of seekers of death." Such a mode of obtaining wealth is as evanescent and unstable as the very breath, and ends in death, which is practically the result of their quest. Thus Wisd. v. 14, "The hope of the ungodly is like dust that is blown away with the wind; like a thin froth that is driven away with the storm; like as the smoke which is dispersed here and there with the tempest, and passeth away, as the remembrance of a guest that tarrieth but a day." Some think that the comparison regards the mirage of the desert, which deceives travellers with the phantasms of cool waters and refreshing shade. Such an allusion is found in Isa. xxxv. 7. The Talmud enjoins, "Speak no word that accords not with the truth, that thy honour may not vanish as the waters of a brook." The Septuagint and Vulgate have followed a different reading (מוּק שׁ־מות), and render thus: Vulgate, *Vanus et excors est, et impingetur ad laqueos mortis,* "He is vain and foolish, and will be taken in the snares of death;" Septuagint, "pursues vain things unto the snares of death (ἐπὶ παγίδας θανάτου)" (ch. xiii. 14; xiv. 27). So St. Paul says (1 Tim. vi. 9), "They that desire to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare (παγίδα), and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition."

Ver. 7.—**The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them;** Vulgate, *rapinæ impiorum detrahent eos;* Revised Version, "The violence of the wicked shall sweep them away," like chaff before the wind. The violence with which they treat others shall rebound on themselves, shall bring its own punishment; they shall sink in the pit that they made, and their foot shall be taken in the net which they hid (Ps. ix. 15; comp. ch. i. 18, 19). Septuagint, "Destruction shall sojourn as a guest (ἐπιξενωθήσεται) with the ungodly." The reason of this fate is given in the concluding hemistich: **Because they refuse to do judgment.** This is a judicial retribution on them for wilfully declining (ver. 25) to do what is right.

Ver. 8.—**The way of man is froward and strange;** Vulgate, *Perversa via viri, aliena est.* Both this and the Authorized Version miss the antithesis between the guilty and the pure man, which is intended. Ish זר, translated "and strange" (which seems to mean "alien from what is right"), the *vav* is not the copulative, but part of the word, which is an adjective signifying "laden with guilt;" so that the clause ought to be rendered, "Crooked is the way of a guilty man" (see note on ch. ii. 15, where, however, the word is different, though the idea is analogous). An evil man's way of life is not open and straightforward, simple and uniform, but stealthy, crooked, perverse, whither his evil inclinations lead him. Septuagint, "To the crooked (σκολιοὺς) God sendeth crooked ways;" which recalls Ps. xviii. 26, "With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the perverse thou wilt show thyself froward." God allows the wicked to punish themselves by falling into mischief. As for **the pure, his work is right;** or, *straight* (ch. xx. 11). The pure in heart will be right in action; he follows his conscience and God's law, and goes direct on his course without turning or hesitation. The LXX. refers the clause to God: "for pure and right are his ways."

Ver. 9.—**It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop.** One is to think of the flat roof of an Eastern house, which was used as an apartment for many purposes; *e.g.* for sleeping and conference (1 Sam. ix. 25, 26), for exercise (2 Sam. xi. 2), for domestic matters (Josh. ii. 6), for retirement and prayer (Ps. cii. 7; Acts x. 9). This, though exposed to the inclemency of the weather, would be not an uncomfortable situation during a great part of the year. But the proverb implies a position abnormally inconvenient as an alternative preferable to a residence inside. Hence, perhaps, it is advisable to render, with Delitzsch, "Better to sit on the pinnacle of a house-roof." Septuagint, "It is better to dwell in a corner of a place open to the sky (ὑπαίθρου)." **Than with a brawling** (*contentious*) **woman in a wide house;** literally, *a house of society;* i.e. a house in common (comp. ver. 19 and ch. xxv. 24). A solitary corner, replete with inconveniences, is to be preferred to a house shared with a woman, wife or other female relation, of a quarrelsome and vexatious temper. The LXX. puts the matter forcibly, "than in cieled rooms with unrighteousness

and in a common house." So the Latin proverb, "Non quam late, sed quam læte habites, refert." The Scotch have a proverb to the same effect: "A house wi' a reek and a wife wi' a reerd (scold) will sune mak' a man run to the door." "I had rather dwell," says the Son of Sirach (Ecclus. xxv. 16), "with a lion and a dragon, than to keep house with a wicked woman."

Ver. 10.—**The soul of the wicked desireth evil.** A wicked man cannot rest without planning and wishing for some new evil thing. Nothing is safe from his malignant activity (comp. ch. iv. 16; x. 23). **His neighbour findeth no favour in his eyes** (Isa. xiii. 18; xxvi. 10). He does not look with pity on friend or neighbour, if they stand in the way of the gratification of his desires; he will sacrifice any one, however closely connected, so that he may work his will. Nothing makes a man more atrociously selfish and hard-hearted than vice (see ch. xii. 10, and the note there). The LXX. takes the sentence in a passive sense, "The soul of the ungodly shall not be pitied by any one." They who have no pity for others shall meet with no pity themselves; while, on the other hand, the Lord says, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. v. 7).

Ver. 11.—**When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise.** We had the same thought at ch. xix. 25 (where see note). The simple (*parvulus*, Vulgate) profit by the punishment of the incorrigibly evil. But the wise need not chastisement for their improvement. **When the wise is instructed** (Ps. xxxii. 6), he (the wise) **receiveth knowledge.** The wise man uses every opportunity, takes advantage of every circumstance and event, to increase his knowledge and experience. The Vulgate carries on the subject, "And if he (the simple) follow the wise man, he shall attain knowledge." Septuagint, "When the intemperate man is punished, the simple is made cleverer; and a wise man understanding will receive knowledge." "For it often happens," says St. Gregory ('Moral.,' xviii. 38), "that the mind of the weak is the more unsteadied from the hearing of the truth, as it sees the despisers of the truth flourishing; but when just vengeance takes away the unjust, it keeps others away from wickedness."

Ver. 12.—**The righteous man wisely considereth the house of the wicked:** but God **overthroweth the wicked for their wickedness.** The Authorized Version introduces the words "but God" in order to eke out the sense desired; the Revised Version, for the same reason, has, "how the wicked are overthrown;" and both versions signify that the good man contemplates the fortunes and seeming prosperity of the wicked, and, looking to the end of these men, sees how hollow is their success and what a fatal issue awaits them. The Vulgate refers the passage to the zeal of the righteous for the salvation of sinners—a thought quite foreign to the present subject—thus: *Excogitat justus de domo impii, ut detrahat impios a malo*, "The righteous man reflects concerning the house of the wicked how he may deliver them from evil." The Hebrew is literally, *A righteous one looketh on the house of the wicked: he precipitates the wicked to destruction.* There is no change of subject in the two clauses, and "a righteous One" (*tsaddik*) is God, put indeterminately to excite the greater awe (comp. Job xxxiv. 17). The Lord keeps the sinners under his eye, that he may punish them at the fit moment (comp. ch. xxii. 12; Job xii. 19). The notion of God's moral government of the universe prevails most strongly in every pronouncement of the writer. The LXX. interprets "the house" as heart and conscience, and renders, "A righteous man understands the hearts of the godless, and despises the impious in their wickednesses;" he sees through their outward felicity, knows well its unreality, and despises them for the low aims and pursuits which satisfy them.

Ver. 13.—**Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor.** A twofold retribution is threatened on the unmerciful man. **He also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.** He himself shall fall into distress, and shall appeal to his neighbours for help in vain. "With the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again" (Luke vi. 38). This is true also in spiritual matters and in the final judgment (see on ch. xiv. 21 and xix. 17; and comp. Matt. xviii. 23, etc.; xxv. 41, etc.; Jas. ii. 13).

Ver. 14.—**A gift in secret pacifieth anger.** We have had above various maxims about bribes and presents; *e.g.* ch. xvii. 8, 23; xviii. 16. The word translated "pacifieth" is from the ἅπαξ λεγόμενον verb כָּפָה, "to turn away," "avert." Septuagint, ἀνατρέπει; Vulgate, *extinguit;* Venetian, κάμψει. A gift offered secretly to one incensed, whether personal enemy, judge, or prince, averts the consequences of the offence. The next hemistich is parallel in meaning. **And a reward** (*present*) **in the bosom strong wrath.** A present kept handy in the bosom of the petitioner's garment, ready to be transferred at a fitting moment, as experience proves, calms the most violent wrath. Septuagint, "He that is sparing of gifts arouses strong wrath."

Ver. 15.—**It is joy to the just to do judgment.** The righteous feel real pleasure in doing what is right; they have the answer of a good conscience, and the feeling that

they are, as far as they can, making God's will their will, and this brings deep comfort and stable joy (see some contrary experiences, ver. 10 and ch. x. 23; xv. 21). **But destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity.** The Authorized Version, by inserting "shall be," and making this clause a separate assertion, obscures the force of the original, which, as in ch. x. 29 (where see note), contrasts the effect of right-doing on the good and the evil. It is a joy to the former, "but destruction [or, 'terror'] to them that work iniquity." *Et pavor operantibus iniquitatem*, Vulgate. They cannot trust themselves to do rightly without fear; they cannot commit the result to God, as the righteous do; if ever they do act uprightly, it is against their inclination, and such action will, as they fear, bring them to ruin. Septuagint, "It is the joy of the righteous to do judgment; but a holy man is abominable (ἀκάθαρτος) among evil-doers." So Wisd. ii. 15, "He [the righteous] is grievous unto us even to behold: for his life is not like other men's, his ways are of another fashion . . . he abstaineth from our ways as from filthiness (ἀκαθαρσιῶν)."

Ver. 16.—**The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding.** (For הַשְׂכֵּל, "understanding," see note on ch. i. 3.) He who forsakes the way of wisdom, the path of virtue, the religious life, and thus becomes in proverbial language "a fool," he **shall remain** (*rest, dwell*) **in the congregation of the dead**; *in cœtu gigantum commorabitur*. "The dead" is, in the Hebrew, *rephaim*, for which see note on ch. ii. 18. The denunciation means primarily that the sinner shall soon be with the shades of the dead, shall meet with a speedy death. Wordsworth considers that the writer is saying in bitter irony that the evil man shall rest as a guest at a banquet, shall lie down and be regaled, but it will be in the company of the dead. The contrast seems to lie between the wandering and the rest, and this rest is regarded as penal; so that one must needs see here an intimation of retribution after death; and comp. ch. xxiv. 14, 20. The Fathers regarded the *Rephaim*, "the giants," as the descendants of the rebel angels, in accordance with their interpretation of Gen. vi. 1—4. Thus St. Gregory writes ('Moral.,' xvii. 30), quoting our passage, "For whosoever forsakes the way of righteousness, to whose number does he join himself, saving to the number of the proud spirits?"

Ver. 17.—**He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man**; *qui diligit epulas*, Vulgate; for feasts are chiefly, though not exclusively, intended. He shall become "a man of want" (*machesor*) as ch. xi. 24. **He that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.** "Wine and oil" were the usual adjuncts of banquets (Ps. xxiii. 5; civ. 15). Some unguents used for anointing honoured guests were very costly. The pound of spikenard expended by Mary of Bethany was worth more than three hundred pence—the wages of a labourer for nearly a whole year (see John xii. 3; Matt. xx. 2). Indulgence in such luxuries would be a token of prodigality and extravagance, which are the sure precursors of ruin; while, on the other hand, according to the trite proverb, *Magnum vectigal est parsimonia*. That fulness of meat and luxurious habits tend to spiritual poverty and the loss of grace, need not be insisted on. Septuagint, "A man in want (ἐνδεὴς) loveth mirth, loving wine and oil unto wealth (εἰς πλοῦτον)." Some translate the last words, "in abundance," as if the meaning was that the poor endeavours to mitigate the severity of his lot by getting all the pleasure he can from creature comforts however procured. Others think that a negative has fallen out of the Greek, which should be, "not unto wealth," *i.e.* he shall not be enriched thereby.

Ver. 18.—**The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous.** The same thought occurs in ch. xi. 8 (where see note). כֹּפֶר (*kopher*), "price of atonement," means of reconciliation. Delitzsch instances that the great movement which gathered the nations together for the destruction of Babylon put an end to Israel's exile; and that Cyrus, the scourge of so many heathen peoples, was the liberator of the Jews (comp. Isa. xliv. 28). **And the transgressor for the upright.** The faithless takes the place of the upright; the stroke passes over the latter, to fall on the former, as in Egypt the destroying angel spared the houses of the Israelites, and poured his wrath on the Egyptians. Septuagint, "A transgressor is the offscouring (περικάθαρμα, perhaps equivalent to 'ransom') of a righteous man."

Ver. 19.—A variant of ver. 9. Here, instead of the "corner of the roof," we have **a wilderness**, a desert land, as the refuge to which the persecuted man must flee. **Than with a contentious and an angry** (*fretful*) **woman.** So the Vulgate. But it seems better, with many modern commentators, to take וְכָעַס, not as another epithet, but as equivalent to "and vexation," *i.e.* a quarrelsome wife, and the vexation that accompanies such an infliction. The LXX. adds a word to the text, as being at the root of the matter, "Than with a quarrelsome, *talkative*, and passionate woman."

Ver. 20.—**There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise.** Precious treasure and store of provision and rich unguents (ver. 17) are collected in the house of the wise man, by which he may fare sumptuously, exercise hospitality, and lay up for the future (comp. ch. xxiv. 4). **But a**

**foolish man spendeth it up.** "A fool of a man" (ch. xv. 20) soon swallows, runs through and exhausts, all that has been accumulated (ver. 17). Septuagint, "A desirable (ἐπιθυμητὸς) treasure will rest on the mouth of the wise, but foolish men will swallow it up." It is obvious to apply the maxim to spiritual things, seeing in it the truth that the really wise man stores up treasures of Divine love and the oil of God's grace, while the foolish man wastes his opportunities, squanders his powers, and drives the Holy Spirit from him.

Ver. 21.—**He that followeth after righteousness and mercy.** "Righteousness" (*tsedakah*), in the first hemistich, signifies the virtue which renders to all, God and man, their due, which is the characteristic of the righteous man (see on ch. xv. 9). "Mercy" (*chesed*) is the conduct towards others, animated by love and sympathy (see note on ch. iii. 3). **Findeth life, righteousness, and honour.** "Righteousness" here is the gift of God to his faithful servants, grace to live a holy life. This becomes habit, and forms the righteous character (Job xxix. 14; xxxiii. 26). "Life" is a long and prosperous life in the world (ch. iii. 16); "honour" is respect and reverence among fellow-men, and glory in another world. "Whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Rom. viii. 30). "Life and honour" stand together in ch. xxii. 4. "The fear of the Lord," says Siracides, "is honour, and glory, and gladness, and a crown of rejoicing . . . maketh a merry heart . . . and giveth long life" (Ecclus. i. 11, etc.). The LXX. omits the second "righteousness" by mistake: "The way of righteousness and mercy will find life and glory" (Matt. vi. 33).

Ver. 22.—**A wise man scaleth the city of the mighty.** The courage and strength of valiant men cannot defend a city against the skilful counsel of a wise strategist. **And he casteth down the strength of the confidence thereof.** He lays low the strength in which the defenders trusted; he not only takes the fortress, but also demolishes it. Wisdom is stronger than bodily might (ch. xx. 18. See the apologue, Eccles. ix. 14, etc.). Septuagint, "A wise man cometh upon strong cities, and casteth down the stronghold (καθεῖλε τὸ ὀχύρωμα) in which the ungodly trusted." Thus St. Paul, speaking of the weapons which God gives us to fight withal in the spiritual battle, says (2 Cor. x. 4) that they are "mighty before him to the casting down of strongholds (πρὸς καθαίρεσιν ὀχυρωμάτων)."

Ver. 23.—We have had similar maxims before (ch. xiii. 3 and xviii. 21, where see notes). **He keepeth his mouth,** who knows when to speak and when to be silent; and **he keepeth his tongue,** who says only what is to the purpose. We have all heard the proverb, "Speech is silver, silence is gold." One who thus takes heed of his words, **keepeth his soul from troubles.** The troubles (*angores*, Vulgate) are such as these—remorse for the evil occasioned, distress of conscience, vexation and strife with offended neighbours, danger of liberty and life, and, above all, the anger of God, and retribution in the judgment.

Ver. 24.—**Proud and haughty scorner is his name, who dealeth in proud wrath.** (For "scorner" (לֵץ), the *esprit fort*, the free-thinking sceptic of Solomon's day, see notes on ch. i. 22 and xiv. 6.) The verse is better translated, *A proud, arrogant man, scoffer is his name, who worketh in superfluity of pride.* עֶבְרָה (*ebrah*), translated "wrath," denotes also want of moderation, excess, presumption (see note on ch. xi. 23). The proverb explains the meaning of the name, *letz*, given to these rationalists; their contempt of revealed religion proceeds from pride of intellect, which refuses instruction, and blinds the eyes to the truth. The warning comes home to us in these times, when the "higher criticism" too often runs into gross scepticism and infidelity. Septuagint, "A bold and self-willed and insolent man is called a pest (λοιμὸς), and he that remembers injuries is a transgressor."

Ver. 25.—**The desire of the slothful killeth him.** The craving for ease and rest, and the consequent disinclination for labour, prove fatal to the slothful man. Or, it may be, the mere wish, combined with no active exertion to secure its accomplishment, is fatal to soul, body, and fortune (comp. ch. xiii. 4; xix. 24). Lesètre quotes Bossuet, "Le paresseux spirituel s'expose aussi à la mort éternelle; car les bons désirs ne suffisient pas pour le salut; il faut encore les œuvres" (see Matt. vii. 21; Rom. ii. 13).

Ver. 26.—St. Jerome and many commentators connect this verse with the preceding, considering the two to form a tetrastich, thus: **The desire of the slothful . . . he coveteth greedily all the day long, but the righteous giveth and spareth not.** But in this division of our book there are only pure distichs; and, as Delitzsch observes, to make the contrast, one requires in the first hemistich an expression like, "and hath nothing" (ch. xiii. 4; comp. ch. xx. 4). So it is correct to consider this distich independent, and to translate, *There is that* (or *one*) *desireth greedily always, but the righteous giveth and withholdeth not.* There are claims made on all sides, demands for help, importunate prayers, such as one would think no man could satisfy; but the righteous has means enough and to spare, he is generous and charitable, he is industrious, and uses his stewardship well (Luke xvi. 9), and so

arranges his expenditure that he has to give to him that needeth (Eph. iv. 28). Septuagint, "An ungodly man devises evil devices all the day long, but the righteous pitieth and showeth compassion unsparingly."

Ver. 27.—The first hemistich occurs in ch. xv. 8 (where see note). **How much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind!** rather, *for evil*, equivalent to "in order to atone for wickedness." The sacrifice of the sinner is abominable, as offered formally without repentance and faith; much more abominable, when he brings his offering to win, as it were, God's connivance in the sin which he commits and has no intention of renouncing,—brings it as a kind of bribe and recompense to compensate for his transgression. Such an outrage on God's purity and justice may well be called an abomination. Septuagint, "The sacrifices of the ungodly are abomination unto the Lord, for they offer them wickedly (*παρανόμως*)." The notion of propitiating the Deity by sharing with him the proceeds of sin is expressed in proverbial language. We have the homely saw, "Steal the goose, and give the giblets in alms;" and the Spaniards say, "Huerto el puerco, y dar los pies por Dios," "Steal the pig, and give away the pettitoes for God's sake" (Kelly). (See Ecclus. xxxi. 18, etc.)

Ver. 28.—(For the first hemistich, see ch. vi. 19; xix. 5, 9.) **Shall perish.** His testimony is worthless, and both he and it come to nothing. **The man that heareth speaketh constantly**; Vulgate, *vir obediens*; Septuagint, *Ἀνὴρ ὑπήκοος φυλασσόμενος λαλήσει*, "An obedient man will speak guardedly." "The man that heareth" is one who is attentive, who listens before he speaks, and reports only what he has heard. Such a one will speak "for continuance," so that what he says is never falsified, or silenced, or refuted. Vulgate, *loquetur victoriam*. And so Aquila, Theodotion, and Symmachus, *εἰς νίκος*. Revised Version, *unchallenged*. The expression thus rendered is *lanetsach*, which means, in Hebrew at any rate, *in perpetuum*, "for continuance." But St. Jerome's rendering has been much used by the Fathers, who have drawn therefrom lessons of obedience. Thus St. Augustine, 'In Psalm.,' lxx., "Sola obedientia tenet palmam, sola inobedientia invenit pœnam." St. Gregory, 'Moral.,' xxxv. 28, "An obedient man in truth speaketh of victories, because, when we humbly submit ourselves to the voice of another, we overcome ourselves in our heart" (Oxford transl.). See a long dissertation on obedience in the note of Corn. à Lapide on this passage of Proverbs.

Ver. 29.—**A wicked man hardeneth his face**; is shameless (as ch. vii. 13), and is insensible to rebuke or any soft feeling. This obduracy he shows with his countenance. Septuagint, "An ungodly man shamelessly withstands with his face." **But as for the upright, he directeth his way.** He gives it the right direction (2 Chron. xxvii. 6). This is the reading of the Khetib, יָכִין but, though generally adopted by the versions (except the Septuagint), it does not make a suitable antithesis to the rash stubbornness of the wicked. Hence modern commentators prefer the reading of the Keri, יָבִין, "he considereth, proveth," his way; he acts only after due thought, giving proper weight to all circumstances. Septuagint, "But the upright man himself understands (*συνιεῖ*) his ways." The contrast lies in the audacious self-confidence of the unprincipled man, and the calm circumspection and prudence of the saint.

Ver. 30.—**There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord**; *i.e.* in opposition to him, which can be compared with his, or which can avail against him (comp. Job v. 13; Ps. xxxiii. 10, 11; Isa. xxix. 14; 1 Cor. i. 20; iii. 19). Septuagint, "There is no wisdom, there is no courage (*ἀνδρεία*), there is no counsel, in respect of the ungodly;" *πρὸς τὸν ἀσεβῆ*, *neged Jahve*, being taken as "that which is against Jahve," equivalent to "impious." Wordsworth quotes Horace, 'Carm.,' iii. 6. 5, etc.—

"Dis te minorem quod geris, imperas:
Hinc omne principium, huc refer exitum."

The following verse carries on and applies the import of this one: As men's wisdom is nothing worth, equally vain is all trust in external means and appliances.

Ver. 31.—**The horse is prepared against the day of battle.** The horse is an emblem of military power and activity. To the earlier Jews, who were unaccustomed to its use, and indeed forbidden to employ it (Deut. xvii. 16), the horse and horse-drawn chariots were objects of extreme terror (Josh. xvii. 16; Judg. iv. 3), and though Solomon had largely imported them from Egypt (1 Kings iv. 26; x. 26, etc.), these animals were used exclusively for war, and, at this time, their services were never applied to agricultural purposes. The proverb asserts that, though all preparations are made for the battle, and material forces are of the best and strongest description, **but safety (*victory*) is of the Lord** (see Ps. xx. 7; xxxiii. 16, etc.). Septuagint, "But from the Lord is the help (*ἡ βοήθεια*)." The great truth here taught may be applied to spiritual matters. The only safety against spiritual enemies is the grace of God; we can cry, with St. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 57), "Thanks be

to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." "By the name 'horse,'" says St. Gregory ('Moral.,' xxxi. 43), "is understood the preparation of right intention, as it is written, 'The horse is prepared,' etc.; because the mind prepares itself indeed against temptation, but contends not healthfully unless it be assisted from above."

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 5.—*Patient industry.* The contrast between diligence and haste suggests the idea that there must be an element of patience and perseverance in the former if it is to be crowned with success. This may be very different from the Herculean efforts of genius, which astonish the world with spasms of effort and then sink into indifference. It is a quiet, constant, persistent activity. We are to see how much this is superior to the more flashy performances which are not seconded by diligence.

I. PATIENT INDUSTRY IN COMMERCE. This is the direct opposite of the gambler's method. The terrible evil of gambling has not been sufficiently weighed. Its awful temptations, its widespread influence, the frightful moral havoc it is making in all classes of society, are not yet appreciated; for if those evils were duly considered, all who are concerned about the welfare of England would start up in horror at the sight of a stupendous cause of ruin that is rampant in our midst. One of our leading judges has pronounced gambling to be the greatest national evil of England. Now, the spirit of gambling is seen in trade, and the Stock Exchange is with many no better than a huge betting-saloon. The greedy race for wealth makes men reckless. But experience shows that it is highly dangerous. The solid success of business men is not attained in this way. The lives of such men as George Moore and Samuel Morley show that honourable industry is a better road to wealth. Even when riches are not acquired—and but a few can ever win the prizes—it is the road of safety and peace. This means self-denial, hard work, patient waiting, courage under adverse circumstances. In these respects the difference between success and failure depends on our character and effort. When a man is in calm earnest his very thoughts are fertile.

II. PATIENT INDUSTRY IN LEARNING. There is a temptation for beginners to seek some royal road to knowledge; but it has never yet been found. The true student must "scorn delights, and live laborious days." Genius may be more than an unlimited capacity for hard work; but assuredly the highest genius will fail of its best fruits if it be swathed in indolence. The lives of great men are nearly always lives of hard-working men. Old-fashioned scholarship may appear less tempting than a short cut to popularity over the flowery fields of literary smartness. But the notoriety that is won so easily is an empty bubble that vanishes at a touch. Study, thought, intellectual industry, will always secure more solid and enduring rewards.

III. PATIENT INDUSTRY IN CHRISTIAN WORK. The modern temptation is to snatch at superficial success. An empty popular style and light attractive methods seem to secure results that are denied to more serious conscientious labours. But such a success is a rotten fruit, worthless, and soon ending in shame and bitterness. It is the duty of all who undertake Christian work to adapt it to the people. It is useless to preach if none will come to hear. The preacher ought to try to interest and win his congregation. There is no merit in dulness. The diligent must have his "thoughts." St. Paul was too wise to waste his efforts in "beating the air" (1 Cor. ix. 26). But the main efforts must be serious, persistent, persevering. If the seed is sown deeply, it will be slow to show itself; but it will be safely buried in the soil. In the mission field patient industry succeeds, while more exciting and hasty efforts only end in an ultimate collapse.

Ver. 10.—*Desiring evil.* I. MEN'S DESIRES ARE DETERMINED BY THEIR NATURES. Good men have good desires, and bad men bad desires. No doubt natural desires may spring up in an innocent heart under circumstances which forbid the satisfaction of them without sin. Only so can one be tempted as Christ was tempted, *i.e.* without sin. Some indeed have maintained that even Christ, in becoming a partaker of "sinful flesh" (Rom. viii. 3), actually took upon him a sinful nature, which he purged and redeemed. But we have no scriptural or historical evidence of any such transactions in

the Person of Christ. 1. *We must distinguish, therefore, between desires suggested and desires encouraged.* The first may be brought by the tempter to the innocent. It is in the case of the second that the desires become signs of sin. 2. *Many desires are in themselves sinful.* Such desires find no place in a pure heart. The very fact that they exist is an evidence of indwelling sin.

II. THE WORST NATURES ARE THOSE THAT DESIRE EVIL FOR ITS OWN SAKE. 1. *It is possible to be surprised into sin* without having previously cherished any desire for it. It is a darker thing to sin deliberately, after nursing the vile project and waiting long for an opportunity to carry it out. 2. Or it may be that the desire is for *some definite object which is thought to be attractive on its own account.* Then there is no wish to sin; on the contrary, the fact that there is no reaching the goal without transgressing the law of righteousness may be regarded with regret. The desire is gratified in spite of its sinfulness, not because of its sinfulness. 3. The worst state is that of *desiring the sin*, loving evil, finding a fascination in it—of two paths choosing the downward just because it descends. This is diabolic wickedness.

III. EVIL DESIRES ARE SINFUL. This is the clear teaching of Christ (Matt. v. 28). 1. They are sinful as *indicating a wicked heart.* The bad fruit condemns the bad tree. The world may not detect the hidden fires of suppressed desire; but they are known to the All-seeing. 2. They are sinful as *showing the exercise of sin*; i.e. if they are entertained. When we resist and seek to crush evil desires, this second stage of sinfulness is not reached. But brooding over them and giving them good room to live and grow in the heart add to their guilt. 3. They are sinful as *leading to wicked deeds.* Evil desires are seeds buried in the soul. Left to themselves and unchecked, they are sure to grow up and reveal their badness in wicked conduct.

IV. EVIL DESIRES SHOULD BE CHECKED AT ONCE. The above considerations should show us that it would be wrong to wait until the desires had reached the outer door of action in the world. They should be checked for various reasons. 1. Because they are *already evil.* Even if we were sure that we could always keep them secret and inoperative, their natural and present wickedness makes it incumbent on us to destroy them. The snake should be destroyed, though it lurks hidden in the thicket. 2. Because they can be *most readily destroyed in an early stage.* It is easier to kill the young brood in the nest than to slay the monsters when they have grown to full size. 3. Because they will be *beyond our control* when they have issued in actions. Deeds are irrevocable; but desires can be suppressed. Therefore men need the grace of Christ before they have fallen into actual sin. The best form of redemption is for the heart to be cleansed from its evil desires.

Ver. 13.—*Ignoring the cry of the poor.* I. THE SIN. 1. *The cry of the poor is exceedingly bitter.* It may not be clamorous, but it is grievous. There is no more pressing problem for society in the present day than the question how to deal with the wretched, overcrowded, poverty-stricken quarters of our great cities. (1) The evil is *widespread.* It concerns the misery of tens of thousands of people. (2) It is *intense.* No one who has not inquired into the subject can conceive of the depth of misery that it represents—pale children crying for bread, weary women heart-sick with despair, strong men enfeebled with hunger and embittered with the sight of wealth that seems to mock their misery. The wonder is that the poor bear their hard lot so patiently that the world of wealth scarcely heeds it. (3) It is *moral.* Overcrowding, ignorance, and despair, lead to gross moral degradation, drunkenness, reckless animalism, brutality, hatred, and outrage. 2. *It is our duty to hear this bitter cry.* The very poor are our fellow-men—our brothers and sisters. Only the Cains among us can dare to ask, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Christ has bidden us to love our neighbour as ourselves, and in the parable of the good Samaritan he has shown who is our neighbour. We cannot pass by on the other side without guilt in the sight of God. 3. *The neglect of this bitter cry is wilful.* The sin is that of a man who "stoppeth his ears." It is true he does not now hear the cry. But he is not the less guilty, for he refuses to hear it. There is a culpable ignorance. Well-to-do people may say that they do not know of the miserable condition of their brethren. It is the more shameful that they are thus ignorant. It is their duty to inquire into it. If the West End luxuriates in pleasures while the East End toils and starves in misery, the more fortunate section of society

has ample means of ascertaining the condition of the unhappy portion. Heedless indifference is cruel selfishness.

II. THE PUNISHMENT. "He also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard." 1. *His own circumstances may bring him into distress.* We see strange reverses of fortune. Some of the most wretched denizens of the lowest quarters were once in affluent circumstances. The breaking of a bank, the failure of a mine, the losses of speculation, the ruin of gambling, may bring a wealthy man down to destitution. Then if he has encouraged the neglect of the poor by his conduct in more fortunate days, he will suffer from the bad social custom that he has helped to foster. 2. *A social revolution may bring fearful punishment on the scornful who now neglect the cry of their brethren.* So it was in France a hundred years ago. There are not wanting signs that the whole civilization of Europe may be endangered by a huge social upheaval. The scandalous inequality of lots is glaringly apparent to all, and the privileges of the few may be ruthlessly torn from them in the interest of the many. If the volcano overflows there will be little respect for vested interests, abstract rights, or personal claims. But if we dread a violent revolution which might shatter the whole fabric of civilization, we must attend to the cry of poverty. To disregard this is to sit on the safety-valve while we wait for the coming explosion. 3. *In the future world the cry of the cruel and negligent will be unheeded.* Dives in torment cries in vain for Lazarus to cool his burning tongue. He is the very type of those who stop their ears against the cry of the poor. His punishment is to suffer from a similar neglect.

Ver. 17.—*The love of pleasure.* The love of pleasure is here described as a cause of poverty. No doubt this was meant to refer to physical destitution. But we cannot fail to see many other forms of poverty resulting from the same foolish infatuation.

I. IT IMPOVERISHES A MAN'S PURSE. This direct meaning of the text is not without its value. No man desires to come down in the social scale and to lose the comforts of life. But least of all will the pleasure-lover welcome such a prospect. High-minded, unselfish, unworldly men submit to the loss of all things, and "count them but dung" for the sake of some noble end. The pleasure-lover is not of this category. To him earthly loss must be a terrible infliction. Therefore, while the text may be of use for all, it is a direct *argumentum ad hominem* for such a person. Now, experience proves the truth of it. 1. For pleasure a man *neglects his business.* In the present day of hard competition such folly is fatal. 2. Many pleasures are *costly.* They cannot be had without great expenditure, and the passion for them leads to reckless extravagance. 3. Some pleasures *destroy the business powers of a man.* They are literally dissipations. Brain and nerves are weakened, and the degraded slave of self-indulgence becomes a wreck, unable to fight the stern battle of life. The drunkard is incompetent. The dissolute man is lacking in business promptness and energy. Other men will not trust the pleasure-seeker, and so business forsakes him. 4. There are pleasures that *directly impoverish.* Gambling—now so fearfully prevalent—is a direct road to poverty.

II. IT IMPOVERISHES A MAN'S INTELLECT. Even though the pleasure-seeker be prudent enough to preserve his fortune from shipwreck, or so exceedingly wealthy that he cannot easily squander all his possessions, he may and he will impoverish himself. Though he may always have money in his purse, his own mind will be emptied of all worthy possessions. The love of pleasure directly weakens the intellect. The physical effect of dissipation impoverishes the brain. The exciting distractions of a life of gaiety destroy the powers of deep, continuous thinking. The mind is thus wasted away in frivolity. The pleasure-seeker will not have patience to study solid literature, to think out great truths, to discuss with serious men grave questions of life and death. Exciting novels and plays will be his staple intellectual food, and the result will be mental ruin.

III. IT IMPOVERISHES A MAN'S HEART. The pleasure-seeker is often supposed to be a good-natured man because he is a genial companion. No doubt many loose-living, self-indulgent men have shown great generosity to their friends. But that is because they are not given up to pure pleasure-seeking. In itself pleasure-seeking is selfish, hard, cruel. The Romans of the old empire made a fine art of the cultivation of pleasure, and they became monsters of cruelty. The tortures of the amphitheatre furnished them with the most exquisite delights. Pleasure-loving Roman ladies treated their poor slave-girls

with heartless cruelty. It is a gross mistake to suppose that kindliness goes with pleasure-seeking, and that its opposite is a sour, ill-natured Puritanism.

IV. IT IMPOVERISHES A MAN'S SOUL. The greatest loss is not that of money, nor even that of thought or heart. The chief treasure which the pleasure-lover loses is the pearl of great price—the kingdom of heaven. He may gain the whole world, but he loses his own soul. Pleasure-seeking destroys the spiritual faculties. It is not required that the Christian should be an ascetic, denying himself innocent delights, nor is it to be supposed that all pleasures are evil. The evil is the *love* of pleasure. Even the love of pleasures that are innocent in themselves may be the rock on which a soul is ruined, if this be the supreme passion of that soul, eclipsing the love of God.

Ver. 31.—*National defence.* The Jews were repeatedly warned against keeping cavalry. Cavalry were for pitched battles, and could only be used on the plains. But the old successful Jewish warfare was among the hills. As a question of military tactics, the advice meant that it was better for the Jews to act on the defensive in their impregnable strongholds than to descend into the field for open warfare. A deeper thought was that, while defensive warfare might sometimes be required, the Jews were not to embroil themselves in the affairs of their neighbours. This was especially desirable for a little state wedged in between the two great empires of Egypt and Assyria, like Afghanistan between Russia and India. A still deeper and more momentous thought has yet to be reached. The Jews were to learn that their true defence was not in armies, not in military prowess, not in naturally strong fortresses. God was their Rock and Tower of strength. Now, we have no reason to consider that the idea which was brought out in the history of Israel with magnificent emphasis applies to that little ancient race alone. It is true of every nation that will recognize God, that "safety is of the Lord." We undergo periodical panics concerning our national dangers. It would be well if we could rise to the position urged upon Israel by the teachers of Old Testament days.

I. OBSERVE HOW SAFETY COMES FROM GOD. 1. *By a providential control of events.* God delivered Israel from Egypt by opening a path through the Red Sea. He saved Jerusalem from Sennacherib by the sword of the destroying angel. He protected England from the Spanish Armada by the tempest that strewed the coast of Norway with the wrecks of Spanish galleons. When no such marked events occur, God can save his people by the quiet, unseen control of the course of history. 2. *By a Divine influence exerted over the minds of men.* God is in the secret counsels of the most astute statesmen. He can suggest and direct their thoughts and plans. He can awaken conscience in the reckless invader, and allay the passions of the enraged enemy. Thus God saved Jacob from Esau. 3. *By help given to the attacked in the hour of danger.* God's interference may be so as to guide and strengthen those who trust in him, and so to lead them on to safety. There is much to be done through wise counsels, righteous decisions, and brave, true actions. These God can inspire. 4. *By final deliverance from all trouble.* (1) After death. God's people may be killed; yet he will save them and take them home to himself. (2) On earth. National deliverance may come after national calamity. It may be just and right and necessary that a fearful defeat should come. Yet God may bring ultimate salvation—a raising up of the fallen from their shame and distress.

II. CONSIDER HOW SAFETY MAY BE OBTAINED FROM GOD. We have no right to believe ourselves to be privileged people whom God will favour in preference to Russia, or France, or Germany. All the nations are cared for by God, and no nation can be assured of his protection without pursuing the right means to find it. We have no right to pray that God will scatter our enemies, if they are in the right, and *ours* are the "knavish tricks." How, then, is safety to be found in God? 1. *By acting justly towards our neighbours.* God will never protect us when we are wronging another nation. 2. *By living at peace with God.* If our conduct at home is inimical to God, we cannot expect him to defend us in the field. Godlessness in peace will bring God-desertion in war. National sin will alienate the protection of God. The first step must be national repentance. 3. *By trusting God.* If we are reconciled to God, and seeking to do the right, we can pray for his help, and believe we shall have it, with our armies if they must be called out; but, better far, without them, in maintaining peace.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—3.—*The providence and government of God.* I. THE DIVINE CONTROL OF HUMAN PURPOSES. (Ver. 1.) As the streams of water are led by canals and trenches through the land, that it may be refreshed and fructified, so are the thoughts and counsels of the ruler, if wise and true, a means of strength and blessing to the people. And all such wise counsels are of God. He forms and turns the purposes of the heart, as the potter with the clay. To Cyrus he says, "I have called thee by name, have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me" (Isa. xlv. 4. See Dr. Bushnell's fine sermon on this text in 'The New Life').

II. ALL HUMAN ACTIONS ARE WEIGHED IN THE SCALES OF DIVINE JUDGMENT. (Ver. 2.) We can say little about *motives;* we may be blind to our own, but God is not. Hence the duty of *pondering* (notice the original meaning of the word) our own doings and plans, *weighing* them, that is, in the scales of a judgment enlightened by his holy Word.

III. THE TRUE DIVINE SERVICE. (Ver. 3.) There is an *outward* and an *inward* side of the religious life. The outward, viz. ritual and moral conduct, is only of value as it is an expression of true desires in the heart. The inward worship of God in spirit and in truth (John iv. 24) must precede and accompany the outward worship, or the latter is nothing worth (ch. xv. 8; Ps. l. 7, *sqq.*; 1 Sam. xv. 22; Micah vi. 6—8).—J.

Vers. 4—9.—*A family of vices.* There is a kinship between all vices as between all virtues. All sins spring from a disturbance of our true relations to God, as all virtues rest upon the deep consciousness of that relation.

I. THE SIN OF PRIDE. (Ver. 4.) Its *aspect*—the lofty eyes, the haughty glance—and its principle in the heart are struck by the Divine rebuke. The meaning of the second clause is not quite clear; probably it is, "The light of the wicked is only sin," *i.e.* his haughty and overweening temper is compared to a flaming or a lurid light, contrasted with the mild serene ray that seems to stream from a good man's life.

II. THE VICE OF COVETOUSNESS. (Ver. 5.) Shown by an eager and selfish haste to obtain the wealth which Providence has apportioned only as the reward of painstaking toil. Religion teaches us moderation, *measure* in all things. "Unhasting, unresting," expresses the measure of diligence in all our life-business.

III. THE USE OF DISHONEST MEANS. (Ver. 6.) This can never lead to aught but a *seeming* success (see the exegesis of this passage). "Man is a shadow's dream," said Pindar. "What shadows we are! and what shadows we pursue!" said a great Englishman. But of none is the word more true than of him who seeks gain at the expense of inner truth, profit by the loss of the soul!

IV. VIOLENT DEEDS. (Ver. 7.) All violence recoils upon the perpetrator. The desolation which godless men bring upon others finally carries away themselves. No one who persistently sets himself against right can stand, can abide, for right is the very foundation and constitution of things in the order of God. And so of *criminality* or *impurity* in general (ver. 8). It is a crooked way, a twisted web. Perplexities, miserable intricacies of doubt, are generally to be traced to the fault of the will; and the straightforward man is he who walks by the light of a pure heart.

V. THE CONTENTIOUS TEMPER. (Ver. 9.) It unfits for society. It makes the home intolerable. The vexing, captious, irritable temper makes a solitude around it, and calls it peace. The very idea of the Christian household is peace. Wherever struggle may be necessary, it is certainly out of place there. Let us seek the "things that make for peace"—these first and foremost. Every wife, mother, daughter, should be in reality, if not in name, a "Salome!" ("a peaceful one").—J.

Vers. 10—13.—*Lessons and warnings from life-experience.* I. THE MERCILESSNESS OF EVIL DESIRE. (Ver. 10.) There is nothing more cruel than unbridled appetite of any kind. All bad desires are perversions of self-love, and men thus became "hateful and hating one another." It is the grace of God which converts the selfish imagination, ever fixed on one narrow object, to the all-embracing imagination which is necessary to the fulfilment of the "golden rule" (Matt. vii. 12).

II. THE LESSONS OF PUNISHMENT AND OF REWARD. (Vers. 11, 12.) Daily life is full of this contrast, will we but heed its warnings. When the evil meet their just doom, let us say with the psalmist, "Thou puttest away the wicked of the earth like dross; therefore I love thy testimonies" (Ps. cxix. 119). And not less when the wise and good are made happy (this is the sense of the next clause) let us own the hand of him who pronounces concerning every good deed, "It shall in no wise lose its reward."

III. RETRIBUTION ON THE HARD HEART. (Ver. 13.) The pitiless man closes the door of pity against himself in the time of need. If the cries of the poor are not heard *by us*, they will be heard *against us* (Exod. xxii. 23; Matt. xviii. 30—34). The parable of the unmerciful servant is the best commentary on this text.—J.

Vers. 14—17.—*Lights and shades of the earthly scene.* I. THE POWER OF GIFTS. (Ver. 14.) They are neither good nor evil in themselves, but may be employed for good or evil ends. Let us make a *good* use of this text. We learn that gifts should be *quiet, unobtrusive, unobserved;* and the same is true of all acts of kindness, which are real gifts from the heart. They should neither irritate pride nor depress independence. By such little attentions and marks of love, how much evil may be warded off, how many asperities of temper or circumstance may be soothed!

II. DELIGHT IN OR DISGUST FOR RIGHT CONDUCT. (Ver. 15.) There is no joy in the world to be compared for depth and purity to that of the good conscience; no exercise that brings so much health and pleasure as acting rightly and doing good. But the corrupt mind of evil men can take no delight in looking at goodness, in contemplating pure and noble conduct. For the consequences can only be the judgment and punishment of their own iniquity.

III. THE END OF ALL MORAL OBSERVATIONS. (Ver. 16.) One of the most solemn passages of the Bible. Taken literally or figuratively, of the present or of the future, they contain a *statement*, a *prophecy*, a *fact*. The wicked and unrepentant pass into a night without the hope of a sunrise to follow.

IV. THE END OF IDLE AND FRIVOLOUS MIRTH. (Ver. 17.) He that will squander more than his plough can earn must utterly waste (Sirach viii. 32). *Magnum vectigal est parsimonia*, or "Economy is income;" "Waste not, want not." "Better than merry Nineveh" is recorded as an old proverb (see Zeph. ii. 15).—J.

Vers. 18—20.—*Alternatives presented to choice.* I. THE JUST AND UPRIGHT, THE FAITHLESS AND WICKED LIFE. (Ver. 18.) It occurs in many cases that the Divine wrath in judgment turns aside from the just man to roll upon the head of the sinner. See this in a *natural* light in Isa. xliii. 3, and in the great Christian light of redemption (2 Cor. v. 21; 1 Pet. iii. 18). Christ became *as* sin, or in the place of the sinner, for us. We must not, however, confuse the evident meaning of the text, which is that in critical moments of calamity the faithful minority appear to escape unscathed; and the lesson that righteousness alone is safe.

II. SOLITUDE OR UNPLEASANT SOCIETY. (Ver. 19; see on ver. 9.)

III. WISE STORING OR FOOLISH SQUANDERING. (Ver. 20.) Thrift and economy give meetness to every home enjoyment they purchase. Waste is without zest, and brings positive dishonour.—J.

Vers. 21—23.—*The wise and the loving life.* I. IT IS AN ARDENT ENTHUSIASTIC LIFE. (Ver. 21.) Literally, he who *hunts after* justice and love *will find life, righteousness, and honour.* So in other figures—of hungering and thirsting, of digging eagerly for hid treasures, etc.—the earnest enthusiasm of the true life is depicted.

II. IT IS A LIFE OF PRESENT POSSESSION AND ENJOYMENT. So in the New Testament (Rom. iii. 26; Gal. iii. 21).

III. THE RESISTLESS POWER OF WISDOM. (Ver. 22.) The like penetrative power to that which we ascribe to the subtlest forces of nature—heat, magnetism, etc.—is possessed, but in a higher degree, by the intelligence and the will of man. The barriers of time and space seem to fall before him who *knows* and him who *loves*. Let none rely on walls and fastnesses. What man's hands have raised man's hands can break to pieces. We are truly strong only by means of the arts and works of intelligence and love.

IV. THE SAFETY OF THE PRUDENT TONGUE. (Ver. 23.) As one quaintly says, "God, as the Creator, has placed a double wall before the mouth—the teeth and lips, to show that we ought to use and guard the tongue with all care." "He that hath a satirical vein, as he maketh others afraid of his wit, so he had need to be afraid of others' memory." "Discretion of speech is more than eloquence; and to speak agreeably with him with whom we deal is more than to speak in good words or in good order" (Bacon).—J.

Vers. 24—26.—*The process of vice.* I. VICES HANG TOGETHER LIKE THE LINKS OF A CHAIN. (Ver. 24.) Contempt is born of pride, wrath of contempt, and from wrath scoffing and manifold injuries.

II. IDLENESS LIES IN CLOSE AFFINITY TO MANY VICES. (Vers. 25, 26.) We have here a brief anatomy of idleness. It is wishing without corresponding exertion. The idle man would rather sit still and starve than set his hand or head to painful toil. He would live by wishing. The effort to rise from the easy-chair, to take the hand from the bosom, is too great for him; hence he is consumed with vain desires. The hope of enjoyment is out of reach, though not out of sight, for want of exertion. In religion *mere* wishes, idle prayers, will not bring us good. The knocking and seeking must go with the asking. And again (ver. 26), in this analysis we are reminded of the selfishness which is at the root of this indolence. In contrast to a habit of coveting for self, we have the hand of the righteous man, who "gives and spares not." Willing labour, surrender of time and thought for others' good,—this, indeed, enriches the soul, and the man who waters others waters himself, and is a "blessing in the land."—J.

Vers. 27—31.—*The just judgments of the Eternal.* I. ON RELIGIOUS ACTS. (Ver. 27; ch. xv. 8.) The hypocrisy of devotion, the play-acting of religion, is as hideous a sight as true worship is beautiful. All the conditions of genuine worship are wanting in the bad man; there is no *heart*, no *way of access*, no faith (Bridges). We have scriptural examples in Balaam (Numb. xxiii.), Saul (1 Sam. xiii.), Absalom (2 Sam. xv.), Jezebel, the Pharisees. Compare the terrible invective of Isaiah (i.) against those who come with hands full of blood to worship and offer vain oblations.

II. ON FALSEHOOD. (Ver. 28.) Compare the ninth commandment. "The essence of a lie is the intention to deceive." But *exaggeration*, the vice of those who perpetually talk for talking's sake, seems also pointed at. The second clause describes the quality of the trustworthy witness. To hear before we speak; and witness to nothing but what we have heard and seen and known to be true. It is more from carelessness about truth than unintentional falsehood, that there is so much untruth in the world (Dr. Johnson).

III. ON INSOLENCE AND PRESUMPTION. (Ver. 29.) *Effrontery*, which assumes the brazen brow upon guilt. There was nothing among the heathen which was thought more to expose a man to the wrath of Heaven than presumption. The picture of the opposite temper is given as a willing docility to rebuke, anxiety for improvement, which brings honour in the sight of God and of man. Insolent presumption would force its will and way in spite of God; true humility would seek direction in its way by the will of God. Ver. 30 reminds us of the folly and presumption of vain human creatures to lift themselves up in rivalry to heaven. Earthly greatness, state policy, pride, stoical firmness, avail nothing against the Divine wisdom and the eternal will. Entire obedience and resignation are our duty and our safety. May all our doings be begun, continued, and ended in God! There is no success without God (ver. 31). The horse may be ready for the battle, the "powder may be dry," but all is vain unless his blessing has been sought and gained; and this cannot be unless our enterprise is just. Never act without dependence on God, nor without attention to the appropriate means of success.—J.

Ver. 1.—*Human power and Divine direction.* The course of human affairs impresses, we might perhaps say *oppresses*, us with the thought—

I. HOW MUCH POWER IS IN ONE MAN'S HAND. We shall always have kings amongst us—of one kind or another. They may not bear that name; they may not occupy the precise social position indicated by the word; but there will always be men who

will exercise such distinguished power and hold such eminent position that they will be "as kings," if they are not so called by their fellows. God endows us very differently, and he puts it in the power of a few to wield commanding influence, to rise to high rank, to sway a wide and powerful control over their countrymen. And it has often been a matter for serious concern that, to a very large extent indeed, the prosperity and well-being of an entire people has rested with the decision of, has been held in the balance by, a single hand. Then we naturally think that—

II. How his hand will move depends upon his heart. As the heart feels the hand directs. Behaviour is the outcome of character. Given a stern, insensitive heart, and we count on a hard and cruel policy; but given a kind and considerate heart, and we reckon on a just and humane career. A country has therefore the deepest interest in the character of its rulers, as it has in the moral and spiritual condition of its leaders in any and every sphere of thought and action. We therefore gladly remember that—

III. The heart of the powerful is in the hand of God. "As rivers of water he turneth it," etc. In the formation of this globe, in the arrangement of land and water, in the upbuilding of the great mountains, in the cutting of the fruitful plains, in the tracing of the fertilizing streams, we recognize the hand of God. He has used a great variety of agencies to bring about all these and all such results; but everything on the surface of the globe bears the impress of his wise hand. The rivers do not run where they list—they flow along the water-courses which his wisdom has arranged. And so with the hearts of the great and the strong, of the king and the counsellor, of the warrior and the minister. God has access to them; he can as easily touch and affect them in their thoughts and judgments as he can determine the channels in which the springs shall run. He can arrest them in their purpose; he can change or even reverse their course. Our human minds, as well as all material objects, are subject to his sway, and own the touch of his controlling hand. Therefore we conclude that—

IV. We never need despair, but should always hope. For in the darkest hour we know that we have one resource. When we can touch no other human or earthly springs, we can make our appeal to God. We can seek to "move the hand which moves the universe," and which "turneth the hearts of kings whithersoever he will." We are sure that: 1. God is never regardless of, or indifferent to, the course which his strong sons are taking. 2. He is ruling the world in the interest of righteousness. 3. He is willing, and indeed wishful, to be sought by those who love and trust him. Let the people of God, therefore, cherish hope in the midst of dire trouble and impending evil; and let the enemies of God beware. One touch of the Divine finger, and their fine fabric of oppression falls instantly to the ground.—C.

Ver. 2.—(See homily on ch. xvi. 2.)—C.

Ver. 3.—*Devotion and duty.* It is certainly noticeable that this truth should be expressed by Solomon. For the one great work of his life was the erection of the temple wherein sacrifice should be offered to the Lord. He might have been excused if his leaning had been toward the ceremonial rather than the moral. But he was not the first Hebrew thinker to give utterance to the idea. It is interesting to trace—

I. Its history in Hebrew thought. We find: 1. Samuel holding this view, and declaring it in firm and powerful language (1 Sam. xv. 22). 2. David filled with a deep sense of it as he humbled his soul before God (Ps. li. 10, 15—19). 3. Asaph powerfully affected by it as he wrote his sacred song (Ps. l. 8—15). 4. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Micah insisting upon this truth in strong and fervent words (Isa. i. 11—17; Jer. vii. 22, 23; Micah vi. 6—8). 5. John the Baptist making nothing of ceremonial religion, and making everything of a true and genuine repentance. 6. Our Lord himself, by his teaching and his attitude, preferring the penitent publican and harlot to the much-sacrificing but hard-hearted Pharisee; while by his own sacrificial death he removed for ever the need of any further offering on any altar whatsoever. 7. His inspired apostles declaring the needlessness of any sacrifice except those which are of a spiritual order (Rom. xii. 1; Heb. ix. 28; x. 12; xiii. 15, 16).

II. Its significance to ourselves. We naturally ask—What is the relation of devotion to duty or righteousness? and we answer: 1. No measure of devotion can

make up for moral laxity. We might be worshipping in the house of the Lord day and night; but if we were false, or cruel, or dishonest, or impure in our daily practice, we should certainly incur his righteous anger. 2. Moral probity by itself will not take the place of the direct approach of our hearts to God. It is much that a man should be just in all his dealings, kind in his various relationships, blameless in his bearing and behaviour—*very much.* But it is not everything; it leaves out one essential thing. God desires and demands of us that we ourselves come into close and living union and communion with himself, that we look to him and address him, and trust and love him as our Divine Father and Redeemer. And no propriety of behaviour, no excellency of life, will take the place of this. 3. Devotion and duty must coexist, and will sustain one another. (1) We should so worship God that we shall be stronger to obey his commandments in the home and in the school and in the shop—everywhere. We may safely conclude that our sacrifice on the sabbath is altogether imperfect and unsatisfactory if it does not lead to a worthier life in the week. (2) And we should so act in all the various paths of life that "with clean hands and a pure heart" we can go up to the house of the Lord, and render acceptable service of prayer and praise as we bow before him in the sanctuary. They are complementary one to the other; and no wise man will disregard or disparage either.—C.

Ver. 5.—(See homily on ch. xxvii. 23.)—C.

Vers. 6—8.—*Marks of sin.* Here we have four marks of that many-sided evil which God condemns as sin.

I. ITS MANIFOLDNESS OF FORM. Of its varied developments we have four forms here specified. 1. *Falsehood*, with a view to temporal enrichment, or the sin of cheating—a crime which has dishonoured the markets and counting-houses of every land. 2. *Violence*, with the same end in view—the breaking into the neighbour's treasury, or the assault committed on his person. 3. *Injustice*, or the sin of withholding from our neighbour that which we know is his due; whether it be a weekly wage (Jas. v. 4), or whether it be the appointment to which he is entitled by his merit, or the honour he has gained by his services. 4. *Perversity*, or frowardness—the attitude of wanton and determined rebelliousness against God's rule, or insubmission to his claim, or disobedience of his particular commandment.

II. THE UNSUBSTANTIAL NATURE OF ITS SUCCESS. Enrichment by falsehood is "a vanity [or, 'a vapour'] tossed to and fro." It is proverbial that wealth that is ill-gotten is quickly lost; this is to be accounted for by the action of God's righteous punitive laws apart from the doctrine that sin commands his condemnation. Independently of this, it is certain that the satisfaction which comes from sin is short-lived and continually declines. Sin allures its victims with fine promises, but it breaks every one of them; its bread may be sweet for a moment, but "afterwards the mouth is filled with gravel" (ch. xx. 17). The hope of the sinner is very fair, but soon comes the strong wind of penal law, and its castle is on the ground; it is "swept away" (ver. 7, Revised Version).

III. ITS SUICIDAL CHARACTER. These guilty ones are "of them that seek death." "Death is the wages of sin," and those who consciously live in sin and those (more especially) who know that this is so may be fitly spoken of as "seeking death." Suicide is not confined to those who deliberately take away their life with the pistol-shot, or the cup of poison, or the fatal plunge. It is a folly and a crime that is being committed day by day at the hearth and at the table, in the office and in the study. Men are transgressing those known laws of God on the observance of which life as well as health depends. They who live in conscious wrong-doing are determinately travelling toward death, and are guiltily "seeking" it.

IV. ITS DEEP AND WIDE DEPARTURE FROM THE HOLY PURPOSE OF GOD. The way of (the) man (of whom we are speaking) is "strange" (ver. 8). It is quite foreign to the thought and contrary to the will of God. He is saying, "Go not along this path; turn from it, and pass away." It is sin which has cut this path for the feet of the human traveller, and it is one which lies quite outside the King's highway. So strange is it to him, so alien to his purpose, so far from his present desire, that he is ever saying to his erring children, "Return, return!" And he has made, in the

gospel of his Son, a way of return and restoration. Indeed, it is his Son Jesus Christ who *is* "the Way." To know him and to love and serve him is to have our feet planted in "the path of life."—C.

Ver. 13.—*Sowing and reaping.* It is true, indeed, that as we sow we reap. It is not only true that God will in some way or other cause iniquity to suffer and righteousness to be recompensed, but we find that sin meets with its *appropriate* penalty, and worth with its *appropriate* reward. "*Whatsoever* a man soweth, *that* shall he also reap." We have an illustration of this in the text, as we find many others elsewhere.

I. INHUMANITY AND PITY. "Whoso stoppeth his ears," etc. Men will have no mercy on the merciless. Let a man be known to be hard-hearted, selfishly and cruelly indifferent to the distress of his neighbours, and when the time of his calamity comes he will discover that there is no eye to pity and no hand to help him. On the contrary, his misfortune will give a secret if not an open satisfaction. But let a man be pitiful and generous in the day of his prosperity, then when adversity overtakes him the hearts and the hands of many will open to sympathize and succour. The same principle is applicable to an evil which is similar though not quite so serious, and to its corresponding virtue, viz.—

II. SEVERITY AND LENIENCY. Our fellow-men will be sure to treat us with the same severity we impose on them. Austerity constantly begets austerity; it is not long before it hears the echo of its own harshness. Be down with rigid particularity on every offence you detect in your child, or your servant, or your neighbour, and you may reckon confidently on having the same unbending rigorousness of judgment applied to any deviation that can be discovered in yourself. But leniency brings forth leniency; charity is the beautiful mother of charity. Make every kind and just allowance as you judge your brother, and you shall have every extenuation granted you when your infirmity leads you into error. We have the same thing showing itself, the appropriateness and correspondence of the penalty or the reward to the offence or the virtue in—

III. GROSSNESS AND PURITY. "He that soweth to the flesh, *of the flesh* reaps corruption; and he that soweth to the Spirit, *of the Spirit* reaps life everlasting" (Gal. vi. 8). Bodily indulgence means bodily degeneration; spiritual culture means spiritual enlargement.

IV. GODLESSNESS AND GODLINESS. The man who lives without God has to do without God in life and at the end of life as well as he can. He has to dispense with all the comfort and support of the consciousness of God's favour and that Divine indwelling which only comes with faith and love. But he who walks with God and lives unto him enjoys all the unspeakable and inestimable advantages of the near presence, the gracious power, the continual comfort and succour of the Divine Spirit. As he sows, he reaps.—C.

Ver. 21.—*The successful search.* What a lamentable history might be written of human lives that would be correctly described as unsuccessful searches! Who, save the Omniscient One, can tell how many have lived and toiled, have struggled and suffered, in search of a goal which they never reached?—it may have been in business, or in the domain of the affections, or in the pursuit of art or of science, or in politics, or in exploration on land or sea. It is a thought of relief and comfort that no human life need be a failure—none, at least, on which the light of Divine truth has shone. It is also pleasant to think that the higher we aim the likelier we are to reach our mark. He who seeks satisfaction on the lower and grosser levels is most likely to fail; but he whose aspiration is toward wisdom and worth, toward goodness and God, is a seeker that will find—

I. THE TRUE QUEST OF A HUMAN HEART. Solomon speaks of "following after righteousness and mercy." These two words may be taken as covering the entire field of rectitude and love, being just in all our relations, and being animated by the spirit of kindness toward all with whom we have to do. Thus understood, they point to the endeavour of the human soul to find: 1. *Acceptance with the living God;* for there is no happy sense of rightness or rectitude until his favour has been secured, and we feel that we stand before him as those that are true and loyal, his faithful subjects,

his reconciled children. 2. *Purity of heart and life*—deliverance from the power and bondage of sin, of the evil forces which stir within and which play around the soul. 3. *A course of honesty and equity* in the sight of man; such a regulation of conduct as will result in doing to others as we would that they should do to us, walking along the path which brings no regrets and no reproaches. 4. *A heart of kindness*; nourishing within ourselves the prevailing feeling of considerateness for others; the blessed faculty of forgetting our own personal tastes and preferences and passing interests in order to remember the wants and well-being of our friends and our fellow-men; the mental and spiritual habit of sympathizing with sorrow and succouring need with an open and a willing hand.

II. THE WAY TO THE GOAL. We who have learnt of Christ need not miss our way; we may, and (if we are in earnest) we shall, find all that we seek. We shall attain to: 1. *Righteousness.* (1) Acceptance with God, being right with him by faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. v. 1, 2; viii. 1). (2) The growth within us of those virtues and graces which come with the service of the holy Lord, with the study and the love of the sinless Friend, with prayer for the sanctifying influences of the indwelling Spirit. 2. *Life;* for he that lives thus unto God, who is becoming daily like God, who is rejoicing in the friendship of God, does *live* indeed. *This is life*—life spiritual, Divine, eternal. 3. *Honour.* No small share of the honour which comes from those whose esteem is worth possessing; and in the end the honour which will come from the appraising and approving Lord, when he says, "Well done!" to his faithful servants.—C.

Ver. 22.—(See homily on vers. 29—31.)—C.

Ver. 27.—(See homily on ch. xv. 8.)—C.

Vers. 29—31 (with ver. 22).—*The achievements and limitations of wisdom.* There is great virtue in wisdom; Solomon never wearies of praising it. Here he adds another commendation, but he calls attention to a boundary beyond which it may not pass.

I. THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF WISDOM. "A wise man scaleth the city of the mighty," etc. (ver. 22). How often have men stood behind their strong ramparts—not of stone or rock only—and looked down with complacent contempt upon the despised adversaries outside and below them; but when the shock of the battle came they found, to their dismay, that wisdom is stronger than all defences that could be raised, and that it can cast down the confidence of the proud! It is not only the city which is built of brick or stone which is at the command of the truly wise; it is also the city of falsehood and of error; it is the city of oppression and of wrong; it is also the city of knowledge and of truth. However hard to win may be its walls, the wise man—who is the man of rectitude, of unselfishness, of purity, of diligence, of earnestness, of patience, of devotion—will strive and toil until he stands within the citadel.

II. ONE OF ITS CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS. On the one hand, a wicked (who is an unwise) man "hardeneth his face." He may be proved to be in the wrong; he may be suffering seriously for his folly; but he will not change his course. He is obstinate, perverse, proud; he will go on his way, come what will. But, on the other hand, the upright (who is the wise) man directeth (or rather, *considereth*) his way. Even when he is right, and things are profitable and promising with him, he is often pondering his path, looking to his chart, carefully considering whether he is moving on in the right direction. But when he has been induced to wander into some byway, and when he is admonished either by God's providence or by man's fidelity, then he seriously considers his way, and, if he finds that he has erred, he immediately retraces his steps, until he is found again in the King's highway. The habit of considering is one of the clearest marks of wisdom.

III. TWO OF ITS LIMITATIONS. 1. It cannot succeed *against* God (ver. 30). Good men and true, who are within the kingdom of Christ, may put forth all their mental powers and moral energies to bring about that which God has condemned; they have watched and thought and striven for the cause which has *not* been, as they imagined, the cause of Christ, and they have hopelessly failed. History will supply abundant illustrations. 2. It cannot succeed *without* God (ver. 31). Equip your cavalry, arm

your infantry, and collect your artillery for the day of battle; bring forth your most experienced general, who will be ready with his most brilliant tactics; still the issue will not be determined thus. There may arise a sudden unaccountable panic; there may be a movement made by the enemy's captain wholly unexpected and practically irresistible; there are forces at work on the great battle-field of the world against which no military skill can provide. God is present there. He can act upon the mind of one man or of many men in such wise that the battle will *not* be to the strong, the victory *not* be to the seasoned troops and the confident commander. Without God's consent, without his blessing, any battle on any field whatever, military or moral, must be lost.—C.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XXII.

Ver. 1.—**A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches.** It will be observed that "good" in the Authorized Version is in italics, showing that the epithet is not expressed in the Hebrew, which is simply שֵׁם (*shem*), "name." But this word carried with it the notion of good repute, as in Eccles. vii. 1; for being well known implied honour and reputation, while being nameless (Job xxx. 8) signified not only obscurity, but ignominy and discredit. Hence the versions have ὄνομα καλόν, *nomen bonum*, and Ecclus. xli. 12, "Have regard to thy name (περὶ ὀνόματος), for that shall continue with thee above a thousand great treasures of gold. A good life," the moralist continues, "hath but few days; but a good name endureth for ever" (contrast ch. x. 7). **And loving favour rather than silver and gold**; or, more accurately, *and before gold and silver grace is good;* i.e. grace is far better than gold. Grace (*chen*) is the manner and demeanour which win love, as well as the favour and affection gained thereby; taken as parallel to "name," in the former hemistich, it means here "favour," the regard conceived by others for a worthy object. Publ. Syr., "Bona opinio hominum tutior pecunia est." The French have a proverb, "Bonne renommée vaut mieux que ceinture dorée." The latter hemistich gives the reason for the assertion in the former—a good name is so valuable because it wins affection and friendship, which are far preferable to material riches.

Ver. 2.—**The rich and poor meet together** (ch. xxix. 13): **the Lord is the Maker of them all** (Job xxxiv. 19). God has ordained that there shall be rich and poor in the world, and that they should meet in the intercourse of life. These social inequalities are ordered for wise purposes; the one helps the other. The labour of the poor makes the wealth of the rich; the wealth of the rich enables him to employ and aid the poor. Their common humanity, their fatherhood in God, should make them regard one another as brethren, without distinction of rank or position; the rich should not despise the poor (ch. xiv. 31; xvii. 5; Job xxxi. 15), the poor should not envy the rich (ch. iii. 31), but all should live in love and harmony as one great family of God.

Ver. 3.—**A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself.** The whole verse is repeated in ch. xxvii. 12. St. Jerome has *callidus*, and the LXX. has πανοῦργος, as the translation of עָרוּם (*arum*); but it must be taken in a good sense, as cautious, far-seeing, prudent (see note on ch. i. 4). Such a man looks around, takes warning from little circumstances which might escape the observation of careless persons, and provides for his safety in good time. Thus the Christians at the siege of Jerusalem, believing Christ's warnings, retired to Pella, and were saved. A Spanish proverb runs, "That which the fool does in the end, the wise man does at the beginning." **The simple pass on, and are punished.** The subject of the former hemistich is in the singular number, for a really prudent man is a comparatively rare being; the second clause is plural, teaching us, as Hitzig observes, that many simple ones are found for one prudent. These silly persons, blundering blindly on their way, without circumspection or forethought, meet with immediate punishment, incur dangers, suffer loss. A Cornish proverb runs, "He who will not be ruled by the rudder must be ruled by the rock." Septuagint, "An intelligent man (πανοῦργος) seeing a wicked man punished is himself forcibly instructed; but fools pass by, and are punished" (comp. ch. xxi. 11).

Ver. 4.—**By humility and the fear of the Lord,** etc. This does not seem to be the best rendering of the original. The word rendered "by" (עֵקֶב *ekeb*), "in reward of," is also taken as the subject of the sentence: "The reward of humility ['and,' or, 'which is'] the fear of God, is riches," etc. There is no copulative in the clause, and a similar asyndeton occurs in ver. 5; so there is no reason why we should not regard the clause in this way. Thus Revised Version, Nowack,

and others. But Delitzsch makes the first hemistich a concluded sentence, which the second member carries on thus: "The reward of humility is the fear of the Lord; it [the reward of humility] is at the same time riches," etc. Vulgate, *Finis modestiæ timor Domini, divitiæ et gloria et vita;* Septuagint, "The generation (γενεὰ) of wisdom is the fear of the Lord, and wealth," etc. It is preferable to translate as above, taking the two expressed virtues as appositional, thus: "The reward of humility, the fear of the Lord." Humility brings with it true religion, which is expressed by "the fear of the Lord." The feeling of dependence, the lowly opinion of self, the surrender of the will, the conviction of sin, all effects which are connected with humility, may well be represented by this term, "the fear of God," which, in another aspect, is itself the source of every virtue and every blessing; it is **riches, and honour, and life.** These are God's gifts, the guerdon of faithful service (see notes on ch. iii. 16 and xxi. 21; and comp. ch. viii. 18). The Easterns have a pretty maxim, "The bending of the humble is the graceful droop of the branches laden with fruit." And again, "Fruitful trees bend down; the wise stoop; a dry stick and a fool can be broken, not bent" (Lane).

Ver. 5.—**Thorns and snares are in the way of the froward.** The words are in the Hebrew without the conjunction (see note, ver. 4), though the versions generally add it. Thus the Septuagint, τρίβολοι καὶ παγίδες; Vulgate, *arma et gladii;* but the Venetian, ἄκανθαι παγίδες. It is a question whether the thorns are what the perverse prepare for others, or what they themselves suffer. In ch. xv. 19 the hedge of thorns represented the difficulties in the sluggard's path; but here, viewed in connection with the following hemistich, the thorns and snares refer to the hindrances proceeding from the froward, which injuriously affect others; "thorns" being a figure of the pains and troubles, "snares" of the unexpected dangers and impediments which evil men cause as they go on their crooked way. The word for "thorns" is סִיר, which occurs in Job v. 5. The plant is supposed to be the *Rhamnus paliurus,* but it has not been accurately identified. **He that doth keep his soul shall be far from them** (comp. ch. xiii. 3; xvi. 17). The man who has regard to his life and morals will go far, will keep wholly aloof, from those perils and traps into which the perverse try to entice them.

Ver. 6.—**Train up a child in the way he should go.** The verb translated "train" (*chanak*) means, first, "to put something into the mouth," "to give to be tasted," as nurses give to infants food which they have masticated in order to prepare it for their nurslings; thence it comes to signify "to give elementary instruction," "to imbue," "to train." The Hebrew literally is, *Initiate a child in accordance with his way.* The Authorized Version, with which Ewald agrees, takes the maxim to mean that the child should be trained from the first in the right path—the path of obedience and religion. This is a very true and valuable rule, but it is not what the author intends. "His way" must mean one of two things—either his future calling and station, or his character and natural inclination and capacity. Delitzsch and Plumptre take the latter interpretation; Nowack and Bertheau the former, on the ground that *derek* is not used in the other sense suggested. But, as far as use is concerned, both explanations stand on much the same ground; and it seems more in conformity with the moralist's age and nation to see in the maxim an injunction to consider the child's nature, faculties, and temperament, in the education which is given to him. If, from his early years, a child is thus trained, **when he is old, he will not depart from it.** This way, this education in accordance with his idiosyncrasy, will bear fruit all his life long; it will become a second nature, and will never be obliterated. The Vulgate commences the verse with *Proverbium est,* taking the first word substantively, as if the author here cited a trite saying; but the rendering is a mistake. There are similar maxims, common at all times and in all countries. Virg., 'Georg.,' ii. 272—

"Adeo in teneris consuescere multum est."

Horace, 'Epist.,' i. 2. 67—

"Nunc adbibe puro
Pectore verba, puer."

For, as he proceeds—

"Quo semel est imbuta recens, servabit odorem
Testa diu."

Thus we have two mediæval jingles—

"Cui puer assuescit, major dimittere nescit."

"Quod nova testa capit, inveterata sapit."

Then there is the German saw, "Jung gewohnt, alt gethan." "What youth learns, age does not forget," says the Danish proverb. In another and a sad sense the French exclaim, "Si jeunesse savait! si vieillesse pouvait!" All the early manuscripts of the Septuagint omit this verse; in some of the later it has been supplied from Theodotion.

Ver. 7.—**The rich ruleth over the poor.** "The rich man (singular) will rule over the poor" (plural); for there are many poor for one rich (see on ver. 3). This is the way

of the world (ch. xviii. 23). Aben Ezra explains the gnome as showing the advantage of wealth and the inconvenience of poverty; the former bringing power and pre-eminence, the latter trouble and servitude; and hence the moralist implies that every one should strive and labour to obtain a competency, and thus avoid the evils of impecuniosity. **The borrower is servant to the lender.** (For the relation between borrower and lender, or debtor and creditor, see on ch. xx. 16; and comp. Matt. xviii. 25, 34.) Delitzsch cites the German saying, "Borghart (borrower) is Lehnhart's (lender's) servant." We have the proverb, "He that goes a-borrowing goes a-sorrowing." The Septuagint departs from the other versions and our Hebrew text, translating, "The rich will rule over the poor, and household servants will lend to their own masters"—a reading on which some of the Fathers have commented.

Ver. 8.—**He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity; shall gain nothing substantial, shall have nothing to show for his pains.** But *aven* also means "calamity," "trouble," as ch. xii. 21; so the gnome expresses the truth that they who do evil shall meet with punishment in their very sins—the exact contrast to the promise to the righteous (ch. xi. 18), "To him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward." Thus we have in Job iv. 8, "They that plough iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same;" and the apostle asserts (Gal. vi. 7, etc.), "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Eastern proverbs run, "As the sin, so the atonement;" "Those who sow thorns can only reap prickles" (comp. ch. xii. 14). **And the rod of his anger shall fail.** The writer is thinking especially of cruelty and injustice practised on a neighbour, as Delitzsch has pointed out, and he means that the rod which he has raised, the violence intended against the innocent victim, shall vanish away or fall harmlessly. Ewald and others think that the rod is the Divine anger, and translate the verb (*kalah*) "is prepared," a sense which here it will not well bear, though the LXX. has lent some countenance to it by rendering, "And shall fully accomplish the plague (πληγὴν, ? 'punishment') of his deeds." The rendering, "shall fail," "shall be consumed, or annihilated," is confirmed by Gen. xxi. 15; Isa. i. 28; xvi. 4, etc. The Septuagint adds a distich here, of which the first member is a variant of ver. 9*a*, and the second another rendering of the latter hemistich of the present verse: "A cheerful man and a giver God blesseth (ἄνδρα ἱλαρὸν καὶ δότην εὐλογεῖ ὁ Θεός); but he shall bring to an end (συντελεσεῖ) the vanity of his works." The first hemistich is remarkable for being quoted by St. Paul (2 Cor. ix. 7), with a slight variation, Ἱλαρὸν γὰρ δότην ἀγαπᾷ ὁ Θεός. So Ecclus. xxxii. (xxxv.) 9, "In all thy gifts show a cheerful countenance (ἱλάρωσον τὸ πρόσωπόν σου)."

Ver. 9.—**He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed.** The "good of eye" is the kindly looking, the benevolent man, in contrast to him of the evil eye, the envious, the unfriendly and niggardly man (ch. xxiii. 6; xxviii. 22). St. Jerome renders, *Qui pronus est ad misericordiam.* Such a one is blessed by God in this world and the next, in time and in eternity, according to the sentiment of ch. xi. 25. Thus in the temporal sense (Ecclus. xxxiv. (xxxi.) 23), "Him that is liberal in food lips shall bless, and the testimony of his liberality will be believed." Septuagint, "He that hath pity upon the poor shall himself be continually sustained (διατραφήσεται)." The reason is added, **For he giveth of his bread to the poor.** The blessing is the consequence of his charity and liberality. 2 Cor. ix. 6, "He that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully (ἐπ' εὐλογίαις)." The Vulgate and Septuagint add a distich not in the Hebrew, *Victoriam et honorem acquiret qui dat munera; animam autem aufert accipientium;* Νίκην καὶ τιμὴν περιποιεῖται ὁ δῶρα δοὺς, τὴν μέντοι ψυχὴν ἀφαιρεῖται τῶν κεκτημένων, "Victory and honour he obtaineth who giveth gifts; but he takes away the life of the possessors." The first hemistich appears to be a variant of ch. xix. 6*b*, the second to be derived from ch. i. 19*b*. The second portion of the Latin addition may mean that the liberal man wins and carries away with him the souls of the recipients of his bounty. But this, though Ewald would fain have it so, cannot be the signification of the corresponding Greek, which seems to mean that the man who is so liberal in distributing gifts obtains the power to do so by oppressing and wronging others.

Ver. 10.—**Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out;** Septuagint, ἔκβαλε ἐκ συνεδρίου λοιμόν, "Cast out of the company a pestilent fellow." Chase away the scorner (ch. i. 22), the man who has no respect for things human or Divine, and the disputes and ill feeling which he caused will be ended; for "where no wood is, the fire goeth out" (ch. xxvi. 20). **Yea, strife and reproach shall cease.** The reproach and ignominy (קָלוֹן, *kalon*) are those which the presence and words of the scorner bring with them; to have such a one in

the company is a disgrace to all good men. Thus Ishmael and his mother were driven from Abraham's dwelling (Gen. xxi. 9, etc.), and the apostle quotes (Gal. iv. 30), "Cast out (ἔκβαλε) the bondwoman and her son." Septuagint, "For when he sits in the company he dishonours all." The next verse gives a happy contrast.

Ver. 11.—**He that loveth pureness of heart**; he who strives to be pure in heart (Matt. v. 8), free from guile, lust, cupidity, vice of every kind. The next clause carries on the description of the perfect character, and is best translated, **And hath grace of lips, the king is his friend.** He who is not only virtuous and upright, but has the gift of graciousness of speech, winning manner in conversation, such a man will attach the king to him by the closest bonds of friendship. We have had something very similar at ch. xvi. 13. Some of the versions consider that by the king God is meant. Thus the Septuagint, "The Lord loveth holy hearts, and all blameless persons are acceptable with him." The rest of the clause is connected by the LXX. with the following verse, "A king guides his flock (ποιμαίνει) with his lips; but the eyes of the Lord," etc.

Ver. 12.—**The eyes of the Lord preserve knowledge.** The expression, "preserve knowledge," is found at ch. v. 2 (where see note) in the sense of "keep," "retain," and, taken by itself, it might here signify that the Lord alone possesses knowledge, and alone imparts it to his servants (1 Sam. ii. 3); but as in the following clause a person, the transgressor, is spoken of, it is natural to expect a similar expression in the former. The Revised Version is correct in rendering the abstract "knowledge" by the concrete "him that hath knowledge;" so that the clause says that God watches over and protects the man who knows him and walks in his ways, and uses his means and abilities for the good of others (see ch. xi. 9). **But he (the Lord) overthroweth the words of the transgressor.** The transgressor here is the false, treacherous, perfidious man; and the gnome asserts that God frustrates by turning in another direction the outspoken intentions of this man, which he had planned against the righteous (comp. ch. xiii. 6; xxi. 12). Septuagint, "But the eyes of the Lord preserve knowledge, but the transgressor despiseth words," *i.e.* commands, or words of wisdom and warning.

Ver. 13.—**The slothful man saith, There is a lion without** (ch. xxvi. 13). The absurd nature of the sluggard's excuse is hardly understood by the casual reader. The supposed lion is without, in the open country, and yet he professes to be in danger in the midst of the town. **I shall be slain in the streets.** Others consider that the sluggard makes two excuses for his inactivity. If work calls him abroad, he may meet the lion which report says is prowling in the neighbourhood; if he has to go into the streets, he may be attacked and murdered by ruffians for motives of plunder or revenge. "Sluggards are prophets," says the Hebrew proverb. Septuagint, "The sluggard maketh excuses, and saith, A lion is in the ways, there are murderers in the streets." Lions, though now extinct in Palestine, seem to have lingered till the time of the Crusades, and such of them as became man-eaters, the old or feeble, were a real danger in the vicinity of villages (comp. Jer. xlix. 19; l. 44).

Ver. 14.—**The mouth of strange women is a deep pit.** The hemistich reappears in a slightly altered form at ch. xxiii. 27. (For "strange woman" as equivalent to "a harlot" or "adulteress," see note on ch. ii. 16.) By her "mouth" is meant her wanton, seductive words, which entice a man to destruction of body and soul. It may be that theology rather than morals is signified here—rather false doctrines than evil practice. In this case the mention of the strange or foreign woman is very appropriate, seeing that perversions of belief and worship were always introduced into Israel from external sources. **He that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein.** He who has incurred the wrath of God by previous unfaithfulness and sin is left to himself to fall a prey to the allurements of the wicked woman (comp. Eccles. vii. 26). Septuagint, "The mouth of a transgressor (παρανόμου) is a deep ditch; and he that is hated of the Lord shall fall therein." Then are added three lines not in the Hebrew, which, however, seem to be reminiscences of other passages: "There are evil ways before a man, and he loveth not to turn away from them; but it is needful to turn away from a perverse and evil way."

Ver. 15.—**Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child.** Foolishness (*ivveleth*) here implies the love of mischief, the waywardness and self-will, belonging to children, bound up in their very nature. Septuagint, "Folly is attached (ἐξήπται) to the heart of the young," in which version Cornelius à Lapide sees an allusion to the ornament hung by fond parents round the neck of a child whom they were inclined to spoil rather than to train in self-denying ways. To such a child folly adheres as closely as the *bulla* with which he is decorated. **But the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.** Judicious education overcomes this natural tendency, by punishing it when

exhibited, and imparting wisdom and piety (see on ch. xiii. 24 and xix. 18; and comp. ch. xxiii. 13; xxix. 15; Ecclus. xxx. 1, etc.). The LXX. pursue their notion of the too-indulgent parents letting the child have his own way, for they render the last clause, "But the rod and discipline are far from him."

Ver. 16.—**He that oppresseth the poor to increase his** riches (so the Vulgate), **and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want.** There are various renderings and explanations of this verse. The Authorized Version says that he who oppresseth the poor to enrich himself, and he who wastes his means by giving to those who do not need it, will come to poverty. But the antithesis of this distich is thus lost. The Hebrew literally rendered brings out the contrast, *Whosoever oppresseth the poor, it is for his gain; whosoever giveth to the rich, it is for his loss.* Delitzsch explains the sentence thus: "He who enriches himself by extortion from the poor, at any rate gains what he desires; but he who gives to the rich impoverishes himself in vain, has no thanks, reaps only disappointment." One cannot but feel that the maxim thus interpreted is poor and unsatisfactory. The interpretation in the 'Speaker's Commentary' is more plausible: The oppressor of the poor will himself suffer in a similar mode, and will have to surrender his ill-gotten gains to some equally unscrupulous rich man. But the terse antithesis of the original is wholly obscured by this view of the distich. It is far better, with Hitzig, Ewald, and others, to take the gain in the first hemistich as that of the poor man, equivalent to "doth but bring him gain;" though the sentence is not necessarily to be explained as suggesting that the injustice which the poor man suffers at the hand of his wealthy neighbour is a stimulus to him to exert himself in order to better his position, and thus indirectly tends to his enrichment. The maxim is really conceived in the religious style of so many of these apparently worldly pronouncements, and states a truth in the moral government of God intimated elsewhere, *e.g.* ch. xiii. 22; xxviii. 8; and that truth is that the riches extorted from the poor man will in the end redound to his benefit, that by God's providential control the oppression and injustice from which he has suffered shall work to his good. In the second hemistich the loss is that of the rich man. By adding to the wealth of the rich the donor increases his indolence, encourages his luxury, vice, and extravagance, and thus leads to his ruin—"bringeth only to want." Septuagint, "He that calumniates (συκοφαντῶν) the poor increaseth his own substance, but giveth to the rich at a loss (ἐπ' ἐλάσσονι)," *i.e.* so as to lessen his substance.

Ver. 17—ch. xxiv. 22.—Part IV. First Appendix to the First Great Collection, containing "words of the wise."

Vers. 17—21.—The introduction to this first appendix, containing an exhortation to attend to the words of the wise, an outline of the instruction herein imparted, with a reference to teaching already given.

Ver. 17.—**Incline thine ear** (comp. ch. iv. 20; v. 1). **The words of the wise;** *verba sapientium*, Vulgate. "Wise" is in the plural number, showing that this is not a portion of the collection called, 'The Proverbs of Solomon' (ch. x. 1), but a distinct work. (For the term, see note on ch. i. 6.) **My knowledge.** The knowledge which I impart by bringing to notice these sayings of wise men. Septuagint, "Incline (παράβαλλε) thine ear to the words of wise men, and hear my word, and apply thine heart, that thou mayest know that they are good."

Ver. 18.—This verse gives the reason for the previous exhortation. **It is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee;** in thy mind and memory (comp. ch. xviii. 8; xx. 27). Thus Ps. cxlvii. 1, "It is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is comely." **They shall withal be fitted in thy lips.** This rendering hardly suits the hortatory nature of the introduction. It is better to take the clause in the optative, as Delitzsch, Ewald, Nowack, and others: "Let them abide altogether upon thy lips;" *i.e.* be not ashamed to profess them openly, let them regulate thy words, teach thee wisdom and discretion. Septuagint, "And if thou admit them to thy heart, they shall likewise gladden thee on thy lips."

Ver. 19.—**That thy trust may be in the Lord.** The Greek and Latin versions make this clause depend on the preceding verse. It is better to consider it as dependent on the second hemistich, the fact of instruction being placed after the statement of its object. All the instruction herein afforded is meant to teach that entire confidence in the Lord which, as soon as his will is known and understood, leads a man to do it at any cost or pains, leaving the result in God's hands. **I have made them known to thee this day, even to thee.** The repetition of the personal pronoun brings home the teaching to the disciple, and shows that it is addressed, not merely to the mass of men, but to each individual among them, who thus becomes responsible for the use which he makes of it (comp. ch. xxiii. 15). The expression, "this day," further emphasizes the exhortation. The learner is not to remember vaguely that some time or other he received this instruction, but that on this particular

day the warning was given. So in Heb. iii. 7, 13 we read, "As the Holy Ghost saith, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. . . . Exhort one another daily, so long as it is called To-day, lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Septuagint, "That thy hope may be in the Lord, and he may make thy way known unto thee." Cheyne ('Job and Solomon') quotes Bickell's correction of this verse, "That thy confidence may be in Jehovah, to make known unto thee thy ways;" but the alteration seems arbitrary and unnecessary.

Ver. 20.—**Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge?** There is a difficulty about the word rendered "excellent things." The Khetib has שלשׁים, "the day before yesterday, formerly;" but the word occurs nowhere alone, and, as Nowack says, can hardly have been the original reading. However, Ewald, Bertheau, and others, adopting it, suppose that the author refers to some earlier work. Cheyne cites Bickell's rendering, "Now, years before now, have I written unto thee long before with counsels and knowledge," and considers the words to mean either that the compiler took a long time over his work, or that this was not the first occasion of his writing. One does not see why stress should be here laid on former instruction, unless, perhaps, as Plumptre suggests, in contrast to "this day" of the previous verse. The LXX. renders the word τρισσῶς thus, "And do thou record them for thyself triply for counsel and knowledge upon the table of thine heart." St. Jerome has, *Ecce descripsi eam tibi tripliciter, in cogitationibus et scientiis.* Other versions have also given a numerical explanation to the term. In it is seen an allusion to the three supposed works of Solomon—Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Canticles—which is absurd; others refer it to the threefold division of the Testament—Law, Prophets, and Hagiographa; others, to three classes of youths for whom the admonitions were intended; others, again, think it equivalent to "oftentimes," or "in many forms." But the reading is as doubtful as the explanations of it are unsatisfactory. The genuine word is doubtless preserved in the Keri, which gives שָׁלִשִׁים (*shalishim*), properly a military term, applied to chariot-fighters and men of rank in the army. The LXX. translates the word by τριστάτης *e.g.* Exod. xiv. 7; xv. 4), which is equivalent to "chieftain." Hence the Hebrew term, understood in the neuter gender, is transferred to the chief among proverbs—"choice proverbs," as Delitzsch calls them. The Venetian, by a happy turn, gives τρισμέγιστα. Thus we come back to the rendering of the Authorized Version as most correct and intelligible.

Ver. 21.—**That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth.** The object intended is to teach the disciple the fixed rule (*firmitatem*, Vulgate) by which truthful words are guided (see Luke i. 4). Septuagint, "I therefore teach thee a true word and knowledge good to learn." **That thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee.** This implies that the pupil will be enabled to teach others who apply to him for instruction; "will be ready," as St. Peter says, "always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you" (1 Pet. iii. 15). But the last expression is better translated, "them that send thee;" *illis qui miserunt te*, Vulgate (see ch. xxv. 13); and we must conceive of these as being parents or tutors who send a youth to a school or wise man to be educated. The moralist expresses his desire that the disciple will carry home such wholesome, truthful doctrines as will prove that the pains expended upon him have not been useless. Septuagint, "That thou mayest answer words of truth to those who put questions to thee (τοῖς προβαλλομένοις σοι)." The Syriac adds, "That I may make known unto thee counsel and wisdom." Bickell's version (quoted by Cheyne) is, "That thou mayest know the rightness of these words, that thou mayest answer in true words to them that ask thee."

Ver. 22—ch. xxiv. 22.—Here commence the "words of the wise."

Ver. 22.—This and the following verse form a tetrastich, which connects itself in thought with ver. 16. **Rob not the poor, because he is poor.** The word for "poor" is here *dal*, which means "feeble," "powerless" (see on ch. xix. 4), and the writer enjoins the disciple not to be induced by his weakness to injure and despoil a poor man. **Neither oppress the afflicted in the gate.** The gate is the place of judgment, the court of justice (comp. Job xxxi. 21). The warning points to the particular form of wrong inflicted on the lowly by unjust judges, who could give sentences from which, however iniquitous, there was practically no appeal.

Ver. 23.—For, though they are powerless to defend themselves, and have no earthly patrons, **the Lord will plead their cause** (ch. xxiii. 11). Jehovah will be their Advocate and Protector. **And spoil the soul of those that spoiled them;** rather, *despoil of life those that despoil them.* So the Revised Version. God, exercising his moral government on human concerns, will bring ruin and death on the unjust judge or the rich oppressor of the poor. Jerome has, *Configet eos qui confixerunt animam ejus.* The verb used is קבע (*kabah*), which is found only here and Mal. iii. 8, where it means "to defraud" or

"despoil." In the Chaldee and Syriac it may signify "to fix," "to pierce." Septuagint, "The Lord will judge his cause, and thou shalt deliver thy soul unharmed (ἄσυλον);" *i.e.* if you refrain from injustice and oppression, you will be saved from evil and dwell securely.

Vers. 24, 25.—Another tetrastich. **Make no friendship with an angry** (*irascible*) **man.** Have no close intercourse with a man given to fits of passion. **And with a furious man thou shalt not go.** Avoid the society of such a one. The reason follows: **Lest thou learn his ways;** his manner of life and conduct, as ch. i. 15 (where see note). Anger breeds anger; impatience, impatience. St. Basil ('De Ira'), quoted by Corn. à Lapide, enjoins, "Take not your adversary as your teacher, and be not a mirror to reflect the angry man, showing his figure in thyself." **And get a snare to thy soul;** bring destruction on thyself. Anger unsubdued not only mars the kindliness of social life, but leads to all sorts of dangerous complications which may bring ruin and death in their train (comp. ch. xv. 18).

Vers. 26, 27.—A warning against suretyship, often repeated. **Be not thou one of them that strike hands;** *i.e.* that become guarantees for others (see on ch. xvii. 18; xx. 16; and comp. ch. vi. 1; xi. 15). **Sureties for debts.** The writer explains what kind of guarantee he means. **Why should he** (the creditor) **take away thy bed from under thee?** Why should you ("from respect of person," Septuagint) act so weakly as to give a creditor power to seize your very bed as a pledge? The Law endeavoured to mitigate this penalty (Exod. xxii. 26, 27; Deut. xxiv. 12, 13). But doubtless its merciful provisions were evaded by the moneylenders (see Neh. v. 11; Ezek. xviii. 12, "hath not restored the pledge").

Ver. 28.—The first line is repeated at ch. xxiii. 10. (On the sanctity of landmarks, see note on ch. xv. 25.) Some of the stones, exhibiting a bilingual inscription, which marked the boundaries of the Levitical city of Gezer, were discovered by Gannean in 1874 ('Quart. Statement Pal. Explor. Fund,' 1874). The Septuagint calls the landmarks ὅρια αἰώνια.

Ver. 29.—A tristich follows. **Seest thou a man diligent in his business?** Mere diligence would not commend a man to high notice unless accompanied by dexterity and skill; and though מָהִיר (*mahir*) means "quick," it also has the notion of "skilful," and is better here taken in that sense. **He shall stand before kings.** This phrase means to serve or minister to another (Gen. xli. 46; 1 Sam. xvi. 21, 22; 1 Kings x. 8; Job i. 6). A man thus expert is fitted for any, even the highest situation, may well be employed in affairs of state, and enjoy the confidence of kings. **He shall not stand before mean men.** "Mean" (חֲשֻׁכִּים) are the men of no importance, *ignobiles*, obscure. An intellectual, clever, adroit man would never be satisfied with serving such masters; his ambition is higher; he knows that he is capable of better things. Septuagint, "It must needs be that an observant (ὁρατικὸν) man, and one who is keen in his business, should attend on kings, and not attend on slothful men."

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*A good name and loving favour.* Both of these blessings—which, indeed, are closely allied—are here preferred to great riches. It is better to be poor with either than rich with neither. Let us examine the excellence of each of them.

I. THE EXCELLENCE OF A GOOD NAME. Why is this rather to be chosen than riches? 1. *Because it is a higher order of good.* Wealth is a material thing. The best of it is empty and vain by the side of what is intellectual, moral, or spiritual. It is possible to have great riches and yet to be miserable and degraded, if the higher reaches of life are impoverished. 2. *Because it is personal.* A man's good name is nearer to him than all his property. The most personal property is distant and alien compared with the name he carries; the reputation that attaches to him is his closest garment—it is wrapped round his very self. If a person wears sackcloth next his skin, he can have little comfort in being clothed outside this with purple and fine linen. 3. *Because it is social.* The good name is known among a man's fellows. It is this that gives him his true status. Now, we cannot afford to neglect social considerations. It is a terrible thing to live under the stigma of the rebuke of mankind. He is either more or less than a man who can look with indifference on the good or the ill opinion of his brethren. Mere fame may be of little value. A good name is far more desirable than a great name. It is not necessary that people should have a high opinion of us. But it is important that our name should be free from disgrace, should be honoured for purity and integrity of character. 4. *Because it is a sign of other excellences.* It may

be given by mistake to a worthless deceiver, or it may be withdrawn from a worthy person through some cruel misapprehension. We cannot always take a man's reputation as a true measure of his character. But when it is justly earned, the good name is the sacrament of a good character, and therefore an outward and visible sign of what is most excellent, for it is better to be good than to own riches.

II. THE EXCELLENCE OF LOVING FAVOUR. Why is this better than silver and gold? 1. *Because it is human.* Silver and gold are but dead metals. They may be bright, beautiful, and precious; but they can have no sympathy with their possessors. Riches are heartless things, that take themselves wings and fly away without a qualm of compunction. But human interests and affections touch our hearts and rouse our sympathies in return. It is better to be poor among friends than to be rich but loveless and friendless. 2. *Because it brings direct blessings.* Riches are at best indirect sources of good. But love is a good itself, and it breathes a benediction on all to whom it is extended. Reputation is good, but affection is better. The best love cannot be enjoyed if the good name has been lost by wrong-doing. But there may be no fame, no great name in the world, and yet much love. It is better to be loved by one than admired by a thousand. 3. *Because it is the type of higher blessings.* The loving favour of man is an earthly emblem of the grace of God. This is better than silver and gold, first, as a human source of peace and power, and then as a promise of eternal life and wealth in the heavenly inheritance, after death has robbed a man of all his silver and gold.

Ver. 2.—*Social distinctions.* I. THE SAD CONDITION OF SOCIAL DISTINCTIONS. 1. *These distinctions are very marked.* There is an enormous separation between the condition of the rich and that of the poor. The one class is overwhelmed with luxury, the other pinched with penury. There seems to be a tendency to an aggravation of this separation. As wealth grows, poverty does not perceptibly recede. Three millions are on the borders of starvation among the riches of England. 2. *These distinctions are not determined by desert.* No doubt honest industry tends to prosperity, while idleness and dissipation lead to poverty. But there are bad rich men and good poor men. 3. *These distinctions are grossly unjust.* It is impossible to maintain that there is equity in the present distribution of property throughout the community, though it may be urged that most attempts at remedying the injustice that have been proposed hitherto would be worse than the disease. 4. *These distinctions generate greater evils.* They destroy the sense of human brotherhood, fostering a spirit of pride on the part of the rich, and rousing passions of hatred among those who feel themselves to be robbed of their share of the world's wealth. One man is not to be thought of as necessarily superior to his neighbour simply because he is in possession of more property; nor, on the other hand, should the owner of wealth be regarded as a wholesale brigand.

II. THE MEANS OF RECONCILING SOCIAL DISTINCTIONS. "The rich and poor meet together." 1. *It is desirable that there should be more intercourse between the various classes of society.* Very much of the antagonism of the classes arises from ignorance. The simple, honest, poor man, seeking his rights in the rough style natural to his circumstances, is regarded as a red-handed revolutionist by the fastidious upper-class person, who, in turn, is treated by his indigent neighbour as a monster of cruelty and selfishness, a very ogre. The first step towards a better understanding is more freedom of intercourse. It is the same with the quarrel between capital and labour. Mutual conferences might bring about a common understanding. 2. *In the Church of God rich and poor meet on common ground.* Here pride of class is utterly inexcusable. Happily, the old distinction between the curtained, carpeted, and cushioned squire's pew, and the bare benches of the villagers, is being swept away. But the spirit that this distinction suggested is not so easily exorcised. Christian brotherhood should bring all together in a common family spirit. It was so in early ages, when the slave might be a privileged communicant, while the master was a humble catechumen on the threshold of the Church. 3. *Death levels all class distinctions.* Rich and poor meet together in the grave. After death new distinctions emerge. Dives cannot scorn Lazarus in Hades.

III. THE MOTIVE FOR OVERCOMING SOCIAL DISTINCTIONS. This is to be discovered in a consideration of the common relation of men to their Maker. Nothing short of religion will heal the fearful wounds of society. Forcible methods will not succeed;

*e.g.* in the French Revolution. A universal redistribution of property would soon be followed by the old distinctions. Socialism would destroy virtues of independence and energy. But faith in God will work inwardly towards a reconciliation. 1. *All classes are equally low before God.* The highest earthly mountains vanish in astronomy. 2. *Our common relation to God is the ground of our mutual relations with one another.* All men have one Father; therefore all men must be brethren. The recognition of the Fatherhood of God will lead to the admission of family duties and claims among men. Christ, who teaches the Fatherhood of God, inspires the "enthusiasm of humanity."

Ver. 4.—*Two graces, and their reward.* I. TWO GRACES. 1. *The social grace.* "Humility." This is becoming in all men, but it is especially seemly where its attainment is most difficult; *e.g.* among the high in station, the wealthy, the famous, the gifted, the popular. It is as difficult for the demagogue to be humble as for the lord—perhaps more difficult, for the former is more conscious of his own powers, and more recently lifted above his fellows. Humility is difficult to acquire, because it is so essentially different from mere weakness and self-effacement. It is seen best in the strongest and most pronounced natures. There is no virtue in falling back from one's highest aims in order to escape notice. The grace of humility is discovered in an earnest effort to press forward energetically, without a thought of self or a care for the admiration of the world. 2. *The religious grace.* "The fear of the Lord." Pride excludes true religion. In the childlike spirit of humble dependence we are open to the influence of Heaven. Thus the one grace is linked to the other. Now, the whole of the Old Testament conception of religion is summed up in "the fear of the Lord"—not because there was no room in it for any emotion but terror, but because the root of the ancient faith was reverence. This is the root of all religion. It may be so richly mingled with love as we come to discern the Fatherhood of God, that its more dread features are utterly lost. Yet love without reverence would not be a religious emotion, or, at all events, not one suited for God as he is revealed to us in the Bible. The Greeks seemed to dispense with the fear of God in their light, gay religion; but they also dispensed with conscience. A feeling of sin and a perception of the holiness of God must lay a deep foundation of awe beneath the most happy and trustful religious experience.

II. A THREEFOLD REWARD. 1. *Riches.* This is the lowest aspect of the reward. It is in the spirit of the Proverbs, which calls especial attention to the secular consequences of good and ill. We know that the humble and good are often poor and oppressed. But there is a tendency for quiet self-renunciation to be recognized and rewarded. The meek are to be blessed with the inheritance of the earth (Matt. v. 5). When full justice is done, the best men will receive the best things in this world as well as the life of that to come. At present we wait for the accomplishment of this social rectification. 2. *Honour.* The humble who do not seek honour shall have it, while the proud are cast down in shame. The first shall be last, and the last shall be first. Men delight to honour self-forgetful merit. But the highest honour comes from God, who discerns the heart, puts down the proud, and exalts them of low degree. 3. *Life.* Whether this is given in the Hebrew manner—in old age—or not, Christ has taught us to see his true eternal life as the greatest blessing for his people. The humility in which a man loses his life is the very means of finding the true life; the reverence of religion leads us from the shallow frivolity of earth to the deep life of God.

Ver. 6.—*The training of a child.* I. THE NEED OF THE TRAINING. This arises from various causes. 1. *An undeveloped condition.* Each child begins a new life. If all that were desirable could be found wrapped up in his soul, this would need to be developed by education. 2. *Ignorance.* The child does not come into the world with a ready-made stock of knowledge. He must learn truth and be made to see the right path, which is at first unknown to him. 3. *Weakness.* The child needs not only to be taught, but to be trained. He must be helped to do what is at first too much for his strength. His better nature must be drawn out, nourished, and confirmed. 4. *Evil.* A child's mind is not a *tabula rasa.* We need not go back to Adam for evidences of hereditary evil. The child inherits the vices of his ancestors. Thus "foolishness

is bound up in the heart of a child." Before he is guilty of conscious sin the tendency to wickedness begins to work within him.

II. THE AGE OF THE TRAINING. This is to be in childhood, for various reasons. 1. *Its susceptibility.* (1) Susceptibility to training. The young mind is plastic; habit is not yet confirmed. It is easier to form a character than to reform it. (2) Susceptibility to religion. "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." Young children are peculiarly open to religious impressions.

> "Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
> Shades of the prison-house begin to close
> Upon the growing boy,
> But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
> He sees it in his joy."
>
> (Wordsworth.)

Faith is natural to children. They cannot become theologians, but they may be citizens of the kingdom of heaven. Thoughts of God and Christ, and the call to the better life, can be well received by them. 2. *Its dangers.* Children are open to temptation. If not trained in goodness, they will be trained in evil. Some have thought that children should not be biassed in their religious ideas, but left in freedom to choose for themselves. We do not do this in secular matters, trusting them to choose their own methods of spelling and to manufacture their own multiplication-table. If we believe our religion to be true and good and profitable, it is only a cruel pedantry that will keep it from children for fear of prejudicing their minds. 3. *Its duties.* Early years should be given to Christ. He seeks the opening bud, not the withered leaf.

III. THE LAW OF THE TRAINING. 1. *In action.* There is a practical end in education. We are not merely to teach doctrine, but chiefly to train conduct. 2. *According to right.* This is not a question of taste. There is a way in which a child ought to go. It is his duty to tread it, and ours to lead him in it. 3. *According to future requirements.* While the main principles of education must be the same for all children, the special application of them will vary in different cases. We have to apply them to the specific career expected for each child. The prince should be trained for the throne, the soldier for the field, etc. 4. *According to personal qualities.* Each child's nature needs separate consideration and distinctive treatment. The training that would ruin one child might save another. We have not to drill all children into one uniform fashion of behaviour; we have rather to call out the individual gifts and capacities, and guard against the individual faults and weaknesses. Thus the training of a child will be the directing of his own specific nature.

IV. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE TRAINING. "When he is old, he will not depart from it." Age stiffens. It is well that it should grow firm in the right. Here is the reward of teaching the young. The work is slow and discouraging, and at first we see few results; perhaps we imagine that all our efforts are wasted upon thoughtless minds. But if the work is hard to begin, there is this compensation in it—when it has fairly laid hold of a child, it is not likely to be ever effaced. The teachings of the Sunday school are remembered after many a long year.

Vers. 20, 21.—*Certainty.* I. THE TRUTH-SEEKER DESIRES CERTAINTY. With him "the certainty of the words of truth" is the great object sought after. 1. *Certainty must be distinguished from positiveness.* Doubt is often violent in assertion, as though to silence the opposition that cannot be answered. We may be very positive without being at all certain. 2. *Certainty must be distinguished from certitude.* Certitude is the feeling of certainty. Now, we may feel no doubt on a subject, and yet we may be in error. Real certainty is a well-grounded assurance. 3. *Certainty is desired because truth is precious.* If a person is indifferent to truth, he may be satisfied with doubt, or acquiescent in error. This is the contemptuous condition of the cheerful Sadducee. His scepticism is no pain to him, because he does not feel the loss of truth. Not valuing truth, it is a light matter to him that he misses it. Such a condition of mind is an insult to truth itself. A man who recognizes the royal glory of truth will be in the greatest distress if he thinks it has eluded his grasp. To him the feeling of doubt will be an agony. 4. *Certainty is sought because it is not always present.* It may be very

difficult to find. We grope in ignorance, error, and confusion of mind. Then the great want is some solid assurance of truth. Without this the world is dark, our voyage may end in shipwreck, and we cannot know God, ourselves, or our destiny.

II. THE TRUTH-SEEKER MAY SECURE CERTAINTY. The Bible denies agnosticism. It offers revelation. 1. *Truth is revealed.* The written Word contains the record of revelation. God has spoken to us through his prophets, but chiefly in his Son (Heb. i. 1, 2). Everything that lifts the Bible above common books and impresses its message upon our hearts as from God, urges us to believe in the truth of what it teaches, for God is the Source of all truth. If the Bible does not teach truth, the Bible must be an earthly book, uninspired by God. 2. *Truth must be practised and studied.* "Excellent things in counsels and knowledge" are written in the Bible. But to find their truth we must do the commandment, follow the counsel, enter thoughtfully into the knowledge. 3. *Truth should be taught.* "That thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee." (1) Inquirers need counsel and guidance. (2) Truth is no private possession, but a public trust. (3) They who teach others especially need to know the truth themselves.

Ver. 28.—*Ancient landmarks.* I. ANCIENT LANDMARKS OF PROPERTY. The stone that divided one man's vineyard from his neighbour's was regarded as a sacred thing, on no account to be touched. This arrangement helped to perpetuate family holdings. It prevented the accumulation of large estates by the wealthy, and the alienation of the land from the poor. It guarded the weak from the oppression of the strong. It was a protection against deceit, error, and confusion. Ahab transgressed the Law in seeking to acquire Naboth's vineyard. It would be well if we could appreciate the spirit of the old Hebrew sanctity of the landmark. It would be well, too, if there were more people who had a personal interest in the soil of the country. The "sacred rights of property" cannot confer on the owner any power to oppress the tiller of the soil; but, on the other hand, they should protect the owner from the violence of social revolution.

II. ANCIENT LANDMARKS OF HISTORY. The field-stones of Palestine were historic. Their very presence served as a record of the lives and doings of a past ancestry. As such they gathered a certain sanctity of association. It is no small thing that we in England belong to a historic nation. The forward movement that is so characteristic of our day should not blind us to the lessons of the past. Noble lives and great events are landmarks on the vast field of history. They help us to map out the past, and they also assist us to gain wisdom for the present. We cannot dispense with the landmarks of Scripture history. Christianity, without the facts of the life of Christ, would be boneless and shapeless. It is strong as a historical religion. Directly it is treated merely as an idea, a sentiment, or a "spirit," it will languish by the loss of the old landmarks of concrete facts in the Birth, Life, Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ.

III. ANCIENT LANDMARKS OF DOCTRINE. We live in an age when many of these have been uprooted and flung on one side. No doubt some of them had been converted into obstructions standing up in the middle of the road of truth. We need to ascertain whether we are really dealing with the truly ancient landmarks, and are not deceived by fraudulent inventions of later ages. The primary landmarks of Christianity are in the teachings of Christ and his apostles. We may have to clear away a great deal of the rubbish of the ages in order to get back to these original truths of Christianity. It is not right to accuse those who are loyal to Christ with removing the *ancient* landmarks, when they are only taking away these later accretions. But we cannot dispense with the truly ancient landmarks. If we forsake the New Testament, we forsake Christianity.

IV. ANCIENT LANDMARKS OF MORALS. Many practices of antiquity may be abandoned. Some may be superseded by better ways, others left behind as unsuited to the circumstances of the new times. But behind and beneath all these changing fashions there are the solid rocks of truth and righteousness. Whatever else may be shaken, we cannot afford to shift these landmarks. We may improve upon old customs; but we cannot cast away the ten commandments.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—16.—The theme of the earlier part of the chapter may be said to be the good name: the blessings in the possession of it, and the conditions for the acquirement of it—partly negatively, partly positively, described.

Vers. 1—5.—*The general conditions of a good name.* I. WHAT DOES NOT CONSTITUTE ITS FOUNDATION. 1. *Riches.* (Ver. 1.) Riches have their worth; reputation has its worth; but the latter is of an order altogether different from the former. The former gives a *physical*, the latter a *moral*, power. It is right that we should have regard to the opinion of good men. "An evil name shall inherit disgrace and reproach," says Sirach vi. 1. And we have, as Christians, clearly to think of the effect a good or evil name must have upon "them that are without" (1 Cor. v. 12; x. 31, *sqq.*; Phil. iv. 8). 2. Again, poverty with a good name is infinitely preferable to riches associated with an evil character (ver. 2). It is according to general laws of providence that one is rich, the other poor. The great point is to recognize that we cannot all possess the lower good, but that the higher good is offered to all, made the duty of all to seek. Let the poor man not exaggerate the worth of riches, nor murmur against God, but humble himself under his hand, and trust the promises of his Word (Matt. v. 3). And let the rich man not put his confidence in riches (1 Tim. vi. 17), but lay up an inward store against the time to come. It is religion alone which solves the contradiction between riches and poverty by reducing both under the true standard of value.

II. THE POSITIVE CONDITIONS OF THE GOOD NAME. 1. *Prudence.* (Ver. 3.) To *foresee* evil at a distance—to have a cultivated spiritual sense, analogous to the keen scent of the lower animals, that may enable us to detect the danger not apprehensible by the duller sense—is necessary to our safety. And what is necessary to safety is necessary ultimately with a view to the good name. To go too near the fire may lead to the *scorching* of the reputation, if not to the loss of the life. To conceal ourselves beneath the wings of the Almighty and to abide in communion with God (Ps. xci. 1) is the best refuge from all danger. 2. *Humility.* (Ver. 4.) He that would attain to the glory must first "know how to be abased." Clearly to recognize our position and part in life always implies humility. For it is always less and lower than that which imagination dreams. Another important lesson from this verse is that reputation and the good attached to it come through seeking something else and something better. To do our *own work* is really to do something that has never been attempted before. For each of us is an original, and success in that which is peculiar to us brings more honour than success in a matter of greater difficulty in which we are but imitators of others. 3. *The fear of God.* (Ver. 4.) Religion gives *reality* to character. And reputation must at last rest on the presence of a reality; and those who have it not are perpetually being found out. 4. *Rectitude of conduct.* (Ver. 5.) What pains, anxieties, what dangers, rebuffs, and disappointments, and what loss of all that makes life sweet and good, do not the dishonest in every degree incur! The path of rectitude and truth seems rugged, but roses spring up around it, so soon as we begin fairly to tread it; the way of the transgressors seems inviting, but is indeed "hard."—J.

Vers. 6—12.—*Means to the preservation of the good name.* I. EARLY TRAINING. (Ver. 6.) The young twig must be early bent. Experience teaches us that nothing in the world is so mighty for good or evil as custom; and therefore, says Lord Bacon, "since custom is the principal magistrate of man's life, let man by all means endeavour to obtain good customs. Custom is most perfect when it beginneth in young years; this we call education, which is in effect but an early custom. The tongue is more pliant to all expressions and sounds, the joints more supple to all feats of activity and motions, in youth than afterwards. Those minds are rare which do not show to their latest days the ply and impress they have received as children."

II. INDEPENDENCE. (Ver. 7.) How strongly was the worth of this felt in those ancient times! Poverty and responsibility to others are to be avoided. Many are forced into distress of conscience and to the loss of a good name by being tempted, for the sake of the rich man's gold or the great man's smile, to vote contrary to their con-

victions. Others will sell their liberty to gratify their luxury. It is an honest ambition to enjoy a competence that shall enable one to afford to be honest, and have the luxury of the freest expression of opinion. Hence frugality becomes so clear a moral duty.

III. INTEGRITY. (Ver. 8.) Ill-gotten gains cannot prosper. "The evil which issues from thy mouth falls into thy bosom," says the Spanish proverb. The rod wherewith the violent and unjust man struck others is broken to pieces.

IV. NEIGHBOURLY LOVE. (Ver. 9.) "Charity gives itself rich, covetousness hoards itself poor," says the German proverb. "Give alms, that thy children may not ask them," says a Danish proverb. "Drawn wells are never dry." So give to-day, that thou mayest have to give to-morrow; and to one, that thou mayest have to give to another. Let us remember, with the Italian proverb, that "our last robe is made without pockets." Above all, if our case is that "silver and gold we have none, let us freely substitute the kindly looks and the healing words, which are worth much and cost little."

V. A PEACEFUL TEMPER. (Ver. 10.) Let the scoffing, envious, contentious temper be cast out of our breast first. As for others, let us strike, if possible, at the cause and root of strife. Let there be solid argument for the doubter, and practical relief for actual grievances. Let us learn from the old fable, and follow the part of Epimetheus, who, when evils flew abroad from the box of Pandora, shut the lid and kept hope at the bottom of the vessel.

VI. A FAITHFUL AND CONSTANT HEART. (Ver. 11.) The greatest treasure to an earthly monarch, and dear above all to the King of kings. "He who serves God serves a good Master." Grace and truth are upon the lips of God's Anointed for evermore. And to clench these proverbs, let us recollect that nothing but truth in the inward parts can abide before the eye of Jehovah. "A lie has no legs." It carries along with itself the germs of its own dissolution. It is sure to destroy itself at last. Its priests may prop it up, after it has once fallen in the presence of the truth; but it will fall again, like Dagon, more shamefully and irretrievably than before. Truth is the daughter of God (Trench).—J.

Vers. 13—16.—*Hindrances to the attainment of a good name.* I. SLOTH. (Ver. 13.) It is full of ridiculous excuses here satirized. While a noble energy refuses to own the word "impossible," it is ever on the lips of the indolent. As in the Arabic fable of the ostrich, or "camel-bird," they said to it, "Carry!" It answered, "I cannot, for I am a bird." They said, "Fly!" It answered, "I cannot, for I am a camel." Always, "I *cannot!*" He who in false regard to his own soul refuses to go out into the world and do God's work, will end by corrupting and losing his soul itself (John xii. 25).

II. PROFLIGACY. (Ver. 14.) Lust digs its own grave. Health goes, reputation follows, and presently the life, self-consumed by the deadly fire, sinks into ruin and ashes. If men saw how plainly the curse of God is written on vice, it would surely become as odious to them as to him.

III. UNGOVERNED FOLLY. (Ver. 15.) Nothing more pitiable than an old fool, whose folly seems to stand in clear relief against the background of years. Hence, again, the urgent need of firm discipline for the young. And what occasion for thankfulness to him who, in his wise chastisements, will not "let us alone," but prunes and tills the soul by affliction, and plucks up our follies by the root!

IV. OPPRESSIVENESS. (Ver. 16.) To become rich at the expense of other's loss is no real gain. The attempt cuts at the root of sound trade and true sociality. Hastily gotten will hardly be honestly gotten. The Spaniards say, "He who will be rich in a year, at the half-year they hang him." Mammon, which more than anything else men are tempted to think God does not concern himself about, is given and taken away by him according to his righteousness—given sometimes to his enemies and for their greater punishment, that under its fatal influence they may grow worse and worse (Trench).—J.

Vers. 17—21.—*The words of the wise to be taken to heart.* I. THEY YIELD DIVINE PLEASURE. (Ver. 18.) And all the pleasure of the world is not to be weighed against

it. Let those who have "tasted of the good Word of God" bear their witness. The human soul is made for truth, and delights in it. There is pleasure in grasping a mathematical demonstration or a scientific law; and the successful inquirer may shout his "Eureka!" with joy over every fresh discovery. But above all, "how charming is Divine philosophy!"—that which traces the clear path of virtue, warns against vice, shows the eternal reward of the former and the doom of the latter. Received with the appetite of faith, Divine truth is food most sweet.

II. THEY LEAD US ON TO CONFIDENCE IN GOD. (Ver. 19.) And this is our true foundation. He is Jehovah, the Eternal One. He is the Constant One. His Name is the expression of mercy, of truth, and of justice. To love and to trust him is to be in living intercourse with all that is true and beautiful and good.

III. THEY ARE RICH IN MANIFOLD INSTRUCTION. (Ver. 20.) They are "princely words," *i.e.* of the highest and noblest dignity. Prone to sink into the commonplace, the mean, the impure, they lift us to high views of our calling, our duty, and our destiny.

IV. THEY PRODUCE JUSTICE OF THOUGHT AND SOUNDNESS OF SPEECH. (Ver. 21.) Thought and speech together form the garment of the soul. It is only the living sap of God's truth within us which can impart greenness and beauty, blossom and fruit, to the life. As water rises to the level from which it descended, so does all truth received into the soul go back in some form to the imparter, in thanks and in blessing.—J.

Vers. 22—29.—*Right in social relations.* I. RELATIONS TO THE POOR. (Vers. 22, 23.) 1. Robbery and oppression are a breach of the positive external law (Exod. xx. 15), much more of the inward and eternal law written in the heart, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." 2. The perversion of law and magisterial authority to this end is an aggravation of the offence. It makes the refuge of the poor the market for bribery. 3. Above all, such oppression shows contempt for the authority of God. Among his titles to the throne of the world are these—that he is Protector of the helpless, Father of the fatherless, Judge of widows. The judgment on Ahab and the Captivity in Babylon (1 Kings xxi. 18—24; Isa. xxxiii. 1) may be referred to as examples of retributive judgment on the spoilers of the poor.

II. AGAINST ASSOCIATION WITH PASSIONATE AND PRECIPITATE MEN. (Vers. 24, 28.) It is a *contagious* temper. How soon is the habit of hot and violent language caught up from another! It is a *dangerous* temper. "Never anger made good guard for itself." It becomes more hurtful than the injury which provoked it. It is often an affected temper, compounded of pride and folly, and an intention to do commonly more mischief than it can bring to pass.

III. AGAINST THE RASH INCURRING OF LIABILITIES. (Vers. 26, 27; see on ch. vi. 1—4; xi. 15; xvii. 18; xx. 16.)

IV. AGAINST THE REMOVAL OF THE OLD LANDMARKS. (Ver. 28. See the express commands of the Law, Deut. xix. 14; xxvii. 17; Job xxiv. 2; Hos. v. 10.) A strict respect for the *rights* of others is the foundation of all social order. And connected with this is the duty of respect for the *feelings* for what is ancient and time-honoured. There should be no violent change in old customs of life and thought. Necessity may compel them; caprice should never dictate them. A spirit ever restless and bent on innovation is a nuisance in society. The existence of a custom is a proof of its meaning and relative worth; until it is discerned that the significance is now a false one, it should not be swept away.

V. ON THE PRINCIPLES OF SUCCESS. (Ver. 29.) 1. A man *must know his business* in the world. This is determined partly by his talents, partly by providential circumstances. "Know thy work" is as important a precept as "Know thyself." 2. He *must be diligent in his business,* doing "with his might" what his hand finds to do, labouring "with both hands earnestly" in every good cause. 3. The result will be *advancement and honour.* We have shining examples in Joseph, Nehemiah, Daniel. Ability and capacity are no less *acquired* than natural; use alone fully brings to light the talent, and to it Providence opens the suitable sphere of activity. Men may seem to be failures in this world who are not really so. He alone can judge of the fidelity of the heart who is to utter at the end of the sentence, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" "Many that are first will be last, and the last first."—J.

Ver. 1.—*Riches or reputation?* Both of these things are good in their way and in their measure. They may be held together, for many wealthy men have enjoyed a good name and much "loving favour." But it is not given to all men to command both of these. A large proportion of rich men have lost their reputation for equity and humanity by the way in which they have gained their wealth. And they must necessarily be many who are compelled to take and keep their place among the poor. But if only one of these two desirable things is open to us, we may be very well satisfied that this is not the wealth, but the worthiness, not the full treasury, but the good name and the kind regard. For—

I. WEALTH IS VERY LIMITED IN ITS CAPACITIES. It is true that it commands considerable material advantages, and that it puts it in the power of its possessor to enlarge his own mind, to extend his social circle, and to multiply his usefulness. This, however, it only does *as an instrument*. It does not ensure any of these things. Men may possess it, and they may, as very many of them do, altogether neglect to avail themselves of the opportunity. It does not even *dispose* men to do these wise things; it is as likely as not to allure them in other and even contrary directions. The power of mere wealth, apart from the character of its owner, is very much slighter than it seems. It only really secures bodily comforts and the *means* of advancement. 1. It does not confer even happiness, for mere jollity or transient excitement is not happiness. 2. It does not supply knowledge, much less capacity, and still less wisdom. 3. It does not provide the friendship which is worthy of the name, for no man who respects himself will be the friend of the rich simply because he *is* rich. We do not *love* a man because he has a large account at his bank. 4. It does not include the possession of any estimable moral qualities, nor, therefore, the favour of God. Moreover—

II. WEALTH HAS ITS SERIOUS DRAWBACKS. 1. It involves heavy burdens, great anxieties lest it should be lost. 2. It entails the most serious responsibility, lest its misuse or its non-use should bring down the weighty condemnation of God (Matt. xxv. 26). 3. It tempts to a dishonourable and degrading self-indulgence; also to a cynical and guilty contempt of the poor and lowly.

III. A GOOD REPUTATION INCLUDES OR IMPLIES THE BEST THINGS. Of course, men *may* acquire a fair name and even loving favour by very superficial qualities; but if they do, it is usually but short-lived. It breaks down under the weight of hard fact and accumulated experience. The good name which Solomon is thinking of, and which is the only thing of the kind worth pursuing, is that which is built upon or which springs from *a sound character*. It therefore implies the possession of uprightness, of purity, of truthfulness, of kindness, of reverence; and it therefore implies the possession of *piety* and the *favour of God*.

IV. A GOOD REPUTATION IS A SOURCE OF TRUE AND PURE SATISFACTION. 1. *It satisfies our self-respect;* for we rightly wish to enjoy the intelligent esteem of our neighbours. We are rightly troubled when we lose it; we are justified in our satisfaction that we possess it. It is a pure and lasting gratification. 2. *It satisfies our affections.* To have the "loving favour" of men is to have much true gladness of heart.

V. A GOOD REPUTATION IS A SOURCE OF MUCH POWER. While the bad rich man is steadily declining in his command, his humbler neighbour, who is esteemed for his wisdom and his worth, is gaining an influence for good with every passing year.—C.

Ver. 2.—"*Rich and poor.*" The great problem of excessive wealth and pitiable poverty confronts us still, and seems likely to task our united wisdom for many years, if not for several generations. We may regard—

I. THE BROAD AND NAKED FACT VISIBLE TO EVERY EYE. The fact that, while this world is stored with wealth beneath the ground, and is capable of bringing forth upon its surface ample supplies for all the need of the race, there is found amongst us a vast mass of miserable indigence. Children are born into the world in homes where parents do not know how to feed and clothe them, where an early death would seem to be the happiest fate; and other children are born into and brought up in homes where parents have a great deal more than they need to provide for their necessities, and where life offers every opportunity for enjoyment with no necessity for labour.

II. HOW FAR THIS DISTINCTION IS OF GOD. 1. Such deep and wide distinctions as now exist must be contrary to his purpose. We cannot possibly suppose that it is in accordance with his mind that thousands of his children should be starving, unclad or ill clad, homeless, exposed to the saddest sufferings and the darkest evils, while other thousands of his children have more than they need or know how to make good use of. 2. These distinctions are the ultimate result of the laws which he ordained. Poverty has its origin in sin; it is one of the penalties of wrong-doing. All the evil we see and sigh over, of every kind, we must trace to sin and to the consequences which sin entails. It is a Divine law that sin and suffering go together. 3. Some inequalities amongst us are directly due to his Divine ordering. He creates us with very different faculties. Some are fitted and enabled to do great things, which raise them in position and in circumstance above their brethren; others are not thus qualified Much, though very far indeed from everything, depends upon our natural endowments.

III. THE UNDESIRABLE SEPARATION WHICH EXISTS BETWEEN THE RICH AND THE POOR. We do not know our neighbours as we should. We pass one another with cold indifference. Too often men turn away from their inferiors (in circumstance) with a contemptuous disregard which signifies that the poor man is beneath their notice; too often men fail to appeal to their fellows because they think themselves unworthy to address them. Between man and man, between brother and brother, there is a gulf of isolation which must be painful and pitiful in the sight of the common Father, the Maker of them both.

IV. THE OCCASIONS WHEN THEY MEET. 1. Those on which they *must* feel the distinction between them—in business and in society. 2. Those on which they *should not* do so—when they meet in public worship or for Christian work, then all differences of a material and social kind should be forgotten and ignored. (1) What are these in presence of that which separates both rich and poor from the Infinite and Almighty One? (2) What are these in comparison with the question of moral and spiritual worth? In the sight of God, the poor but holy man is far more acceptable than the rich but unholy man. With him all questions of income or of title are utterly insignificant, positively invisible in presence of the questions of moral rectitude and spiritual worth. 3. One on which *they will not* do so (Rev. xx. 12).

1. Do your best to bridge the gulf, or, still better, to fill up the chasm which separates one class from another. 2. Take care to have that distinction which will survive the shocks of time and change.—C.

Ver. 3.—*Thoughtfulness and thoughtlessness.* All men might be divided into the thoughtful and the thoughtless. They belong either to those who look before them and prepare for the struggle or the danger that is coming, and avoid it; or else to those who go blindly on and stumble over the first impediment in their way. The "prudent man" of the text is not only the cautious man; he is the man of sagacity and foresight, who takes large and extended views of things. There are many illustrations of the thought, of which we may select.

I. THE EVIL OF PECUNIARY ENTANGLEMENT. The prudent man forbears to enter into that alliance, or into those relationships, or on to that course of action which will demand more resources than he can supply. But the simple "pass on"—become involved, and pay the penalty of prolonged anxiety, of great distraction, of painful humiliation, of grave dishonour, of financial ruin.

II. THE STRAIN OF UNWISE COMPANIONSHIP. A prudent man will consider well what company he can wisely keep, whose society will be beneficial and whose injurious to him, whether or not he can bear the pressure that will be put upon him to indulge in this or that direction, and he will shun the social circle that would be perilous to his integrity. But the simple take no heed, accept the first invitation that comes to them, become associated with those whose influence is deteriorating, succumb to their solicitation, and pay the penalty of serious spiritual declension.

III. THE FORCE OF SOME PARTICULAR TEMPTATION. The wise perceive the danger of the intoxicating cup, of the saloon, of the racecourse, of the gambling-table, and they keep steadfastly away. The simple pass on—self-confident, presumptuous, doomed, and they *are* punished indeed.

IV. THE PASSAGE OF YOUTH. The prudent recognize the fact that, unless youth yields its own particular fruit of knowledge, of acquisition, of capacity for work in one field or other, the prizes of life must be foregone; and, recognizing this, they do not waste the golden hours of study in idleness or dissipation. But the simple take no heed, trust to the chapter of accidents, wait upon fortune, fling away their precious chances, and are "punished" by having to take the lower path all the rest of their days.

V. THE RISK OF LOSING HEALTH. The prudent man sees that, if he urges his powers beyond the mark which kind and wise nature draws for him, he will gain a present advantage at the cost of future good, and he holds himself in check. The simple pass on—over-work, over-study, strain their faculties, and break down long before their time.

VI. THE LOSS OF LIFE. The wise man will count on this; he will reckon that any day he may be called to pass *from* his business and his family and his pleasure *to* the great account and the long future; and he lives accordingly, ready for life or for death, prepared to encounter the hour when he will look his last on time and confront eternity. The simple leave this stern fact out of their account; they pass on their way without making preparation either for those whom they must leave behind or for themselves when they enter the world where material treasures are of no account whatever; they pass on, and they "are punished," for they, too, reach the hour of departure, but they awake to the sad fact that that has been left undone for which a long life is not too long a preparation.—C.

Ver. 5.—*The path of the perverse.* By "the froward" we understand the spiritually perverse—those that will go on their own way, deaf to the commandments and the entreaties of their heavenly Father.

I. THE PATH OF THE PERVERSE. This is: 1. *One of guilt.* These froward souls who choose their own way, declining that to which God calls them, are most seriously guilty. Whether their disobedience be due to *careless inattention* or whether to *deliberate recusancy*, it is disloyal, ungrateful, presumptuous, offensive in a high degree. It is no wonder that it proves to be: 2. *One of suffering.* No wonder that "thorns" are in that way, thorns that pierce and pain—grievous troubles, poverty, sickness, loneliness, fear, remorse, forsakenness of God. Departure from God leads down to tangled places, causes men to be lost in thorny wildernesses where suffering abounds. It is also: 3. *One of danger.* It is a place of "snares." Without the "lamp unto the feet and the light unto the path," how should the traveller in "this dark world of sin" do otherwise than fall? Outside the service of Christ, and apart from his guidance, when the heart is uncontrolled from above, there is the greatest danger of the spirit giving way to one evil after another, of yielding to that multitude of strong temptations which attend the traveller's steps.

II. THE WAY OF THE WISE. There is no necessity for man finding the path of his life a path full of thorns and snares. It is true that no prudence or wisdom will prove an absolute guard therefrom; but if a man will "keep his soul" as he may keep it, he will be preserved in his integrity, he will even "be far" from the worst evils which overtake the froward and perverse. To "keep our soul" is to: 1. Understand its inestimable worth; to understand that it far transcends in value any property we may hold, or any position we may reach, or any prizes or pleasures we may snatch. 2. Realize that God claims it as his own; that to the Father of spirits, to the Saviour of souls, our hearts and lives belong; that to him they should be willingly and heartily surrendered, that they may be placed in his strong and holy keeping. 3. Guard it by the help of Divine wisdom; apply those precious truths which are in the pages of God's Word to its necessity; study the life and form the friendship of that One who himself *is* the Wisdom of God, walking with whom along the path of life we shall be safe from the wiles of the wicked one.—C.

Ver. 6.—*Parental training.* Very many parental hearts have leaned their weight of hope on these cheering words—many to be sustained and gladdened, some to be disappointed. We look at—

I. THE BROAD SPHERE OF PARENTAL TRAINING. What is the way in which a child

should be trained to go? It is one that comprehends much. It includes: 1. *Manners.* These are not of the first importance, but they have their value. And if politeness, demeanour, bearing, be not engraven in the young, it will not be perfectly attained afterwards. 2. *Mind.* The habit of observing, of thinking, of reasoning, of sound reading, of calm consideration and discussion. 3. *Morals.* The all-important habits of truthfulness, of temperance, of industry, of self-command, of courage, of pure and stainless honesty, of unselfish considerateness, of generous forgiveness. 4. *Religion.* The habit of reverence in the use of the Divine Name, of public worship, of private prayer, of readiness to learn all that in any way God is willing to teach us.

II. THE STRENGTH OF THE PARENTAL HOPE. Let the child be trained in these right ways, "and when he is old," etc. 1. *The assurance of habit.* When we have firmly planted a good habit in the mind and in the life, we have done a very great and a very good thing—we have gone far toward the goal we seek. For habit, early formed, is not easily broken. We sometimes allude to habit as if it were an enemy. But, in truth, it is our best friend. It is a gracious bond that binds us to wisdom and virtue. Without it we should have no security against temptation; with it we have every reason to hope that youth will pass into prime, and prime into old age, clothed with all the wisdom and adorned with all the grace that it received in its early years. What makes the assurance the more strong is that habit becomes more powerful with each effort and each action. Every day the good habits we have formed and are exercising become more deeply rooted in the soil of the soul. 2. *The assurance of the common experience of mankind.*

III. THE NECESSARY LIMIT. Not the very best training of the very wisest parents in the world can positively *secure* goodness and wisdom in their children. For when they have done everything in their power, there must remain that element of individuality which will choose its own course and form its own character. Our children *may* choose to reject the truth we teach them, and to slight the example we set them, and to despise the counsel we give them. In the will of every child there is a power which cannot be forced, which can only be won. Therefore: 1. Let all parents seek, beside training their children in good habits, to *win* their hearts to that Divine Wisdom in whose friendship and service alone will they be safe. Where sagacity may fail, affection will triumph. Command and persuasion are the two weapons which parental wisdom will do its best to wield. 2. Let all children understand that for their character and their destiny they must themselves be responsible. All the very worthiest and wisest influences of home will lead to no good result if they oppose to them a rebellious spirit, if they do not receive them in the spirit of docility. There is but one gate of entrance into life, and that is the *personal, individual* acceptance of Jesus Christ as the Lord and Saviour of the spirit. The parent may lead his child up to it, but that child must pass through it of his own accord.—C.

Ver. 13.—*Excuses.* Few things are oftener on human lips than excuses. Men are continually excusing themselves from doing what they know in their hearts they ought to do. There is no sphere from which they are excluded, and there is hardly any evil to which they do not lead.

I. THE SPHERES IN WHICH THEY ARE FOUND. The child excuses himself from the obedience which he should be rendering to his parents; the scholar, from the application he should be giving to his studies; the apprentice, from the attention he should be devoting to his business; the agriculturist, from the labour he should be putting forth in the fields; the captain, from setting sail on the troubled waters; the unsuccessful tradesman or merchant, from investigating his books and seeing how he really stands; the failing manufacturer, from closing his mill; the statesman from bringing forward his perilous measure; the minister, from seeking his delicate and difficult interview; the soul not yet reconciled to God, from a searching inquiry into its own spiritual condition and present obligation.

II. THEIR MORAL CHARACTER. 1. There is a decided ingredient of *falsehood* about them. Those who fashion them know in their hearts that there is something, if not much, that is imaginary about them. The lion is *not* without; the slothful man will *not* be slain in the streets. The evil which is anticipated in all cases of excuse is exaggerated, if it is not invented. We do not, at such times, tell ourselves the whole

truth; we "deceive our own selves." 2. There is something of *meanness* or unmanliness about them; we "let 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would.'" We allow a craven feeling of apprehension to enter in, to take possession, to prevail over our better self. 3. There is an element of *disobedience* and unfaithfulness. We shrink from doing the thing which is our duty to do; we relegate to the rear that which we should keep in the front; we prefer that which is agreeable to that which is obligatory; we obey the lower voice; we leave unfulfilled the will of God.

III. THE FATE OF THOSE WHO INDULGE THEM. 1. To have a very pitiable retrospect; to have to look back, self-condemned, on work left undone, on a life not well lived. 2. To lose all that might have been gained by energy and decision, and which has been lost by sloth and weakness. And who shall say what this amounts to in the years of a long life? 3. To miss the "Well done" of the Master, if not, indeed, to receive his final and sorrowful condemnation.—C.

Ver. 15.—(See homily on ch. xiii. 24.)—C.

Vers. 16, 22.—(See homily on ver. 28.)—C.

Vers. 24, 25.—(See homily on ch. xvi. 32.)—C.

Vers. 26, 27.—(See homily on ch. vi. 1—5.)—C.

Ver. 28.—*The ancient landmark.* The text clearly refers to the ancient division of property by which the land was carefully marked out, and each family had its own proper share. The man who removed these boundaries in his own material interest was simply appropriating what did not belong to him. Perhaps "the removal of the ancient landmark" became a proverbial phrase to signify any serious departure from rectitude. It will be worth while to consider—

I. WHAT IS NOT FORBIDDEN IN THIS PRECEPT. 1. A change in social customs. It is found by experience that we are all the better for leaving certain usages behind us. We outgrow them, and they become hindrances rather than aids to us. 2. The remodelling of old institutions. The time comes when the old order changes, giving place to new, by common consent and to the general advantage. With new methods, new organizations, there may come new life and renewed power. 3. The change of religious vocabulary. There is nothing wrong in putting the old doctrine in new forms; indeed, it becomes more living and more telling when uttered in the language of the time. Ancient phraseology is to be respected, but it is not sacred; it may and must give place to new. 4. The modification of Christian doctrine; not, indeed, a change of "the faith once delivered to the saints"—a departure from "the truth as it is in Jesus," but such a varying account and statement of it as comes with increased light from the study of nature or of man, and with further reverent research of the Word of God. But what is—

II. THE WRONG WHICH IS HERE FORBIDDEN. It is *all criminal selfishness*, more especially such as that referred to—the appropriation of land by immoral means, or the securing of any kind of property by tampering with a deed or other document. It may include the act of obtaining any advantage in any direction whatever by means that are dishonourable and unworthy. In all such cases we need the ear to hear a Divine, "Thou shalt not." To act thus is a sin and a mistake. It is: 1. To disobey the voice of the Lord, who emphatically denounces it. Especially does God rebuke and threaten the wronging of the poor and feeble because they *are* such; to do this is to add meanness and cowardice to selfishness and crime (see vers. 16, 22). 2. To injure ourselves far more seriously and irremediably than we hurt our neighbour. It is to lose the favour of God, the approval of our own conscience, and the esteem of the just.—C.

Ver. 29.—(See homily on ch. vi. 6—11; xxvii. 23.)—C.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XXIII.

Vers. 1—3.—A hexastich closely connected with the last verse of the preceding chapter, as if the warning was addressed to the man of skill whom his talents had made the guest of kings.

Ver. 1.—**When thou sittest to eat with a ruler.** This, of course, would be a great honour to a man of lowly birth, or to one of the middle class, to whom the manners of courts and palaces were practically unknown. **Consider diligently what is before thee.** So the Vulgate, *Quæ apposita sunt ante faciem tuam;* and the Septuagint, Τὰ παρατιθέμενά σοι. Take heed lest the unusual dainties on the table tempt thee to excess, which may lead not only to unseemly behaviour, but also to unruly speech, revealing of secrets, etc. But the latter words may also be rendered, "him that is," or, "*who* is before thee." And this gives a very appropriate sense. The guest is enjoined to fix his attention, not on the delicate food, but on the host, who is his superior, and able to exalt and to destroy him (compare the cautious maxims in Ecclus. xiii. 2, 6, 7, 11, etc.).

Ver. 2.—**And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite.** "Stab thy gluttony," Wordsworth. Restrain thyself by the strongest measures, convince thyself that thou art in the utmost peril, if thou art a glutton or wine-bibber (Ecclus. xxxiv. [xxxi.] 12). The LXX. gives a different turn to the injunction, "And apply (ἐπίβαλλε) thy hand, knowing that it behoves thee to prepare such things." This is like the warning of Siracides, in the chapter quoted above, where the disciple is admonished not to attend the banquets of rich men, lest he should be tempted to vie with them, and thus ruin himself by attempting to return their civilities in the same lavish manner. The earlier commentators have used the above verses as a lesson concerning the due and reverent partaking of the Holy Communion, thus: "When you approach the table of Christ, consider diligently what is represented by the elements before you, and have discernment and faith, lest you eat and drink unworthily; and after communicating walk warily, mortify all evil desires, live as in the presence of the Lord Jesus, the Giver of the feast."

Ver. 3.—**Be not desirous of his dainties.** (For "dainties," see on ver. 6.) Be not too greedy of the bounties of the royal table, so as to forget discretion, and be led to say and do things which are inexpedient or unseemly. **For they are deceitful meat.** Oftentimes such entertainment is not offered for friendship's sake, but for some sinister purpose—to make a man expose himself, to get at a man's real character or secrets. Far from being a sign of favour and good will, the seeming honour is deceptive and dangerous. We all know Horace's lines, 'Ars Poet.,' 434, etc.—

"Reges dicuntur multis urgere culullis
Et torquere mero, quem perspexisse laborant,
An sit amicitia dignus."

Hitzig quotes the Eastern proverb, "He who eats of the sultan's soup burns his lips, even though it be after a length of time." We have too the Indian saying, "An epicure digs his grave with his teeth," which is true in more senses than one. "Keep thee far from the man that hath power to kill," says Siracides (Ecclus. ix. 13); "so shalt thou not be troubled with fear of death: and if thou come unto him, commit no fault, lest he presently take away thy life; remember that thou goest in the midst of snares, and that thou walkest upon the battlements of the city." Then for the reasons which induce a ruler to ply a guest with wine, we have, "In vino veritas. Quod est in corde sobrii, est in ore ebrii." Theognis writes—

Ἐν πυρὶ μὲν χρυσόν τε καὶ ἄργυρον ἴδριες ἄνδρες
Γιγνώσκουσ', ἀνδρὸς δ' οἶνος ἔδειξε νόον,
Καὶ μάλα περ πινυτοῦ, τὸν ὑπὲρ μέτρον ἤρατο πίνων,
Ὥστε καταισχῦναι καὶ πρὶν ἐόντα σοφόν.

The Septuagint combines the ending of ver. 2, "But if thou art more insatiable, desire not his victuals, for these appertain to (ἔχεται) a false life."

Vers. 4, 5.—These form a pentastich.

Ver. 4.—**Labour not—weary not thyself—to be rich.** John vi. 27, "Labour not for the meat that perisheth," where the warning is against that absorbing eagerness for wealth which leads to evil-doing and neglect of all higher interests. **Cease from thine own wisdom.** The wisdom (*bînah*, ch. iii. 5) is that which is necessary for making and keeping wealth. Vulgate, *Prudentiæ tuæ pone modum.* This is not the highest form of wisdom (*chochmah*), but rather the faculty of distinguishing one thing from another, mere discernment, which may exist without any religious or keen moral sense (see note on ch. xvi. 16, where possibly the contrast is expressed). Talmud, "He who augments his riches augments his cares." Erasmus, 'Adag.,' quotes or writes—

"Jupiter ementitur opes mortalibus ipse,
Sic visum ut fuerit, cuicunque, bonove, malove."

Septuagint, "If thou art poor, measure not thyself (*μὴ παρεκτείνου*) with a rich man, but in thy wisdom refrain thyself."

Ver. 5.—**Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?** more literally, *wilt thou let thine eyes fly upon it, and it is gone?* Why cast longing looks towards this wealth, and so prepare for yourself loss and disappointment? The pursuit is vain, and the result is never secure; what you gained by long toil and prudent care may be lost in an hour. Do you wish to incur this danger? Wordsworth quotes Persius, 'Sat.,' iii. 61—

"An passim sequeris corvos testaque lutoque?"

**For riches certainly make themselves wings.** The subject, unexpressed, is riches, and the Hebrew phrase implies absolute certainty: *Making they will make for themselves.* **They fly away as an eagle toward heaven;** or, *like an eagle that flieth toward heaven*, where not even sight can follow. Publ. Syr., 255, "Longinquum est omne quod cupiditas flagitat." The Telugu compares worldly prosperity to writing upon water. Says the Greek moralist—

*Βέβαιον οὐδὲν ἐν βίῳ δοκεῖ πέλειν.*

"There's naught in life that one can deem secure."

Septuagint, "If thou fix thine eye upon him (the rich patron), he will nowhere be seen, for wings like an eagle's are ready prepared for him, and he will return to the house of his master (*τοῦ προεστηκότος αὐτοῦ*), and leave you to shift for yourself."

Vers. 6—8.—Another maxim, here a heptastich, concerning temperance.

Ver. 6.—**Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye;** the envious and jealous man, in contrast to the "good of eye" (ch. xxii. 9). Vulgate, *Ne comedas cum homine invido.* Septuagint, *ἀνδρὶ βασκάνῳ*, the man who has the evil eye that fascinates, which, however, is a later idea; here the notion is rather of a grudging, sordid temper, that cannot bear the sight of others' happiness or prosperity (comp. Deut. xv. 9; Matt. xx. 15). Ecclus. xvi. 8, *Πονηρὸς ὁ βασκαίνων ὀφθαλμῷ*, "The envious man hath an evil eye; he turneth away his face, and he is one who despiseth men." **Dainty meats;** as in ver. 3. The word (*matammoth*) occurs also throughout Gen. xxvii., where it is rendered, "savoury meat." Talmud, "To ask a favour from a miser is as if you asked wisdom from a woman, modesty from a harlot, fish on the dry land."

Ver. 7.—**For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.** The verb here used is שָׁעַר (*shaar*), "to estimate," "to calculate," and the clause is best rendered, *For as one that calculates with himself, so is he.* The meaning is that this niggardly host watches every morsel which his guest eats, and grudges what he appears to offer so liberally. In the Authorized Version the word "heart" occurs twice in this verse, but the Hebrew words are different. The first is *nephesh*, "breath," equivalent to "mind;" the second is *leb*, "heart." The Vulgate paraphrases the clause, *Quoniam in similitudinem arioli et conjectoris, æstimat quod ignorat*, "For like a soothsayer or diviner he conjectures that of which he is ignorant." **Eat and drink, saith he to thee.** He professes to make you welcome, and with seeming cordiality invites you to partake of the food upon his table. **But his heart is not with thee.** He is not glad to see you enjoy yourself, and his pressing invitation is empty verbiage with no heart in it. The Septuagint, pointing differently, translates, "For as if one should swallow a hair, so he eats and drinks." The Greek translators take the gnome to apply to one who invites an envious man to his table, and finds him eating his food as if it disgusted him. They go on, "Bring him not in to thee, nor eat thy morsel with him; for (ver. 8) he will vomit it up, and outrage thy fair words." In agreement with the gnome above, we find in the Talmud, "My son, eat not the bread of the covetous, nor sit thou at his table. The bread of the covetous is only pain and anguish: the bread of the generous man is a source of health and joy."

Ver. 8.—**The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up.** Food thus grudgingly bestowed will only create disgust, and do thee no good; thou wilt feel annoyed to have eaten it, and wilt long to get rid of it. **And lose thy sweet words.** You will have expended in vain your civil speeches and thanks for the entertainment provided for you; you really owe no gratitude for fare so grudgingly bestowed. Some think that by the "sweet words" are meant the conversation at table with which you have endeavoured to amuse your host—the witty sayings, enigmas, and apothegms, which entered so largely into the programme of a good talker. All such efforts are thrown away on the jealous, morose host. But the former explanation is more agreeable to the context.

Ver. 9.—Here is another case in which "sweet words" are lost. **Speak not in the ears of a fool.** This does not mean, as it would in our English phrase—whisper not to a fool; but do not take the trouble to try to make him understand, impart nothing to him. The "fool" here (*kesil*) is the dull,

stolid, stupid man, who cannot be moved from his own narrow groove (see on ch. i. 22). It is a mere casting of pearls before swine (Matt. vii. 6) to speak to such a man of high aims, righteous motives, self-sacrifice (comp. ch. ix. 8). **He will despise the wisdom of thy words.** He cannot enter into the meaning of words of wisdom; he has no appetite for them, he cannot assimilate them; and in his self-satisfied dulness he feels for them nothing but contempt (Ecclus. xxii. 7, etc., "Whoso teacheth a fool is as one that glueth a potsherd together, and as he that waketh one from a sound sleep. He that telleth a tale to a fool speaketh to one in a slumber: when he hath told his tale, he will say, What is the matter?")

Vers. 10, 11.—An enlargement of ch. xxii. 28 combined with ch. xxii. 22, 23.

Ver. 10.—**Enter not into the fields of the fatherless.** Do not think to appropriate the fields of orphans, as if there were no one to defend their rights (comp. ch. xv. 25).

Ver. 11.—**For their Redeemer is mighty.** The redeemer (*goel*) is the near kinsman, who had to avenge bloodshed, carry on the blood-feud, or vindicate the cause of a relation otherwise unsupported (see Numb. xxv. 12, 19, 21; Lev. xxv. 25; Ruth iii. 2, 9, 12). God himself will be the orphans' Goel. This term is often applied to God; *e.g.* Job xix. 25; Ps. xix. 14; Jer. L 34. **He shall plead their cause with thee.** He will, as it were, conduct their cause, try thee, convict thee of injustice, and pronounce thy condemnation (ch. xxii. 23).

Ver. 12 commences a new series of proverbs of wisdom. This general admonition is addressed to all, tutor and disciple, educator and educated. **Apply thine heart unto instruction.** (For *musar*, "instruction," see note on ch. i. 2.)

Ver. 13.—An injunction to the tutor or parent (comp. ch. xiii. 24; xix. 18; xxii. 15; xxix. 17). **For if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die.** This has been understood in various senses; *e.g.* "Though thou scourge him, that correction will not kill him;" "If thou chastise him, thou wilt save him from the doom of the rebellious son" (Deut. xxi. 18—21); or, "He shall not die eternally," which rather anticipates the conclusion in the next verse. The expression merely means—Do not be weak, thinking that you will injure your child by judicious correction, and in this fear withholding your hand; but punish him firmly when necessary, and, far from harming him, you will be doing him the greatest good.

Ver. 14.—**Shalt deliver his soul from hell** (*sheol*); *de inferno*, Vulgate; ἐκ θανάτου, Septuagint. Premature death was regarded as a punishment of sin, as long life was the reward of righteousness. Proper discipline preserves a youth not only from many material dangers incident to unbridled passions, but saves him from spiritual death, the decay and destruction of grace here, and the retribution that awaits the sinner in another world (comp. Ecclus. xxx. 1—12).

Ver. 15.—The moralist now addresses the disciple, and so to the end of the chapter. **If thine heart be wise;** become wise by profiting by discipline, and having its natural folly (ch. xxii. 15) eradicated. **My heart shall rejoice, even mine.** The pronoun is repeated for the sake of emphasis (as in ch. xxii. 19), the speaker thus declaring his supreme interest in the moral progress of his pupil.

Ver. 16.—**My reins shall rejoice.** The "reins" (*kelayoth*), kidneys, are regarded as the seat of feeling and sensation (Job xix. 27), or of the inner nature generally (Ps. xvi. 7; Rev. ii. 22). **I shall rejoice in my very soul when thy lips speak right things;** *i.e.* when thy heart is so replete with wisdom, thy mind so well instructed as to utter naught but what is true and sensible (ch. viii. 6). The composition of these two verses is noteworthy, 15*a* being parallel to 16*b*, and 15*b* to 16*a*. Septuagint, "And thy lips shall linger in words (ἐνδιατρίψει λόγοις) with my lips, if they be right," which seems to mean, "If thy lips utter what is right, they will gather wisdom from my words and impart it to others."

Ver. 17.—**Let not thine heart envy sinners,** when thou seest them apparently happy and prosperous (comp. ch. iii. 31; xxiv. 1, 19; Ps. xxxvii. 1; lxxiii. 3). The Authorized Version, in agreement with the Septuagint, Vulgate, Arabic, and other versions, takes the second clause of this verse as an independent one; but it seems evidently to be constructionally connected with the preceding, and to be governed by the same verb, so that there is no occasion to insert "be thou." **But be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.** Jerome, corrected, would read, *Non æmuletur cor tuum peccatores, sed timorem Domini tota die.* As Delitzsch and Hitzig, followed by Nowack, have pointed out, the Hebrew verb, קנא (*kana*), is here used in two senses. In the first clause it signifies to be envious of a person; in the second, to be zealous for a thing, both senses combining in the thought of being moved with eager desire. Ζηλοτυπέω is used in this double sense, and *æmulor* in Latin. So the gnome comes to this—Show your heart's desire, not by envy of the sinner's fortune, but by zeal for true religion, that fear of the Lord which leads to strict obedience and earnest desire to please him.

Ver. 18.—**For surely there is an end,**

Some take the hemistich conditionally, rendering אִם "when," or "if the end comes;" but one sees no object in the thought being expressed conditionally; and it is best, with the Authorized Version, Nowack, and others, to take אִם־ equivalent to "assuredly," as in Judg. xv. 7; 2 Sam. xv. 21. "End" (*acharith*) is the glorious future that awaits the pious (ch. xxiv. 14; Jer. xxix. 11). The prosperity of sinners is not to be envied, for it is transitory and deceptive; but for the righteous, however depressed at times, there is a happy end in prospect. **And thine expectation** (*hope*) **shall not be cut off.** The hope of comfort here and reward hereafter shall be abundantly realized. The writer has a firm belief in the moral government of God, and in a future life which shall rectify all anomalies (comp. ch. xiv. 32; Wisd. v. 15, etc.; Ecclus. i. 13). Septuagint, "For if thou keep them, thou shalt have posterity, and thy hope shall not be removed" (Ps. xxxvii. 9; Job xlii. 12).

Vers. 19—21.—An exhortation to temperance, as one of the results of the fear of God, prefaced by an exhortation to wisdom.

Ver. 19.—**Hear thou.** The pronoun gives force and personality to the injunction (Job xxxiii. 33). **Guide thine heart in the way.** (For אַשֵּׁר, "to guide straight," see on ch. iv. 14.) "The way" is the right way, in distinction to the many wrong paths of life—the way of understanding, as it is called (ch. ix. 6). Septuagint, "Direct aright the thoughts of thy heart," for right thoughts lead to right actions.

Ver. 20.—**Wine-bibbers**; persons who meet together for the express purpose of drinking intoxicating liquors. **Among riotous eaters of flesh.** The Hebrew is "of flesh for themselves," whence some take the meaning to be "of their own flesh," *i.e.* who by their gluttony and luxury ruin their own bodies. But the parallelism with the wine-drinker shows plainly that the flesh which they eat is meant, and the idea is that they eat for the gratification of their own appetites, caring nothing for anything else. The combination of glutton and wine-bibber was used as a reproach against our blessed Lord (Matt. xi. 19). The versions of Jerome and the LXX. point to the contributed entertainments, where each guest brought some article to the meal, like our picnics. Thus Vulgate, "Be not among parties of drinkers, nor at the banquets of those who contribute flesh to eat;" Septuagint, "Be not a wine-bibber, and strain not after contributed feasts (*συμβολαῖς*) and purchases of meats."

Ver. 21.—Intemperance leads to prodigality, carelessness, and ruin. **And drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.** The luxury and excess spoken of above lead to drowsiness and inability to work, and poverty follows as the natural result (comp. ch. xix. 15; xxiv. 33, etc.). The Vulgate still harps on the same string as in the previous verse, "Those who waste time in drinking, and who give picnics (*dantes symbola*), shall be ruined, and somnolence shall clothe with rags." The LXX. introduces a new idea, which the Hebrew does not warrant, "For every drunkard and whoremonger shall be poor, and every sluggard shall clothe himself with tatters and rags."

Vers. 22—25.—An octastich, containing an earnest exhortation to the disciple.

Ver. 22.—**That begat thee.** This is a claim on the attention and obedience of the son. **When she is old.** When old age with its consequent infirmities comes upon thy mother, despise her not, but rather thank God for giving her long life, and profit by her love and long experience (comp. Ecclus. iii. 1, etc., where the exhortation to honour parents is very full and touching).

Ver. 23.—**Buy the truth, and sell it not** (comp. ch. iv. 5, 7; xvi. 16). Consider truth as a thing of the highest value, and spare no pains, cost, or sacrifice to obtain it, and, when gotten, keep it safe; do not barter it for earthly profit or the pleasures of sense; do not be reasoned out of it, or laughed out of it; "sell it not," do not part with it for any consideration. The second clause gives the sphere in which truth moves, or the three properties which appertain to it. These are: **wisdom** (*chochmah*), practical knowledge; **instruction** (*musar*), moral culture and discipline; and **understanding** (*binah*), the faculty of discernment (see notes on ch. i. 2). This verse is omitted in the chief manuscripts of the Septuagint.

Ver. 24.—**The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice.** The father of a righteous son who has won truth and profited by the possession has good cause to be glad (ch. x. 1). Septuagint erroneously, "A righteous father brings up children well." The second clause repeats the first in different words, with the further idea that the wise son affords his father practical proof of the excellence of his moral training. The contrast is seen in ch. xvii. 21.

Ver. 25.—**Shall be glad**; or, *let them be glad; gaudeat*, Vulgate; *εὐφραινέσθω*, Septuagint. **She that bare thee.** As in ver. 24 the father's joy was expressly mentioned, so here prominence is given to that of the mother. In the former case it is "he that begetteth;" here, "she that beareth."

Vers. 26—28.—A hexastich, in which Wisdom herself is the speaker, and warns against unchastity.

Ver. 26.—**Give me thine heart.** Do not waste thy powers and affections on evil objects, but set thy soul with all its best faculties on me, Wisdom, who alone can satisfy its desires and aspirations. There is an eloquent passage in a tract that has gone by St. Bernard's name, though not written by him ('Epist. de Reg. Vitæ Spirit.,' ii. 1604, Mab.), which is worth quoting: "Cor nostrum nihil dignius perficere potest, quam ut ei se restituat a quo factum est: et hoc a nobis Dominus expetit dicens, 'Fili, da mihi cor tuum.' Tunc siquidem cor hominum Deo datur, quando omnis cogitatio terminatur in eum, gyrat et circumflectitur super eum, et nihil vult possidere præter eum. Sicque colligato sibi animo, eum diligit, ut sine ipso amarus sit omnis amor. Nec aliud dixerim cor Domino dare, quam ipsum captivare in omne obsequium ejus, et ita voluntati ejus ex toto supponere, ut nihil aliud velit, quam quod noverit eum velle." **Let thine eyes observe my ways;** keep closely to the paths of virtue which I teach thee, especially the path of purity, as the next verse shows. Vulgate, *Vias meas custodiant;* Septuagint, Ἐμὰς ὁδοὺς τηρείτωσαν. This is the reading of the Keri, תִּנְצֹרְנָה; the Khetib, which Delitzsch and others prefer, reads תִּרְצֶינָה, "delight in" my ways.

Ver. 27.—The need of the emphatic injunction in ver. 26 is exemplified by the dangers of impurity. **A deep ditch;** as ch. xxii. 14. **A strange woman is a narrow pit.** (For "strange woman," equivalent to "harlot," see on ch. ii. 16.) A narrow pit is one with a narrow mouth, from which, if one falls into it, it is difficult to extricate one's self. The verse indicates the seductive nature of the vice of unchastity: how easy it is to be led into it! how difficult to rise from it! Thus St. Chrysostom ('Hom. xi. in 1 Cor.'), "When by unclean desire the soul is made captive, even as a cloud and mist darken the eyes of the body, so that desire intercepts the foresight of the mind, and suffers no one to see any distance before him, either precipice, or hell, or fear; but thenceforth, having that deceit as a tyrant over him, he comes to be easily vanquished by sin; and there is raised up before his eyes as it were a partition wall, and no windows in it, which suffers not the ray of righteousness to shine in upon the mind, the absurd conceits of lust enclosing it as with a rampart on all sides. And then, and from that time forward, the unchaste woman is everywhere meeting him—before his eyes, before his mind, before his thoughts, in station and presence. And as the blind, although they stand at high noon beneath the very central point of the heaven, receive not the light, their eyes being fast closed up; just so these also, though ten thousand doctrines of salvation sound in their ears from all quarters, having their soul preoccupied with this passion, stop their ears against all discourses of that kind. And they know it well who have made the trial. But God forbid that you should know it from actual experience!" The LXX. has changed the allusion: "For a strange house is a pierced wine-jar (πίθος τετρημένος), and a strange well is narrow," where the idea seems to be that the private well, which is dug for the convenience of one family only, is not to be relied upon, and will yield not enough to supply others' wants. Hence would arise a warning against coveting a neighbour's wife. There is a Greek proverb about drawing wine into pierced jars (Xen., 'Œcon.,' vii. 40).

Ver. 28.—**She also lieth in wait as for a prey.** "Yea, she [ch. xxii. 19] lieth in wait," as is graphically described in ch. vii. (comp. Jer. iii. 2). *Chetheph* is better taken, not as "prey," but in a concrete sense as the person who snatches it, the robber. Vulgate, *Insidiatur in via quasi latro* (comp. Ps. x. 9). **And increaseth the transgressors among men.** The Greek and Latin versions have taken יוֹסִיף as meaning "kills," "destroys." But the verb *yasaph* always means "to add," here "to multiply." The special transgression indicated is treachery or faithlessness. The harlot leads her victim to be faithless to his God, his wife, his parents, his tutor, his master. Septuagint, "For he shall perish suddenly, and every transgressor shall be destroyed."

Vers. 29—35.—Here follows a mashal ode or song on the subject of drunkenness, which is closely connected with the sin mentioned in the previous lines.

Ver. 29.—**Who hath woe? who hath sorrow?** Hebrew, *lemi oi, lemi avoi*, where *oi* and *avoi* are interjections of pain or grief. So Venetian, τίνι αἴ, τίνι φεῦ; Revised Version margin, *Who hath Oh? who hath Alas?* The Vulgate has stumbled at the second expression, which is an ἅπαξ λεγόμενον, and resolving it into two words, translates, *Cujus patri væ?* **Contentions;** the brawling and strife to which drunkenness leads (ch. xx. 1). **Babbling;** שִׂיחַ (*siach*) is rather "meditation," "sorrowful thought" showing itself in complaining, regret for lost fortune, ruined health, alienated friends. Others render "misery," "penury." St. Jerome's *foveæ* is derived from a different reading. The LXX. has κρίσεις, "lawsuits," ἀηδίαι καὶ λέσχαι, "disgust and gossipings." **Wounds without cause;** wounds which might have been avoided, the result of quarrels in which a sober man would never have engaged.

**Redness of eyes.** The Hebrew word *chakliluth* is commonly taken to mean the flashing of eyes occasioned by vinous excitement. The Authorized Version refers it to the bloodshot appearance of a drunkard's eyes, as in Gen. xlix. 12, according to the same version. But Delitzsch, Nowack, and many modern commentators consider that the word indicates "dimness of sight," that change in the power of vision when the stimulant reaches the brain. Septuagint, "Whose eyes are livid (πελιδνοί)?" The effects of intemperance are described in a well-known passage of Lucretius, 'De Rer. Nat.,' iii. 475, etc.—

"Denique, cor hominum quom vini vis penetravit
Acris, et in venas discessit diditus ardor,
Consequitur gravitas membrorum, præpediuntur
Crura vacillanti, tardescit lingua, madet mens,
Nant oculei; clamor, singultus, jurgia gliscunt."

We may refer to the article in Jeremy Taylor's 'Holy Living' on "Evil Consequents to Drunkenness," and to Ecclus. xxxiv. (xxxi.) 25, etc.

Ver. 30.—The answer to the above searching questions is here given. **They that tarry long at the wine** (Isa. v. 11), who sit till late hours drinking. **They that go to seek mixed wine**; *i.e.* go to the wine-house, place of revelry, where they may taste and give their opinion upon "mixed wine," *mimsak*, wine mingled with certain spices or aromatic substances, or else simply with water, as it was too luscious to be drunk undiluted (see on ch. ix. 2). Septuagint, "those who hunt out where carousals are taking place."

Ver. 31.—**Look not thou upon the wine when it is red.** Be not attracted by its beautiful appearance. The wine of Palestine was chiefly "red," though what we call white wine was not unknown. The Vulgate *flavescit* points to the latter. **When it giveth his colour in the cup.** For "colour" the Hebrew has "eye," which refers to the sparkling and gleaming which show themselves in wine poured into the cup. It is as though the cup had an eye which glanced at the drinker with a fascination which he did not resist. **When it moveth itself aright.** Having warned against the attraction of sight, the moralist now passes to the seduction of taste. Hebrew, *when it goeth by the right road.* This may refer to its transference from the jar or skin to the drinking-cup; but it more probably alludes to the drinker's throat, and is best translated, "when it glideth down smoothly." Vulgate, *ingreditur blande.* The wine pleases the palate, and passes over it without roughness or harshness (comp. Cant. vii. 9). The LXX. has enlarged on the original thus: "Be ye not drunk with wine, but converse with just men, and converse in public places (ἐν περιπάτοις). For if thou set thine eyes on goblets and cups, afterwards thou shalt walk more bare than a pestle (γυμνότερος ὑπέρου)." This last expression, *pistillo nudior*, is a proverb. Regarding the danger of looking on seductive objects, the Arab, in his sententious language, says, "The contemplation of vice is vice."

Ver. 32.—**At the last it biteth like a serpent.** Wine is like the subtle poison of a serpent, which affects the whole body, and produces the most fatal consequences (comp. Ecclus. xxi. 2). *Nachash* is the generic name for any of the larger tribe of snakes (Gen. iii. 1, etc.); the poisonous nature of its bite was, of course, well known (Numb. xxi. 9). **Stingeth like an adder.** The Hebrew word is *tsiphoni*, which is usually rendered "cockatrice" in the Authorized Version, but the particular species intended has not been accurately identified. There was some confusion in men's minds as to the organ which inflicted the poisonous wound. Thus a psalmist says, "They have sharpened their tongue like a serpent" (Ps. cxl. 3). But the verb "sting" is to be taken in the sense of puncturing, making a wound. Vulgate, *Sicut regulus venena diffundet*, "It will diffuse its poison like a basilisk:" Septuagint, "But at the last he stretches himself like one stricken by a serpent, and the venom is diffused through him as by a horned snake (κεράστου)."

Ver. 33.—The excitement occasioned by wine is now described. **Thine eyes shall behold strange women.** Ewald, Delitzsch, and others take זָרוֹת to mean "strange things," as affording a better parallel to the "perverse things" of the next clause. In this case the writer intends to denote the fantastic, often dreadful, images produced on the brain by the feverish condition of the inebriated. But the often denounced connection between drunkenness and incontinence, the constant reference to "strange women" in this book, and the general consensus of the versions, lead one to uphold the rendering of the Authorized Version. It seems, too, somewhat meagre to note these illusions as one of the terrible effects of intemperance, omitting all mention of the unbridling of lust, when the eyes look out for and rove after unchaste women. **Thine heart shall utter perverse things** (comp. ch. xv. 28; Matt. xv. 19). The drunkard's notions are distorted, and his words partake of the same character; he confuses right and wrong; he says things which he would never speak if he were in full possession of his senses. Septuagint, "When thine eyes

shall see a strange woman, then thy mouth shall speak perverse things."

Ver. 34.—**As he that lieth down in the midst of the sea.** The dazed and unconscious condition of a drunkard is described by one familiar with sea life, as in Ps. civ. 25, etc.; cvii. 23, etc. The Hebrew has "in the heart of the sea" (Jonah ii. 4), *i.e.* the depth. Many understand the idea to be that the drunkard is compared to a man asleep in a frail boat, or to one slumbering on board a ship sunk in the trough of the sea. But the "lying" here does not imply sleep, but rather immersion. The inebriated person is assimilated to one who is drowned or drowning, who is cut off from all his former pursuits and interests in life, and has become unconscious of surrounding circumstances. This much more exactly represents the case than any notion of sleeping amid danger. Septuagint, "Thou shalt lie as in the heart of the sea." **Or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast;** the extreme point of the sailyard, where no one could lie without the greatest peril of falling off. The drunkard is exposed to dangers of all kinds from being unable to take care of himself, and yet is all the time unconscious of his critical situation. Corn. à Lapide, followed by Plumptre, considers that the cradle, or look-out, on the top of the mast is meant, where, if the watchman slept, he would be certain to endanger his life. Vulgate, "like a pilot fallen asleep, who has dropped the tiller," and is therefore on the way to shipwreck. Septuagint, "as a pilot in a great storm."

Ver. 35.—The drunkard is represented as speaking to himself. The LXX. inserts, "and thou shalt say," as the Authorized Version does: **They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick;** or, *I was not hurt.* The drunken man has been beaten (perhaps there is a reference to the "contentions," ver. 29), but the blows did not pain him; his condition has rendered him insensible to pain. He has some vague idea that he has suffered certain rough treatment at the hands of his companions, but it has made no impression on him. **They have beaten me, and I felt it not;** did not even know it. Far from recognizing his degradation and profiting by the merited chastisement which he has incurred, he is represented as looking forward with pleasure to a renewal of his debauch, when his drunken sleep shall be over. **When shall I awake? I will seek it (wine) yet again.** Some take מָתַי (*mathai*) as the relative conjunctive: "When I awake I will seek it again;" but it is always used interrogatively, and the expression thus becomes more animated, as Delitzsch observes. It is as though the drunkard has to yield to the effects of his excess and sleep off his intoxication, but he is, as it were, all the time longing to be able to rouse himself and recommence his orgies. We have had words put into the mouth of the sluggard (ch. vi. 10). The whole verse is rendered by the LXX. thus: "Thou shalt say, They smote me, and I was not pained, and they mocked me, and I knew it not. When will it be morning, that I may go and seek those with whom I may consort?" The author of the 'Tractatus de Conscientia' appended to St. Bernard's works, applies this paragraph to the case of an evil conscience indurated by wicked habits and insensible to correction.

## HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—3.—*Sycophancy and independence.* The reader is here warned against the danger of depending too much on the favour of great people. Possibly that favour is only offered as a bribe, and the unwary recipient of it may be no better than a dupe, who has unconsciously sold himself. At the best it tends to destroy the spirit of independence.

I. HE WHO DEPENDS ON THE FAVOUR OF A GREAT MAN PUTS HIMSELF IN HIS POWER. In proportion to the power to help is the power to hurt. It is a dangerous thing to trust one's interests to man at all; but it is doubly dangerous where there is no equality of relationship.

II. DEPENDENCE ON THE FAVOUR OF THE GREAT TEMPTS TO DISHONOURABLE CONDUCT. The sycophant is in danger of stooping to unworthy actions in order to please his patron. He is tempted to deceive and flatter in the hope of winning favour. The will of the great man supersedes the conscience of his dependant. Thus sycophancy wrecks the moral nature.

III. THIS DEPENDENCE DESTROYS TRUE MANLINESS. The poor creature who lives on the favour of the great loses all self-reliance. The honest industry that earns a night's repose is exchanged for miserable tricks of cringing slavery. Such conduct may earn the dainties of luxury, but only at the cost of all that life is worth living for. It is infinitely better to be independent, though compelled to live on the coarsest fare.

IV. SUCH A DEPENDENCE ON THE GREAT IS SURE TO BE DISAPPOINTING. The sycophant succeeds in obtaining a place at the banquet. But he cannot enjoy the feast like those guests who meet the host on terms of equality. He sits in constant dread of offending the great man. Though hungry, he shrinks from eating too much. He must almost put a knife to his throat to check his appetite; *i.e.* he must be always nervously on his guard against trespassing too far on the good will of his host. Surely such a condition must be miserable at the best!

V. THE ONLY SAFE DEPENDENCE IS THAT OF MAN ON GOD. This is not degrading, but ennobling; for God is worthy of all trust, honour, and adoration. He never deceives those who put their confidence in him. There is no painful fear for those who accept his gracious invitation to the "wedding-feast," for he is kind and merciful.

VI. AMONG MEN THE SAFEST CONDITION IS ONE OF MANLY INDEPENDENCE. This does not mean churlish indifference and selfish isolation from all social intercourse. The text supposes a person's presence at the great man's table, while it warns against the danger of the situation. We want to learn to be friendly with all men, and, at the same time, self-reliant through inward dependence on God alone.

Ver. 4.—*Labouring to be rich.* Never was the advice of the wise man more appropriate than it is in the present day; but never were people more slow to accept it. Let us consider the grounds on which is based the warning, "Labour not to be rich."

I. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR MOST PEOPLE TO BECOME RICH. In the lottery of life the prizes are few and the blanks many. If the race for wealth is accelerated, the stakes are not multiplied. Or, if it be by production rather than by commerce that the riches are to be got, so that greater industry may actually create more wealth, still each of the multitude of the toilers can share but a fraction of the total produce. Riches only fall into the hands of a very small number of persons. Consequently, labouring to be rich often becomes just a species of gambling. It frequently partakes of the selfish, cruel character of gambling, the few fortunate persons enriching themselves at the expense of the large number of unfortunate persons. If a man can be content to work with his fellows and share with them, he will be saved from a multitude of anxieties that must besiege him the moment he enters the exciting race for riches.

II. THE COST OF LABOURING TO BE RICH IS EXORBITANT. 1. *In energy.* The fierce battle of life tries a man who only strives to keep his ground. They who would force their way on to marked success must toil with double effort. Rising early, sitting up late, taking no holidays, working at high pressure, they must put out every effort if they would pass equally eager competitors. 2. *In time.* The riches are not usually reached soon. As a rule, it takes many years to pile up a great fortune, and when the coveted end is attained, the tired toiler is too old and weary to enjoy it. 3. *In higher riches.* The wealth-seeker sinks into a low materialism. He becomes a mere machine for coining guineas, and his soul is ground to dust in the money-making mill.

III. WHEN THE PURSUIT OF RICHES IS SUCCESSFUL, THE ATTAINMENT IS DISAPPOINTING. Riches bring new cares. There is an anxiety to retain what has been won at so great a cost. They may make themselves wings, and "fly away as an eagle toward heaven" (ver. 5). If no fear is felt on this account, wealth itself is found to be unsatisfactory. The mere money-seeker has not cultivated any taste for the finer enjoyments which his wealth could buy him. He cannot satisfy his soul with money; he has no soul to enjoy the best things in art, etc., which money can purchase. But even if he could enjoy those things, they would not satisfy; for man has deep wants which neither money nor its purchases can ever meet. Riches are a poor salve for a breaking heart.

IV. LABOURING TO BE RICH LEADS TO THE NEGLECT OF THE NOBLER PURSUITS OF LIFE. 1. *Mind-culture.* It might be better to be more poor and to have time for reading, music, meditation. 2. *Social intercourse.* Buried in business, the fierce toiler after money has no leisure or heart for cultivating the friendship of his neighbours. 3. *The service of God.* "Life is more than meat;" "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Labouring to be rich too often means working for self and toiling for earth. Men sometimes make family claims an excuse for doing nothing directly in the service of Christ; when, if they were honest, they would confess that they are simply labouring to be rich. The family, which in this case is a larger self, becomes a shield for selfishness.

Ver. 11.—*The mighty Redeemer.* I. THE HELPLESS NEED A MIGHTY REDEEMER. In simple, rough times some provision had to be made to protect the weak from the overbearing insolence and tyranny of the strong. When the arm of the law was not capable of maintaining justice, private friends were required and authorized to take up the cause of the wronged. The *goel*, or avenger, was then needed to stand up for his helpless kinsfolk. But there were extreme cases in which no such assistance could bring deliverance, either because no relative was living who could undertake the task, or because the distress was so desperate that no human hand could relieve it. This might happen with heart-broken widows robbed of husband, children, and land, and left penniless and friendless. But even such cases of the utmost distress are not so desperate as that of the soul in its sin and wretchedness, utterly and hopelessly undone unless some mighty hand of redemption is stretched out to save it.

II. GOD IS A MIGHTY REDEEMER. Two essential conditions were required in the redeemer. He must have a right to interfere, and he must have power to succeed. God has both. 1. *The right.* The right of the old Hebrew redeemer was blood-relationship. The nearest kinsman was called to act as *goel*. God is nearly related to man. He is the Father of all. The friendless poor have One left who regards them as of his family. Christ came as a brother-man to be the Redeemer of the human race. 2. *The power.* (1) God has power as the Almighty. He can overthrow the greatest. If the poor man has God on his side, he need not fear the most imperious tyranny; it is as child's play before the majesty of heaven. (2) *Christ has power as the crucified Saviour.* The great redemption from man's worst enemy, sin, is won by the cross of Christ. Now he is "*able* to save unto the uttermost."

III. GOD'S MIGHTY REDEMPTION IS AVAILABLE. He is not only a mighty Redeemer; he is willing to help, and he does afford succour. 1. *He acts in justice.* "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. xviii. 25). At present we witness cruel injustice. The poor are oppressed by the strong. Hard-toiling men, women, and children in manufacturing centres are ground into penury by the fierce mill of competition, while ruthless "middle-men" fatten on their ill-paid labour. The few in prosperity revel in luxury that they wring out of the many in penury. God will not permit such cruel wrongs to last for ever. The Redeemer is an Avenger. The blood of the victims of those who make haste to be rich at the expense of their starving brethren cries out to heaven for vengeance. It will not always cry in vain. (1) Meanwhile, seeing that the Redeemer of the poor is mighty, it would be well for the reckless oppressors to repent before the sword of judgment is unsheathed. (2) They who are working at the apparently hopeless task of helping the poor and oppressed have a great encouragement. God, the mighty Avenger, is on their side. 2. *He acts in mercy.* He pities the suffering poor. They are his children, and he will not forget their needs. Love is the inspiration of Divine redemption. This is the secret of Christ's great redemption of sinners. Justice is ultimately satisfied here; but the first motive is mercy, for the helpless are also the ill-deserving. Yet even their Redeemer is mighty.

Vers. 17, 18.—*Envying sinners.* I. THERE IS A GREAT TEMPTATION TO ENVY SINNERS. The wise man would waste words in giving a warning if he saw no danger. This temptation is fascinating on various accounts. 1. *Sinners prosper.* This was the old ground of the psalmist's perplexity. The righteous were suffering while the wicked were fattening in ill-earned luxury (Ps. lxxiii. 3—9). 2. *Sinners take forbidden paths with impunity.* They trespass and are not arrested. Thus they attain their ends by easy ways from which conscientious people are restrained. They are not troubled with scruples. 3. *Sinners escape onerous duties.* There are great and weighty obligations that rest like a heavy yoke on the shoulders of an earnest man who tries to do his duty to God and his fellows, all of which are simply ignored by the man of lower morals. Hence the apparently easier course of the latter. He can refuse the subscription list, decline to work in the benevolent society, and shirk all the burdens that come from sympathy with the suffering. 4. *Sinners enjoy wicked pleasures.* They are pleasure-seekers, and they seem to obtain pleasure. Thus at a superficial glance they appear to have sources of happiness from which those who are more rigorous in regarding the law of righteousness are excluded. The child of the Puritan home envies the gay cavalier his merry revelry.

II. IT IS WRONG TO ENVY SINNERS. 1. *This is to doubt God's justice.* Though we cannot yet see the issue of events, we must believe that God will not allow injustice to flourish for ever, unless he cares not for the course of the world or is unable to set it right. To suppose any such condition is to distrust God. 2. *This is to form a low estimate of the purpose of life.* We are not sent into the world simply to enjoy ourselves, but primarily to do our duty. If we are fulfilling that great purpose, it is a degradation to envy those who seem to be more fortunate than ourselves in the mere enjoyment of worldly pleasures. 3. *This is to yield to the attraction of unworthy delights.* The pleasures of sinners are sinful. To lust after such forbidden fruit is to have a depraved appetite. The soul that is truly pure will loathe the delights of sin. It will not be hard on a good man that his conscience forbids him to frequent the haunts of vicious revelry. He could find no true pleasure for himself amid such scenes.

III. IN THE END THE MISTAKE OF ENVYING SINNERS WILL BE DEMONSTRATED. "For surely there is an end." The pleasure-seeker is short-sighted. To judge of the wisdom of following his course, we must see what it leads to. 1. *The pleasure must end.* The delights of evil are brief, and they are followed by wretchedness. The wild devotee of pleasure soon becomes a debauched and *blasé* wreck of humanity. If one is prudent enough to avoid extreme folly, still death will soon come and put an end to all worldly pleasure. 2. *Sinful pleasure produces suffering.* It corrupts body and soul; it sows seeds of disease and misery. They who sow to the flesh will reap corruption. 3. *There will be retribution in the next world.* There is a future. Does the sinner consider this? Does the foolish man who envies him remember it?

Ver. 26.—*Our Father's claim.* I. GOD CLAIMS NOTHING LESS THAN THE HEART. 1. Some offer *belief of the intellect.* It is well to understand truth and to believe in that which is revealed about God. We may give many thoughts to God; but these, without the heart, will not satisfy him. 2. Some offer *external service.* This is claimed by God, but only as the fruit of a loving heart. Given in hard, mechanical work, without love or devotion, it is worthless in the sight of God. 3. Some offer *money, sacrifices, worship.* All such things are acceptable only as growing out of the heart. In heartless worshippers these are but mockery, and are rejected by God. 4. God's true children must give their *hearts.* They must give themselves, their inmost being, their very lives, thoughts, affections, desires.

II. THE HEART IS CLAIMED BY GOD ABOVE ALL. 1. *The world* tries to claim it. Some men are enchained in its fascinations, and so withdrawn from God. 2. *Sin* endeavours to ensnare it. If it is not a divine possession, it will be held by sin. It cannot be detached. It will be given to evil if not to God. 3. *Self* hopes to hold it. In selfishness men would retain their hearts, their love and devotion, for their own interests. Yet in doing so their hearts harden, shrink, and perish. 4. *God* has the supreme claim on the heart. We must not be satisfied with devotion to the Church or with good will towards men. The first duty is to love the Lord our God with all our heart. He must be first.

III. THE HEART MUST BE WHOLLY GIVEN TO GOD. We must not be content to love God half-heartedly. We must *give* our heart to God, and give it wholly, if we would satisfy his claim. 1. Give it in *affection.* This means a supreme surrender of our heart's love to God. 2. Give it in *devotion.* God expects loyal service, not merely the adoration of the lips or the work of the hands, but the consecration of the very soul and life and being to him. 3. Give it in *trust.* If one truly gives his heart to God, it is put in a safe place, to be guarded from harm and sin. God is the safest treasury for man's most precious treasure. When the heart is entrusted to God, he will not betray it; its affection and devotion will lead it not to desire evil; it will be in a sanctuary amid the storms and battles of life.

IV. GOD CLAIMS THE HEART OF HIS SON BECAUSE HE IS A FATHER. This is a family claim. The call, "My son," justifies the claim, "Give me thine heart." 1. The claim *rests on the obligations of the filial tie.* A young man may freely choose or refuse a particular person to be his friend. But he is not thus free in regard to his father. He owes duty and love to a father. God is represented by Malachi as saying, "A son honoureth his father . . . if then I be a Father, where is mine honour?" (Mal. i. 6). 2. The claim is *strengthened by the love of God.* He is a good Father; he does not ask

his son to do what he has not done himself. God first gives his heart to his child, and then seeks the child's heart in return.

V. THE HEART MUST BE GIVEN VOLUNTARILY TO GOD. God is Lord of all, and he has a right to enforce universal obedience. But he cares not for loveless, compulsory service. Therefore he condescends to wait for willing devotion, and to ask for the heart of his son. 1. *Perhaps the heart is not yet given to God.* God seeks what he has not received. 2. *The heart can only be given by decision of will.* We shall remain away from God unless we decide to respond to the call of our Father, and freely offer him our hearts.

Vers. 31, 32.—*The danger of strong drink.* I. IT IS TERRIBLY FASCINATING. 1. *It is beautiful to the eye.* The wine sparkles in the cup. 2. *It is palatable.* Though children at first shudder at it, as at some unnatural product, the early dislike is easily surmounted, and then nothing can be more attractive. 3. *It is exhilarating.* It gives pleasurable excitement, stimulates jaded energies, enlivens conversation, drowns sorrow, and promises still larger enjoyments. 4. *It is recommended by social influences.* Good-fellowship seems to go with the use of strong drink. In some circles to decline it appears unsociable.

II. IT IS FEARFULLY DANGEROUS. The mischief is not seen at first. It is "at last" that "it biteth like a serpent." Hence its snake-like deception, as well as the deadliness of its venom. But this venom is so deadly that all need to be warned against its fatal consequences. It bites in many places; *e.g.*: 1. *The purse.* Money runs out like water, business fails, the home is wrecked and broken up as the effect of this serpent-bite of strong drink. 2. *The health.* The firm hand becomes palsied, the bright eye dimmed, and the strong body diseased when this venom of intoxication is in the blood. 3. *The mental powers.* The brain is weakened with the body. Thought is paralyzed or reduced to inanity. The lawyer, the doctor, the scholar, lose the faculties necessary for their avocations. 4. *The moral nature.* The one sin of intemperance too often debauches the conscience and prepares the way for other sins (see ver. 33). 5. *Reputation.* The drunkard loses his character. His good name vanishes in smoke when this deadly serpent lays hold of him. 6. *Soul-life.* This, too, is poisoned and slain. Religion is wrecked. The drunkard cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

III. IT SHOULD BE UTTERLY SHUNNED. It is urged that all these indisputably evil things only come from drinking to excess. They are the results of the abuse, not of the use of strong drink. Men should be wise enough to take warning, and not to go to excess with what, used in moderation, is perfectly harmless. This was not the opinion of the wisest man. He not only urged his reader to refrain from excess; he would have him not even *look* at the fascinating cup, lest he should be ensnared by its snake-like charms. Many things concur to demand this extra caution. 1. *The terrible extent and evil of intemperance.* This is no small failing, but a national vice, and a source of wide and awful wretchedness. As no ordinary enemy has to be faced, so no ordinary means will secure us against it. 2. *The insidious nature of the temptation.* It works by slow degrees. At first it appears to be harmless. The fatal steps lead down slowly and without a shock of surprise, till it is too late to return. It is best to hold back at first. 3. *The needlessness of the strong drink.* Except in particular conditions of weakness and illness, it is not required. To renounce it is not to sacrifice any really good thing.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—8.—*Hints and warnings on conduct.* I. PERILS OF COURTLY LIFE. (Vers. 1—3.) The Arab proverb says, "He who sups with the sultan burns his lips," and, "With kings one sits at the table for honour's sake, not for that of appetite." Horace says that kings are said to press dainties and wine upon those whom they desire to scrutinize and test, as to whether they be worthy of friendship. The caution is therefore one dictated by prudence. And in general it may be thus understood: Beware of going to places and frequenting society where watchfulness and prudence are likely to be overborne; and take care that the body, by being pampered, becomes not the master of the soul.

II. PERILS AND VANITY OF RICHES. (Vers. 4, 5.) This precept does not forbid industry and diligent toil for worldly gain; but only excessive carefulness in regard to it, over-valuation of its worth, and the burning lust of avarice, which implies want of confidence in God and of the sense of our true position in the world. The antidote is the exhortation of the Saviour to lay up treasures in heaven—to make certain of the incorruptible riches (Matt. vi. 19, 20). "It is a wise course to be jealous of our gain, and more to fear than to desire abundance. It is no easy thing to carry a full cup with an even hand" (Leighton).

III. CORRUPTION FROM EVIL ASSOCIATIONS. (Vers. 6—8.) The man of the evil eye is the jealous or envious temper; his heart is dyed in its dark colour. There is no genuine hospitality here; it is like that of the Pharisees who invited our Lord. This bitter sauce of envious hatred will presently be found giving a disgusting flavour to his delicacies. Discontent will poison the best food and wine. "Men's minds will either feed on their own good or others' evil, and whoso wanteth the one will prey upon the other." Envy takes no holidays. The devil is represented as the envious man who sows tares among the wheat at night. Always it works subtly, in the dark, and to the prejudice of good things, such as is the wheat (Bacon). Instead of seeking the pleasures which bring disgust, let us secure a humble fare with Christian content (Phil. iv. 11).—J.

Vers. 9—11.—*Holding aloof from evil.* I. THE FOOL. (Ver. 9.) There is "a time to keep silence." Truth may be desecrated in certain company by speech and honoured by silence. Pearls are not to be cast before swine. The silence of Christ was equally eloquent with his words. How much does the sentence convey, "He answered him never a word"! Beyond a certain point explanations are worse than useless; the caviller only takes them as food for his folly and encouragement to his perversity.

II. THE OPPRESSOR. (Ver. 10.) The property of the widow and the fatherless is in the protection of the Almighty. He is the Eternal Vindicator of down-trodden right. In the bright evangelical picture of conduct it is the very opposite of violence and oppression to the weak that is held up for our emulation: "To visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction." And the negative side is, in one word, "to keep one's self unspotted from the world."—J.

Vers. 12—18.—*Discipline in Divine wisdom.* I. THE TEMPER OF DOCILITY. (Ver. 12.) It is *submission of the affections* to a higher law. It is the *resignation of the will* to a higher leading. It is the *opening of the understanding* to Divine counsels. It is the realization, on the one hand, of dependence and need; on the other, of the light, the wisdom, and the goodness which ever meet that need.

II. THE NECESSITY OF DISCIPLINE FOR THE YOUNG. (Vers. 13, 14; see on ch. iii. 27; xix. 18; xxii. 15.) Luther says, in his blunt way, "Beat your son, and the hangman will not beat him. There must be a beating once for all; if the father does it not, Master Hans will; there is no help for it. None ever escaped it; for it is God's judgment." Another sternly says, "Many parents deserve hell on their children's account, because they neglect to train them in piety."

III. JOY IN DUTIFUL CHILDREN. (Vers. 15, 16.) It is next to the joy in the personal sense of God's grace. None but a parent knows the heart of a parent—the "travailing in birth" over their souls, the joy of discovering symptoms of the new life. "May all my sons be Benaiahs, the Lord's building; then will they all be Abners, the father's light: all my daughters Bithiahs, the Lord's daughters; and then they will be all Abigails, their father's joy" (Swinnock). What must be the joy in heaven and in the bosom of God over his returning and dutiful children!

IV. ENVY OF THE WICKED REBUKED. (Vers. 17, 18.) When Socrates was asked what was most troublesome to good men, he replied, "The prosperity of the wicked." Here, then, is a great temptation. It needs an antidote in reason. There is *no* reason for this envy. They are not truly happy. We look at them from the outside; the dark discontent of the heart is concealed from us. To live in the communion of God, on the other hand, is a secret, a certain, a profound and all-compensating joy. The enjoyment of the wicked, such as it is, must have its end; while the child of God ends only to begin anew—sinks below the horizon to rise in the power of an endless life.

We have thus three resources against sin: the avoidance of evil example; reverence before God; and constant recollection of the blessings of piety and virtue.—J.

Vers. 19—25.—*The perils of dissipation and the antidote.* "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

I. PERILS OF DISSIPATION. (Vers. 20, 21.) Gluttony and wine-bibbing. As the stomach is the centre of health, so it is also of disease. A wise man (Dr. Johnson) said that if one did not care for one's stomach, one was not likely to care for anything. It is equally true that he who cares only or chiefly for the flesh will make a wreck of everything else. Gluttony has been pointed to as "the source of all our infirmities, the fountain of all our diseases. As a lamp is choked by superabundance of oil, a fire extinguished by excess of fuel, so is the natural heat of the body destroyed by intemperate diet." By slow degrees, and more and more, the habits of self-indulgence undermine the strength of body, still more certainly the vigour of mind, until poverty comes like an armed man.

II. THE ANTIDOTE. 1. *Early instruction to be constantly recalled.* (Ver. 22.) Along with the affectionate association of the parents who gave it. That "men shall be disobedient to their own parents" (2 Tim. iii. 2) is one of the marks of the great apostasy in Scripture. But "comely and pleasant to see, and worthy of honour from the beholder," is a child understanding the eye of his parent (Bishop Hall). 2. *The truth of life to be held in supreme value.* (Ver. 23.) Wisdom, discipline, insight,—these are various names of the one thing, different aspects of the pearl of great price. There are required in the truth-seeker—attention, willingness for toil, judgment, the constant preference of reason to prejudice, teachableness, humility, self-control. Translated into Christian terms, this pearl of great price is "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord." Bunyan beautifully describes the pilgrims answering the sneering reproach, "What will you buy?" They lifted their eyes above: "We will buy the truth!" And no sacrifice is too costly with this end in view, as the example of holy men and martyrs teaches—Moses, Paul, the Hebrews (Heb. xi. 24—26). To sell one's birthright for a mess of pottage (as Esau, Judas, and Demas) is indeed to "gain a loss." 3. *Consideration of the joy we give to others by well-doing.* (Vers. 24, 25.) That heart must be unnatural or utterly depraved which feels not the force of this motive—to repay a father's anxious love, and the yearning tenderness of her that bare him. A selfishness may supply the motive even here, since parental gladness is the child's own joy as he walks in the ways of pleasantness and peace.—J.

Vers. 26—28.—*The harlot's true character.* I. IT IS DANGEROUS AND PERNICIOUS. (Vers. 27, 28.) It may be compared to a deep pit or to a narrow and deep well, out of which, if one falls therein, there is no easy escape. Or to a fell robber lying in wait for the unwary and the weak.

II. THE TRUE RESOURCE OF SAFETY. This is in the heart given up to God (ver. 26). If that heart be already polluted, he can wash it and make it clean. But he who yields his heart to the prince of this world becomes the enemy of God and of his eternal wisdom.—J.

Vers. 29—35.—*The perils of drunkenness.* I. THE IMMEDIATE EXTERNAL EFFECTS. (Vers. 29, 30.) Trouble, quarrels, violence, deformity. "No translation or paraphrase can do justice to the concise, abrupt, and energetic manner of the original." "Oh that men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains! that we should with joy, revel, pleasure, and applause, transform ourselves into beasts!"

II. THE ULTIMATE CONSEQUENCES. (Ver. 32.) It "bites like a serpent, and spits poison like a basilisk." This is the course of all sin; like Dead Sea fruits that tempt the taste, and turn to ashes on the lips. It is the "dangerous edge of things," against which men have to be on their guard. The line between use and abuse is so easily passed over. *Corruptio optimi pessima.*

III. THE EFFECT ESPECIALLY ON THE INTELLIGENCE. (Vers. 33—35.) The mind falls into bewilderment, and sees double or awry. The victim of intoxication is indeed "at sea," and like one sleeping on the very verge of danger and sudden death. In a spiritual sense he is drunk who does not perceive the great danger of his soul, but

becomes more secure and stubborn under every chastisement (Jer. v. 3). It is the dreadful *insensibility*—depicted by ver. 35 which imitates the thought and speech of the drunkard—which is among the worst consequences of the vice. "The sight of a drunkard is a better sermon against that vice than the best that was ever preached upon the subject." "He who hath this sin, hath not himself; whosoever doth commit it, doth not commit sin, but he himself is wholly sin" (Augustine).—J.

Vers. 1—3.—*The temptation of the table.* It is probable that Solomon had in view those who did not often sit down to a "good dinner," and who, when they were invited to a feast by some one who was able to spread his table with delicacies, found themselves subjected to a strong temptation to unusual indulgence. Dr. Kitto tells us that, in the East, men would (and now will) eat an almost incredible amount of food when a rare opportunity offered itself. From the moral and the religious standpoint this matter of appetite demands our attention to—

I. A SPECIAL SPHERE OF OBEDIENCE AND SELF-CONTROL. Appetite is undoubtedly of God; and for few things, on the lower level, have we more occasion to thank our Creator than for the fact that he has made our food to be palatable, and caused us so to crave it that the partaking of it is a pleasure. Otherwise, the act of eating in order to keep ourselves alive and strong would be a daily weariness and penalty to us. But as it is, the necessary act of eating is a constant source of pleasure. But with the pleasure there enters inevitably a temptation. Appetite in man, strengthened as it is by man's imaginative faculty, and fostered as it is by the inventiveness which provides all kinds of inviting dainties, becomes one of those things which allure to excess, and thus to sin. To maintain the golden mean between asceticism on the one hand and epicurism or gluttony on the other hand is not found to be an easy task. Medical science inclines now to the view that a very large proportion of people take more to eat than is really for their good—especially in later life. Frequently, perhaps generally, this is rather a mistake than an offence. But the wise man will carefully consider how far he should go, and where he should draw the line. In doing this he will more especially consider two things. 1. How he should act at the table, so as not in any way to weaken his intelligence by what he eats or drinks. 2. How he should act so as to keep himself in health and strength for all useful activity in the days to come. By resolving to act with a firm self-command, with the higher and indeed the highest end in view, he may, in eating and drinking, do what he does "to the glory of God" (see 1 Cor. x. 31).

II. THOSE TO WHOM THIS FORMS A SPECIALLY STRONG TEMPTATION. "If thou be a man given to appetite." Some men are so constituted that to have the greatest delicacies in the world before them would be no temptation to them; others have an appetency which they have the greatest difficulty in controlling,—this may arise either from heredity, or from their individual bodily organization, or (as is oftenest the case) from the habit of indulgence. There are also—

III. OCCASIONS WHEN THIS TEMPTATION IS SPECIALLY SEVERE. Such as that indicated in the text (see also 1 Cor. x. 27). There are times when it would be churlish, and even unchristian, to refuse an invitation; but the presence of food or of stimulants upon the table may be a serious inducement to transgression. Then "put a knife to thy throat;" determinately stop at the point of strict moderation; resolutely and fearlessly refuse that of which you know well that you have no right to partake; distinctly and definitely decline the dish or the cup which you cannot take with a good conscience. For consider—

IV. THE FOLLY AND THE SIN OF INDULGENCE. "They are deceitful meat." Excess may bring some momentary enjoyment, but: 1. It is quickly followed by pain, disorder, feebleness, incapacity; even if not of a serious order, yet humiliating enough to a man who respects himself. 2. The habit of it leads with no uncertain step to physical and also to mental and moral degeneracy. 3. The pleasure afforded, like all the grosser gratifications, declines with indulgence. 4. All excess is sin. It is a misuse and profanation of that body which is given us as the organ of our own spirit, and should be regarded and treated as "the temple of the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. vi. 19).—C.

Vers. 4, 5.—*The worthlessness of wealth.* Wealth is not, indeed, absolutely worth-

less; it has a distinct value of its own; but relatively to man's deeper necessities, and to his other, spiritual resources, it is to be held in slight esteem.

I. THE UNSUBSTANTIAL AS DISTINGUISHED FROM THE REAL. "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?" Money regarded as that which purchases food, clothing, shelter, books, etc., has a certain value not easily overstated. But mere wealth, as wealth, has but a fictitious and unreal virtue. A man may have it and have it not at the same time. A rich man may be, to all intents and purposes, a very poor one. He may own land the scenery upon which he is wholly unable to appreciate; soil which he has not the spirit or the wisdom to cultivate; houses which he neither inhabits nor causes to be inhabited; gardens whose paths no feet are treading, and whose beauty no eyes are admiring; books which he has not the taste or even the power to read, etc. In fact, his wealth is only a possibility and not a reality to him. Practically, he "sets his eyes upon that which is not." And it is quite a common thing for men to be wealthy far beyond their capacity of enjoyment; their riches do not serve them any real purpose; they remain unused, and are as if they were not at all (see Matt. xxv. 29; Luke viii. 18). On the other hand, knowledge, wisdom, pure and holy love, a generous interest in the welfare of others, joy in God and in the friendship of the good,—these are real blessings. A man who has these must be and *is* enriched thereby.

II. THE TRANSIENT AS DISTINGUISHED FROM THE ABIDING. "Riches certainly make themselves wings," etc. 1. *They are insecure.* It is impossible to mention any "investment" that is absolutely secure. Even "real property" has been found to become depreciated and even positively worthless in the market. And of the more ordinary sources of wealth, it is proverbial that they have all a limited, and many of them but a slight, security. A revolution in government, in trade, even in fashion or in taste, and the ample means are reduced to nothing, the millionaire is brought down to bankruptcy. A poor foundation, indeed, on which to build the structure of human happiness and well-being is the possession of riches. 2. *They must soon be laid down.*

III. THE HUMAN AS DISTINGUISHED FROM THE DIVINE. To "labour to be rich" is of man. To work for wealth, and even to live for it is to be borne along on the current of human energy, is to breathe the atmosphere which human society is throwing round him. It is "our own wisdom." But it is not the wisdom of God. That says to us, "Labour *not* for the meat which perisheth;" "Lay *not* up for yourselves treasures on earth;" "A man's life does *not* consist in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." The wisdom which is from above speaks to us of "forsaking all to follow Christ;" of parting with everything for one inestimable pearl; of agonizing to enter in at the strait gate. It tells us that the service of God, the friendship of Jesus Christ, the life of holy usefulness, the life-testimony to a Divine Redeemer, the rest of soul which comes with spiritual rectitude, the inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled and which fadeth not away,—that all this is not only more precious than gold, it is absolutely priceless; it is the one thing for which it is worth our while to labour with all our strength, to sacrifice all that we have.—C.

VERS. 6—8.—*The graces of giving, receiving, and refusing.* The text treats of a hospitality which does not deserve the name, and of our duty when we are invited to accept a gift that is grudged. It thus opens the whole subject of giving and receiving. There are three graces here.

I. THE GRACE OF GIVING. This is one which is readily recognized as heaven-born. 1. God commends it to us. He says, "Give, and it shall be given unto you" (Luke vi. 38); "Give to him that asketh thee" (Matt. v. 42); "He that giveth let him do it with liberality" (Revised Version); "given to hospitality" (Rom. xii. 8, 13). 2. It is the best reward of labour (Eph. iv. 28). 3. It is the most God-like of all graces. For God lives to give; he is ever giving forth to all his creation; he is feeding the multitudes and millions of his creatures beneath every sky. 4. It is the source of the purest and most elevating joy. "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

II. THE GRACE OF RECEIVING. If it is right and good for some men to give of their abundance, then the correlative act of receiving must also be right and good. There is, indeed, a virtue, a grace, in receiving cheerfully and cordially as well as gratefully, which may be almost, if not quite, as acceptable to God as that of generosity itself. There is truth in Miss Proctor's lines—

"I hold him great who for love's sake
Can give with generous, earnest will;
Yet *he who takes* for love's sweet sake,
I think I hold more generous still."

III. THE GRACE OF REFUSING. 1. We may rightly refuse a gift, whether it be in the way of hospitality or not, which we are sure the giver *cannot honestly afford*; we do not wish to be enriched or entertained at the expense of his creditors. 2. We may properly decline a gift if we feel that it is offered us under a misconception; when we are imagined to be, or to believe, or to be working toward, that which is contrary to our spirit, our creed, our aim. 3. We do well to decline the hospitality which does not come from the heart. The host is "as he thinketh in his heart." His fair or "sweet words" are no real part of himself; they only come from his lips; and if he is grudging us what he gives us, we may well wish ourselves far away from his table. No man who has any self-respect whatever will wish to take a crust from the man who counts what he gives his friends. Such food as that, however dainty, would choke us as we ate it. Nor is it begrudged hospitality alone that we should have the independence to refuse, but all else that is in the shape of gift; all money, all position, all friendship. Better to go entirely without than to have abundance at the cost of our own self-respect. Better to toil hard and wait long than to accept such offers as those. Better to turn to him "who giveth liberally and upbraideth not," and ask of him.—C.

Ver. 10.—(See homily on ch. xxii. 28.)—C.

Vers. 13, 14.—(See homily on ch. xiii. 24.)—C.

Vers. 17, 18.—*God's righteous judgment.* Nothing is more foolish than to endeavour to found a proof of the righteousness of God's rule upon a single case of human experience. Yet is that often done. A good man seizes upon a piece of good fortune in a godly man's life, and exaggerates its importance; a bad man pounces upon a piece of bad fortune and draws unwarrantable conclusions therefrom. But are there not indications, if not proofs, to be had for the seeking, that all things are under the direction of a just and righteous Ruler? Yes; if we look far and wide enough. For as we look, we see that *all* men, good and bad, are rewarded according to their works.

I. All the laws which regulate the recompense of labour exist FOR THE UNRIGHTEOUS AS WELL AS FOR THE RIGHTEOUS. Take, *e.g.*: 1. *The covetous man.* Consider all that he foregoes in order to reap his harvest—all the physical, social, domestic, literary, philanthropic, religious advantages and delights that he sacrifices; consider all the immense and ceaseless pains and toils he goes through, and the risks he runs, to achieve his object. And he gets his prize; he has earned it. He will find it weighted with more burdens and freighted with fewer and smaller blessings than he thought, and it will not last him long. Do not envy him or begrudge him what he receives; he has paid a very heavy price for it, and is surely welcome to it. 2. *The hypocrite.* He is a very painstaking, hardworking man; he spares himself no trouble, no sacrifice; he makes long prayers, for which he has no heart; he abstains from food he would fain be eating; he parts with money which he longs to keep; he goes through the most wearisome experiences in order that he may win a little passing honour. He has his reward; he is very welcome to it. He has earned it; we will not envy him; there is nothing more for him to receive (Matt. vi. 5). 3. *The man of pleasure.* He also pays a very high price for his momentary gratifications—the degradation of his powers, the disregard of his friends, the loss of his self-respect, the decline of his health, etc.; and all this for mere enjoyment which becomes less keen and vivid every day. We will not envy him. Unholy pleasure is the costliest thing in the whole world.

II. All the laws which regulate the recompense of labour exist FOR THE RIGHTEOUS MAN AS WELL AS FOR THE UNRIGHTEOUS. 1. By returning unto God in penitential self-surrender we seek reconciliation, peace, joy, the full re-establishment of our filial relations with God; and we find what we seek. "Surely there is a reward" (Revised Version) for us, and "*our* expectation is not cut off." 2. By "walking in the fear of the Lord all the day long," consulting his will and endeavouring to follow him, we seek

his Divine favour and a growing measure of likeness to our Lord. And we find what we seek. 3. By kind Christian helpfulness, by sympathy and succour freely and gladly given to those in need, we seek the blessedness of him that gives (Acts xx. 35), the gratitude of true and loving hearts, the present smile and final benediction of the Son of man (Matt. xxv. 34—40). And we find and shall find it. Surely there *is* a reward for us; our hope shall not be cut off. No; let us "envy not the sinner;" let us make him welcome to all he has; let us try to elevate and enlarge his hope and his reward by changing the spirit of his mind. As for ourselves, let it be in our hearts to say, "God is faithful who hath called us to the fellowship of his Son;" let us anticipate the anthem of the angels, and sing already, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, *just and true* are thy ways, O thou King of saints!"—C.

Vers. 20, 21.—(See below.)—C.

Ver. 23.—*The freedom and the price of truth.* We have often to insist upon—

I. THE FREEDOM OF THE TRUTH. In one sense, truth is essentially free. If firm and strong as the granite rock, it is also fluent as the water, elastic as the air. It belongs to no man, and cannot be patented or monopolized; it is the inheritance of mankind. We are all of us bound to communicate it freely, to "pass it on like bread at sacrament." This is emphatically the case with the truth of the gospel. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat . . . without money and without price;" "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life *freely*." But the lesson of the text is—

II. THE PRICE OF TRUTH. Truth has sometimes to be paid for; it has its own price, and we must be willing to buy it. 1. *That truth for which we involuntarily pay some price.* We go forth into the world with crude, immature notions, which we find, by painful experience, have to be corrected and perhaps changed. Sometimes this necessary lesson is very costly to us. In this way we have to buy the truth as to: (1) The checkered character of our human life. We have to learn, painfully enough, that it does not answer to our early dreams, but is sadly dashed with disappointment, with failure, with loss, with trouble; that it is many-coloured, with a large admixture of the dull or even the dark. (2) The imperfections of the good. That there is a large amount of profession without any reality at all; that *some* really good men allow themselves to be overtaken in serious fault; that all good men have some defects which tarnish the perfect brightness of their character; that human excellency is not so much an attainment as an earnest and admirable endeavour. (3) The strength and weakness of our own character. We have to find, at the cost of much humiliation, where our strength ends and our weakness begins. Such truths as these we buy without bargain; we do not agree to the price that we pay. There is not the freedom of contract we usually have in any purchase we make. But we may part willingly, and even cheerfully, as we are called upon to do, with that which we lose, thankfully accepting the truth we acquire; and so doing we practically and wisely "buy the truth." 2. *The truth for which we voluntarily pay the price.* (1) A completer knowledge of God's Word. Our knowledge of the book of God is very varied; it may be very slight, or it may be very deep and full. How deep or how full depends on whether or not we will pay the price of this excellent wisdom; the price is that of *patient, reverent study.* (2) The surpassing blessedness of true consecration; the peace and the joy to be had in Christ and in his holy and happy service. We do not know as much as we might, and as we should, of this; but we do not pay the price of knowledge. That price is whole-hearted surrender of ourselves to our Saviour and to his service. So long as we "keep back part of the price" we cannot know this experience; but if we will "yield ourselves unto God" unreservedly, we shall know the truth in its fulness. We may make a special point of (3) the beauty and excellency of Christian work; and the price of knowing this is the act of hearty and faithful labour, sustained by much earnest prayer for the inspiration and the blessing of God. We complete the thought of the text by considering—

III. THE ABSOLUTE PRICELESSNESS OF THE TRUTH. "Sell it not." Heavenly wisdom, once gained, is not to be parted with for any consideration whatever. Nothing on earth represents its value. To lose it is to sign away our inheritance. It is to be held at all costs whatever.—C.

Vers. 24—26.—(See homily on ch. x. 1.)—C.

Vers. 29—35 (with vers. 20, 21).—*Drunkenness.* A most striking picture is given us here of the manifold evils of this great curse. In a few strokes Solomon brings before us most, if not all, of its painful and pitiable consequences. Their name is legion, for they are indeed many.

I. THE CONTEMPT OF THE SOBER. (Ver. 20.) The very word "drunkard," or "wine-bibber," is indicative of the deep disregard in which the victim of this vice is held by sober men.

II. POVERTY. (Ver. 21.) It is striking and surprising how soon men of large means are brought down to straitness of circumstance, and even poverty itself. It is what they *spend* on this craving, and what they *lose* by its ill effects upon them, that drag them down.

III. PHYSICAL DETERIORATION. (Ver. 29.) Dissipation soon tells on a man's personal appearance; he shows by his garments, and still more by his countenance, that he is mastered by that which he puts into his mouth. Vice means ugliness.

IV. CONTENTIOUSNESS. (Ver. 29.) We need all our powers in good balance to control ourselves so that we are not provoked to the hasty word and to the lasting quarrel. But the man who is excited by wine is in the worst possible condition for ruling his spirit and commanding his tongue. He is likely enough to speak the sentence which is followed by the blow, or, what is worse, the long-continued feud.

V. IMPURITY. (Ver. 33.) The excitement of the intoxicating cup has had much to do with the saddest departures from the path of purity and honour; with the entrance upon the road of utter ruin.

VI. INFATUATION. (Vers. 34, 35.) The drunkard is seen by his friends to be sinking and falling; in his circumstances, his reputation, his health, his character, he is palpably perishing. Those who really love and pity him warn him with earnest remonstrance, with affectionate entreaty, but it is of no avail. He acts with as much infatuation as would a man who made a bed of the waves or the top of a mast. After he has been stricken and has suffered, he goes back to his cups, and is stricken and suffers again.

VII. THE AGONY OF REMORSE. "At the last it biteth like a serpent," etc. The sting of remorse which a man suffers when he awakes to a full sense of his folly is something pitiful to witness, and must be far more terrible to endure. The man suffers a penalty which is worse than bodily torture; it is the just punishment in his own soul for his folly and his sin. In one sense it is self-administered, for it is the stern rebuke of conscience; in another sense it is the solemn and strong condemnation of the Supreme.

VIII. BITTER BONDAGE. Worse, if possible, than the sting of remorse is the sense of helpless bondage in which he finds that he is held. "At the last" is a tyranny which the evil habit, the strong craving, exercises over the man's spirit. He knows and feels his humiliation and loss; he essays to escape; he strives, he writhes to become freed; but he tries in vain; he is "holden with the cords of his sins" (ch. v. 22); he is a poor, miserable captive, the slave of vice.

Such are the consequences of departure from sobriety. It is the first step which is the most foolish and the most avoidable. When a certain stage is reached, restoration, though not impossible or impracticable, is very difficult. Let all men, as they love their soul, keep well within that boundary-line that divides sobriety from intemperance. Moderation is good; abstinence is better, for it is safer, and it is kinder to others. "Look not" on the tempting cup; turn the eyes to purer and nobler pleasure.—C.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XXIV.

**Ver. 1.—We return here to the more usual form, the tetrastich. Be not thou envious against evil men** (see on ch. xxiii. 17, where a similar warning is given, and comp. ver. 19 below). "Men of wickedness," wholly given over to evil. **Neither desire to be with them.** Their company is pollution, and association with them makes you a partner in their sinful doings. The Septuagint prefaces the paragraph with the personal address, *υἱέ*, "son."

Ver. 2.—**For their heart studieth destruc-**

tion. The grounds of the warning are here given, as in ch. i. 15. "Destruction" (*shod*); Vulgate, *rapinas*, "violence" of all kinds, *e.g.* robbery, murder. **Their lips talk of mischief**; utter lies and slanders which may injure other people or bring themselves profit. Admiration of such men and intercourse with them must be repugnant to every religious soul. The LXX. refers the verse to evil imaginations issuing in evil talk; "For their heart meditates falsehoods, and their lips speak mischiefs (*πόνους*)."

Vers. 3, 4.—In contrast with the conversation of the evil, wisdom is commended.

Ver. 3.—**Through wisdom is an house builded** (see on ch. xiv. 1). By prudence, probity, and the fear of God a family is supported and blessed, maintained and prospered. **Established** (see on ch. iii. 19); Septuagint, *ἀνορθοῦται*.

Ver. 4.—(Comp. ch. i. 13 and note ch. iii. 10.) **With all precious and pleasant** (ch. xxii. 18) **riches.** Material prosperity, copious store of necessaries, and wealth, follow on wisdom; how much more do spiritual blessings attend the fear of God!

Vers. 5, 6.—Wisdom is beneficial in peace and war.

Ver. 5.—**A wise man is strong.** בְּעֹז, "in strength," full of strength, because, however feeble in body, he is wise in counsel, firm in purpose, brave in conduct, thoroughly to be depended upon, and supported by his perfect trust in God (comp. ch. xxi. 22). The Septuagint, with which agree the Syriac and Chaldee, reading differently, renders, "A wise man is better than a strong man"—a sentiment which Lesètre compares to Cicero's "cedant arma togæ." **A man of knowledge increaseth strength**; literally, *strengtheneth power*; shows greater, superior power, as Amos ii. 14. The Septuagint, from some corruption of the text, renders, "And a man having prudence (is better) than a large estate (*γεωργίου μεγάλου*);" *i.e.* wisdom will bring a man more worldly advantages than the possession of extensive farms. The gnome is proved by what follows.

Ver. 6.—**Thy war**; war for thyself, for thy profit, equivalent to "successful war" (comp. Exod. xiv. 14). The clause is an echo of ch. xx. 18 (where see note). The last line is a repetition of ch. xi. 14 (comp. also ch. xv. 22). Septuagint, "War is made with generalship (*κυβερνήσεως*), and help with a heart that counsels."

Vers. 7—10.—Some distichs now follow, concerned with wisdom and its opposite.

Ver. 7.—**Wisdom is too high for a fool.** It is beyond his reach, he cannot follow its lead, and has nothing to say when his counsel is asked, and no ability to judge of any question presented to him. "Wisdom" (*chochmoth*) is in the plural number, intimating the various attributes connoted by it, or the different aspects in which it may be regarded (see note on ch. i. 20). "Too high" (רָמוֹת, *ramoth*) is also plural; and Delitzsch and Nowack take it to mean, not so much "high things" as "precious things," such as pearls or precious stones, in accordance with Job xxviii. 18, "No mention shall be made of coral or of crystal; yea, the price of wisdom is above rubies." In this sense Delitzsch translates, "Wisdom seems to the fool to be an ornamental commodity," a costly and unnecessary appendage, which is not worth the sacrifices entailed by its pursuit. Whichever way we take it, the point is the rarity and inaccessibility of wisdom, and the repugnance of fools to make any exertion in order to obtain it. St. Augustine thus sums up the steps by which wisdom is reached: fear of God, piety, knowledge, fortitude, mercifulness, sincerity ('De Doctr. Christ.,' ii. 7). **He openeth not his mouth in the gate.** When men gather in the usual place of assembly (ch. viii. 3; xxii. 2), to take counsel on public matters, he has nothing to say; he listens fatuously, and is silent. Septuagint, "Wisdom and good thought are in the gates of the wise; the wise turn not aside from the mouth of the Lord, but reason in assemblies."

Ver. 8.—**He that deviseth to do evil.** He who shows a certain kind of misapplied cleverness (in contrast to the true wisdom) in planning and pursuing evil schemes. **Shall be called.** Defined and explained, as ch. xvi. 21 (comp. ch. xxi. 24). **A mischievous person**; literally, *lord of mischief*; i.e. owner, possessor of mischief. One must not be led by such a man's apparent astuteness to attribute to him wisdom; he is an impostor, a mere intriguer, who is sure to be exposed ere long. Septuagint, "Death befalls the undisciplined."

Ver. 9.—**The thought of foolishness is sin.** "Sin" is the subject in this clause as "the scorner" is in the next; and what it says is that sin is the excogitation, the contriving of folly. The sinner is the real fool, in that he does not pursue his proper end, prepares misery for himself, is blind to his best interests. The connection between sin and folly, as between wisdom and righteousness, is continually enforced throughout the book. **The scorner is an abomination to men.** The man who scoffs at religion and every high aim is an object of abomination to the pious, and is also a cause of evil to others, leading them to thoughts and acts which are hateful in the eyes of God. Septuagint, "The fool dieth in sins (John viii. 24), and uncleanness belongeth to a pestilent man." The

text here followed, as in other passages of this chapter, is quite different from the received one.

Ver. 10.—**If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.** The gnome seems to be unconnected with the preceding. There is a paronomasia between צָרָה (*tsarah*), "adversity," and צַר (*tsar*), "small," narrow, which is retained by Fleischer: "Si segnis fueris die angustiæ, angustæ sunt vires tuæ." So we may say in English, "If thou faint in time of straitness, straitened is thy strength." If you fail, and succumb to anxiety or danger, instead of rising to meet the emergency, then you are but a weakling or a coward, and the strength which you seemed to possess, and of which you boasted, perhaps, is nothing worth. Such a man hearkens not to the Sibyl's counsel (Virgil, 'Æneid,' vi. 95)—

"Tu ne cede malis, sed contra audentior ito,
Quam tua te fortuna sinet."

The LXX. again varies from the received text, "He shall be polluted in an evil day, and in a day of affliction, until he fail," or "die" (ἐκλίπῃ).

Vers. 11, 12.—A hexastich, inculcating humanity on the ground of God's omniscience.

Ver. 11.—**If thou forbear to deliver** them **that are drawn unto death.** The sentence is not conditional, אִם in the second line being equivalent to לוּ, *utinam*, "oh that!" "would that!" So the first hemistich should be rendered, "Deliver them that are haled to death," and the second, "And those that are tottering to slaughter, oh, hold them back!" The sentence is somewhat obscure, but Cheyne well explains it thus: "Some victims of a miscarriage of justice are about to be dragged away to execution, and the disciple of wisdom is exhorted to use his endeavours to deliver them" ('Job and Solomon'). In the case supposed a moral obligation lies on the pious and well-informed to save a human life unjustly imperilled. At the same time, there is nothing in the passage which absolutely shows that the punishment of the guiltless is here deprecated; it looks rather as if Wisdom had no pleasure in the death of men, innocent or not, and that the victims of an extreme sentence claimed pity at her hands, whatever might be the circumstances of the verdict. Septuagint, "Deliver those that are being led away to death, and redeem (ἐκπρίου) those that are appointed to be slain; spare not (to help them)" (comp. Ps. lxxxii. 3, 4).

Ver. 12.—**If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not.** The disciple of Wisdom may excuse himself from making any effort for the prisoners' release, by saying he had not heard of the case. St. Jerome makes the excuse to be inability, *vires non suppetunt*. The LXX. makes it a personal matter, ignoring the plural form of the previous paragraph. "I know him not, he is no friend of mine; why should I trouble myself about him?" Such a selfish person, like the priest and Levite in the parable, would "pass by on the other side." **Doth not he that pondereth the heart consider** it? God knows the truth—knows that the excuse is vain; for he is the Weigher and Searcher of hearts (ch. xvi. 2; xxi. 2). Cain's plea, "Am I my brother's keeper?" is unavailable; the law of love is limited by no circumstances. **He that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it?** The expression, "keeping the soul," may be equivalent to "preserving the life;" but it more probably means watching, observing, the inmost secrets of the nature (Job vii. 20). The verb used is נָצַר (*natsar*), which has both significations. The sense of "forming," which some give it, seems not allowable. (For "heart" (*leb*) and "soul" (*nephesh*), see note on ch. ii. 10.) **Shall not he render to every man according to his works?** Knowing the heart and the motive, God deals out retributive justice (ch. xii. 14: Ps. lxii. 12; Rom. ii. 6). Septuagint, "But if thou say, I know not this man, know that the Lord knoweth the hearts of all; and he who formed (πλάσας) breath for all, himself knoweth all things, who rendereth to every man according to his works."

Vers. 13, 14.—An exhortation to the study of wisdom, with an analogy.

Ver. 13.—**Eat thou honey, because** it is **good.** Honey entered largely into the diet of the Oriental, and was regarded not only as pleasant to the taste and nutritious, but also as possessed of healing powers. It was especially used for children's food (Isa. vii. 15), and thus becomes an emblem of the purest wisdom. "I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey," says the lover in Cant. v. 1; and the psalmist says that the ordinances of the Lord are "sweeter than honey and the honeycomb" (Ps. xix. 10; see on ch. xxv. 16). Palestine was a land flowing with milk and honey (Exod. iii. 8); hence is derived the continual reference to this article of diet in the Bible.

Ver. 14.—**So shall the knowledge of wisdom** be **unto thy soul**; better, *know, apprehend wisdom to be such for thy soul*—to be as pleasant and nourishing and profitable to thy soul, as honey is to thy taste and thy body. The moralist would have his disciple feel the same relish for wisdom that he has for sweet food, recognize it not simply as useful, but as delightful and enjoyable. **When thou hast found it.** To find wisdom is to get possession of it and use it (comp. ch. iii. 13, and note there). **Then**

**there shall be a reward.** The apodosis begins here. We have had the same assurance in ch. xxiii. 18 (where see note). The word is literally *future*. One who has obtained wisdom has a glorious hope before him; *habebis in novissimis spem*, Vulgate; but his hope is better than that—it goes with him, not in his last hour only, but all his life long. Septuagint, "Then shalt thou perceive wisdom in thy soul; for if thou find it, fair shall be thine end, and hope shall not fail thee."

Vers. 15, 16.—A warning against plotting for the ruin of a good man's house, with a view doubtless of profiting by the disaster.

Ver. 15.—**Lay not wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous.** רָשָׁע (*rasha*) is vocative (comp. Ezek. xxxiii. 8); taken appositionally, as in Revised Version margin, "as a wicked man," it is senseless; for how could he lay wait in any other character? **Spoil not his resting-place.** "Spoil," as ch. xix. 26 (where see note). Drive him not from his house by violence and chicanery. Vulgate, "Seek not impiety in the house of the righteous;" do not attempt to cloak your insidious designs by detecting some evil in the good man, and making yourself the instrument of retribution, as if you were doing God service in afflicting him (John xvi. 2). Septuagint, "Bring not an ungodly man into the pasture (νομῇ) of the righteous, neither be thou deceived by the feasting of the belly."

Ver. 16.—**A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again.** The fall may be taken of sin or of calamity. Preachers, ancient and modern, have made much use of this text in the first sense, expatiating how a good man may fall into venial or more serious sins, but he never loses his love of God, and rises from his fall by repentance on every occasion. We also often find the words *in die*, "a day," added, which indeed occur in some manuscripts, but are not in the original. But the verb *naphal* seems not to be used in the sense of "falling" morally; and the meaning here is that the just man frequently falls into trouble,—he is not secure against worldly cares and losses, or the insidious attacks of the man mentioned in ver. 15; but he never loses his trust in God or offends by fretfulness and impatience, and always God's providence watches over him and delivers him out of all his afflictions. "Seven times" means merely often, that number being used to express plurality or completeness (see on ch. vi. 31; xxvi. 16; and comp. Gen. iv. 24; Job v. 19 (which is like our passage); and Matt. xviii. 22). The expectation which the sinner conceived when he saw the good man distressed, that he might seize the opportunity and use it to his own benefit, is woefully disappointed. In contrast with the recovery and re-establishment of the righteous, when the wicked suffer calamity there is no recuperation for them. **The wicked shall fall into mischief;** Revised Version better, *are overthrown by calamity* (comp. ch. xiv. 32, and note there). Septuagint, "But the ungodly shall be weak in evils."

Vers. 17, 18.—A warning against vindictiveness, nearly approaching the great Christian maxim, "Love your enemies" (Matt. v. 44).

Ver. 17.—**Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth.** "Thou shalt love thy neighbour" was a Mosaic precept (Lev. xix. 18); the addition, "and hate thine enemy," was a Pharisaic gloss, arising from a misconception concerning the extermination of the Canaanites, which, indeed, had a special cause and purpose, and was not a precedent for the treatment of all aliens (see ch. xxv. 21, 22). **When he stumbleth;** rather, *when he is overthrown*. The maxim refers to private enemies. The overthrow of public enemies was often celebrated with festal rejoicing. Thus we have the triumph of Moses at the defeat of the Amalekites, and over Pharaoh's host at the Red Sea; of Deborah and Barak over Sisera (Exod. xv.; xvii. 15; Judg. v.); and the psalmist, exulting over the destruction of his country's foes, could say, "The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance; he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked" (Ps. lviii. 10). But private revenge and vindictiveness are warmly censured and repudiated. So Cato, 'Distich.' iv. 46—

"Morte repentina noli gaudere malorum;
Felicesobeunt quorum sinecrimine vita est."

Of very different tone is the Italian proverb, "Revenge is a morsel for God;" and "Wait time and place to act thy revenge, for it is never well done in a hurry" (Trench).

Ver. 18.—**Lest the Lord see it, and it displease him.** This malignant pleasure at others' misfortunes (which Aristotle, 'Eth. Nic.,' ii. 7. 15, calls ἐπιχαιρεκακία) is a sin in the eyes of God, and calls for punishment. **And he turn away his wrath from him;** and, as is implied, direct it upon thee. But it seems a mean motive to adduce, if the maxim is taken baldly to mean, "Do not rejoice at your enemy's calamity, lest God relieve him from the evil;" for true charity would wish for such a result. Bede considers "his wrath" to be the enemy's ill will against thee, which God by his grace changes to love, and thou art thus covered with confusion and shame for thy former vindictiveness. But the point is not so much the removal of God's

displeasure from the enemy as the punishment of the malignant man, either mentally or materially. To a malignant mind no severer blow could be given than to see a foe recover God's favour and rise from his fall. The moralist then warns the disciple against giving way to this ἐπιχαιρεκακία, lest he prepare for himself bitter mortification by having to witness the restoration of the hated one, or by being himself made to suffer that evil which he had rejoiced to see his neighbour experience (comp. ch. xvii. 5, and note there).

Vers. 19, 20.—A warning against envying the prosperity of the wicked.

Ver. 19.—**Fret not thyself because of evil men** (comp. ver. 1 and Ps. xxxvii. 1). The verb (*charah*) means "to burn," "to be angry;" so here we may render, "Be not enraged on account of evil-doers." The anger would arise on account of the apparent inequitable distribution of blessings. St. Jerome has, *Ne contendas cum pessimis;* Septuagint, "Rejoice not over (ἐπί) evil-doers." **Neither be thou envious at the wicked;** *i.e.* do not fancy that their prosperity is to be desired, nor be led to imitate their doings in order to secure like success. The next verse shows the solemn reason for this warning.

Ver. 20.—**For there shall be no reward to the evil man.** He has no happy "future" to expect, as ver. 14; ch. xxiii. 18 (where see note). **The candle,** etc. (see ch. xiii. 9, where the clause appears). Septuagint, "For the evil man shall have no posterity, and the torch of the wicked shall be quenched."

Vers. 21, 22.—An injunction urging loyalty to God and the king.

Ver. 21.—**Fear thou the Lord and the king.** The king is God's vicegerent and representative, and therefore to be honoured and obeyed (see Eccles. viii. 2; x. 20; 1 Pet. ii. 17). **Meddle not with them that are given to change.** There is some doubt about the interpretation of the last word שׁנים (*shonim*), which may mean those who change, innovators (in which transitive sense the verb does not elsewhere occur), or those who think differently, dissidents, who respect neither God nor the king. The verb שָׁנָה signifies transitively "to repeat," and intransitively "to be changed;" so it may be most accurately translated here, with Delitzsch, "those who are otherwise disposed," who have not the proper sentiments of fear and honour for God and the king. St. Jerome has, *Et cum detractoribus non commiscearis,* by which word he probably means what we call revolutionists, persons who disparage and despise all authority. Septuagint, "Fear God and the king, and disobey neither of them." The verse has been largely used as a text by preachers who desired to recommend loyalty and to censure disaffection and rebellion. It has been a favourite motto for discourses on the Gunpowder Treason and the execution of Charles I.

Ver. 22.—**For their calamity shall rise suddenly.** Though these dissidents seem to succeed for a time, yet retribution shall fall suddenly upon them. **And who knoweth the ruin of them both?** This seems to mean the two classes, those who dishonour God and those who dishonour the king; but no such distinction is made in the previous verse; the rebels are classed under one category. Wordsworth renders, "the stroke of vengeance from them both," *i.e.* from God and the king. Otherwise, we must give another signification to שׁניהם, and, with the Syriac and many modern commentators, take it in the sense of "years," which שָׁנִים will bear, as Job xxxvi. 11, and translate, "The destruction [equivalent to 'end'] of their years, who knoweth?" No one can tell when the crisis of their fate shall come; but it will arrive some day, and then the time of their prosperity will be at an end. Septuagint, "For they (God and the king) will suddenly punish the ungodly; and who shall know the vengeance of both (τὰς τιμωρίας ἀμφοτέρων)?" After this the LXX. inserts three proverbs not found now in the Hebrew, which, however, Ewald ('Jahrb. der Bibl. Wissensch.,' xi. 17, etc.) considers to have been translated from a Hebrew original: "A son that keepeth the commandment shall be safe from destruction (ch. xxix. 27, Vulgate), and he hath fully received it (the word). Let no lie be spoken by the tongue of the king; and no lie shall proceed from his tongue. The king's tongue is a sword, and not of flesh; and whosoever shall be delivered unto it shall be destroyed; for if his anger be inflamed, he consumes men with their nerves, and devours men's bones, and burns them up as a flame, so that they are not food for the young eagles." The allusion at the end is to animals killed by lightning. Here follows the series of proverbs (ch. xxx. 1—14) called in the Hebrew, "The words of Agur." The second part of "the words of Agur," and "the words of Lemuel" (ch. xxx. 15—xxxi. 9) follow in the Greek after ch. xxiv. 34 of the Hebrew. Dolitzsch explains the matter thus: In the copy from which the Alexandrines translated, the appendix (ch. xxx.—xxxi. 9) was divided into two parts, half of it standing after "the words of the wise" (ch. xxii. 17—xxiv. 22), and half after the supplement containing further sayings of wise men (ch. xxiv. 23—34).

Vers. 23—34.—Part V. A SECOND COLLECTION, forming a second supplement to the first Solomonic book, and containing further "words of the wise."

Vers. 23—25.—Partiality and impartiality a hexastich.

Ver. 23.—**These things also belong to the wise**; are the sayings of wise men. The following proverbs, as well as the preceding, are derived from wise men. Mistaking this superscription, the LXX. makes it a personal address: "This I say to you who are wise, so that ye may learn." **The first line is not** a proverb, but the introduction to the ensuing collection. It is **not good to have respect of persons in judgment** (see ch. xviii. 5, and note there; and xxviii. 21, where the expression is the same as here). To regard one person before another is to be partial and unjust. To say this error is "not good" is a meiosis, the meaning being that it is very evil and sinful (comp. ch. xx. 23). The statement is developed and confirmed in the next two verses, which show the results of partiality and its opposite.

Ver. 24.—**He that saith unto the wicked, Thou art righteous.** The judge is supposed to be acquitting a guilty person. **Him shall the people curse.** The Hebrew is "peoples," as Septuagint and Vulgate, *maledicent eis populi*. **Nations shall abhor him.** Not individuals, nor families only, but the whole community, wherever such an iniquitous ruler is found, shall execrate and hate him. The voice of the people is universally against him; no one is so blind and degraded as openly to applaud his acts. The verb *nakab*, "to curse," means primarily "to bore or pierce;" hence some have translated it here, "him shall the peoples stab." But the word is used in the sense of distinguishing by a mark or brand, and thence passes into the sense of cursing, as at ch. xi. 26; Lev. xxiv. 11; Job iii. 8. In ch. xvii. 15 the unjust judge is called an abomination to the Lord. In this case the *vox populi* is *vox Dei*.

Ver. 25.—**But to them that rebuke him shall be delight** (see on ch. ii. 10). They who punish the wicked, with them it is well; they are approved by God and applauded by the people. Vulgate, *Qui arguunt eum, laudabuntur*, "They who convict him shall be praised." **And a good blessing shall come upon them**; literally, *a blessing of good*—one that has in it all good things, the happy contrast to the curses which meet the unjust judge. Septuagint, "But they that convict them (the guilty) shall appear more excellent, and upon them shall come blessing."

Ver. 26.—A distich connected with the subject of the preceding paragraph. Every man **shall kiss his lips that giveth a right answer**; or better, *he kisseth the lips who giveth a right answer*. An answer that is fair and suitable to the circumstances is as pleasant and assuring to the hearers as a kiss on the lips. Such a salutation would be a natural sign of sympathy and affection. Thus Absalom won the hearts of the people by kissing those who came to court with their suits (2 Sam. xv. 5). In Gen. xli. 40, where the Authorized Version has, "According to thy word shall all my people be ruled," the Hebrew runs, "Thy mouth shall all my people kiss," *i.e.* they shall do homage to thee, which is another signification of this action. This, however, would not be suitable here, as the kiss is supposed to be given by the speaker, though the LXX. mistakenly translates, "But men will kiss lips that answer good words."

Ver. 27.—**Prepare thy work without.** The proverb enjoins a man to look well to his resources before he undertakes to build a house or to establish a family. "Without" (*chuts*) (ch. vii. 12; viii. 26); in the fields. Put in due order all immediate work in thy farm. **And make it fit for thyself in the field**; and get ready for what has to come next. That is, in short, steadily and with due foresight cultivate your land; provide abundant means of subsistence before you attempt to build up your house. A suitor had, as it were, to purchase his bride from her relations by making considerable presents; it was therefore necessary to provide a certain amount of wealth before contemplating matrimony. **And afterwards build thy house.** This is, indeed, the meaning of the passage; but the Hebrew makes a difficulty, as it is literally, "afterwards and thou shalt build." Some have supposed that some words have dropped out of the text (Cheyne, 'Job and Solomon'). But *vav* in וּבָנִיתָ, coming after a date or notification of time, as here after אַחַר (comp. Gen. iii. 5), "has the future signification of a perfect consecutive" (Delitzsch), equivalent to "after that, then, thou mayest build." Septuagint, "Prepare thy works for thy going forth (εἰς τὴν ἔξοδον), and get ready for the field, and come after me, and thou shalt build up thine house." In a spiritual sense, the heart must be first cleared of thorns, and opened to genial influences, before the man can build up the fabric of virtuous habits, and thus arrive at the virtuous character.

Ver. 28.—**Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause** (*chinnam*); gratuitously (ch. iii. 30; xxiii. 29; xxvi. 2), when you are not obliged in the performance of a plain duty. Persons are not to put themselves forward to give testimony to a neighbour's discredit, either officiously as busybodies, or maliciously as slanderers. The maxim is expressed in general terms

and is not to be confined to one category, as the Syriac and Septuagint render, "Be not a false witness against thy fellow-citizen." **And deceive not with thy lips.** The Hebrew is really interrogative, "And wouldest thou deceive with thy lips?" (Ps. lxxviii. 36). The deceit is not so much intentional falsehood as misrepresentation arising from haste and inconsiderateness consequent on this unnecessary eagerness to push forward testimony unsought. Septuagint, "Neither exaggerate (*πλατύνου*) with thy lips."

Ver. 29.—The subject is still continued, as if the moralist would say, "Though a man has done you an injury by gratuitously testifying against you, do not you retaliate in the same way." **Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me** (see ch. xx. 22, and note there). The *lex talionis* should not be applied to private wrongs. The high morality of the Christian code is here anticipated, the Holy Spirit guiding both.

Vers. 30—34.—A *mashal* ode concerning the sluggard (for similar odes, comp. ch. vii. 6—23; Job v. 3—5; Ps. xxxvii. 35, etc.; Isa. v. 1—6).

Ver. 30.—**The field . . . the vineyard**; the two chief objects of the farmer's care, which need constant labour if they are to prove productive. Moralizing on this passage, St. Gregory ('Moral.,' xx. 54) says, "To pass by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding, is to look into the life of any careless liver, and to take a view of his deeds."

Ver. 31.—**Thorns.** *Kimmashon* is the word here used, but the plant has not been certainly identified (comp. Isa. xxxiv. 13). **Nettles** (*charul*). The stinging-nettle is quite common in Palestine, but the plant here meant is probably the prickly acanthus, which quickly covers any spot left uncultivated (Job xxx. 7). Revised Version margin suggests wild vetches. Ovid, 'Trist.,' v. 12. 21—

"Adde, quod ingenium longa rubigine læsum
Torpet, et est multo, quam fuit ante, minus.
Fertilis, assiduo si non renovetur aratro,
Nil, nisi cum spinis gramen, habebit ager."

So spiritual writers have used this apologue as teaching a lesson concerning the soul and the life of man, how that spiritual sloth allows the growth of evil habits, and the carelessness which maintains not the defence of law and prayer, but admits the enemy, and the result is the loss of the true riches and the perishing of the heavenly life. The two verses are thus rendered, or morally applied, in the Septuagint: "A foolish man is as a farm, and a man wanting in sense is as a vineyard; if you leave him, he will be barren, and will be altogether covered with weeds, and he will become deserted, and his fences of stone are broken down."

Ver. 32.—**Then I saw, and considered it well** (ch. xxii. 17). I looked on this sight, and let it sink into my mind. **I looked upon it, and received instruction** (ch. viii. 10). I learned a lesson from what I saw.

Vers. 33, 34.—These verses are a repetition, with very slight variations, of ch. vi. 10, 11 (where see notes), and possibly have been introduced here by a later editor. Ver. 33 seems to be the sluggard's own words; ver. 34 shows the result of his sloth. There are numberless proverbs dedicated to this subject in all languages; *e.g.* "No sweat, no sweet;" "No pains, no gains;" "He that wad eat the kernel maun crack the nut;" "A puñadas entran las buenas hadas," "Good luck enters by dint of cuffs" (Spanish); "Nihil agendo male agere discimus;" "The dog in the kennel," say the Chinese, "barks at his fleas; the dog that hunts does not feel them" (Kelly). "Sloth and much sleep," say the Arabs, "remove from God and bring on poverty." The LXX. is somewhat dramatic in its rendering: "Afterwards I reponted (*μετενόησα*), I looked that I might receive instruction. 'I slumber a little, I sleep a little, for a little I clasp (*ἐναγκαλίζομαι*) my hands across my breast.' But if thou do this, thy poverty will come advancing, and thy want like a good runner (*ἀγαθὸς δρομεύς*)." The word *ἐναγκαλίζομαι* occurs in ch. vi. 10, but nowhere else in the Septuagint. It is used by St. Mark (ix. 36; x. 16). It has been thought that the original *mashal* ended with ver. 32, the following passage being added by a scribe as illustrative in a marginal note, which afterwards crept into the text.

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 9.—*Sin and folly.* However these words are read, they point to an association of sin and folly. This may be regarded from two points of view, according as we start with the thought of the sin or with that of the folly.

I. SIN IMPLIES FOLLY. 1. *It chooses the worse of two courses.* Thus it blunders into self-injury. Evil is not only culpable in the sight of God; it is hurtful to the evil-doer. Its path is dark, degraded, disappointing. It is foolish to turn from the way of light and honour and satisfaction to such a course. 2. *It is short-sighted.* In

choosing a way one should look to the end of it. It is madness for the belated traveller to turn aside to the grassy path when the rough, stony road would take him home, and he knows not whither the pleasanter way will lead him. "The wages of sin is death;" it is, then, nothing but folly to work for the master without considering his direful payment. 3. *It perverts the thoughts.* Sin involves folly, and it also leads to greater folly. Many sins directly poison and paralyze the intellectual faculties. All sins confuse the lines of right and truth. Thus the man who lives in sin is blinding his eyes to the greatest facts. To know of the doctrine we must do the commandment (John vii. 17). The wilful sinner obscures the doctrine by breaking the commandment.

II. FOLLY ISSUES IN SIN. We now look at the conjunction from the opposite point of view. We start with the folly. This is to be regarded as a seed of sin. It is true that sin is primarily concerned with the moral nature. A man cannot really sin altogether in ignorance, because if he does not know that he is doing a wrong thing, to him the thing is not wrong. But, on the other hand, there is a culpable ignorance, arising from carelessness, disregard for truth, moral obliquity. Now, as sin is at the root of that ignorance, so the ignorance may, in such a case, serve as a link in the miserable chain of consequences that drags new sins into existence. These facts should lead us to certain practical conclusions. 1. *It is our duty to seek the light that we may avoid sin.* Truth is not merely given as a luxury. It is, first of all, a beacon-light. It is to guide us over the wilderness in the right way. 2. *The teaching of children is a moral and religious duty.* The advantages of education are usually discussed from a utilitarian standpoint. But the chief advantage is that it should open the eyes of children to the wisdom of doing right and to the folly of wickedness. Many poor children grow up among scenes of vice and crime without having an opportunity of knowing of a better way. The Christian Church is called to be a light in the world, leading from sin, not forcibly, but by showing the clear wisdom of goodness, as well as its moral obligation.

Ver. 10.—*Fainting in the day of adversity.* I. STRENGTH IS TESTED BY THE DAY OF ADVERSITY. 1. *The day of adversity will come.* All have not an equally painful lot. It is only the pessimist who refuses to admit that God sends a happy life to some; and if the lines have fallen in pleasant places, nothing but ingratitude or sentimentality will deny the fact. Nevertheless, the dark day of adversity will rise on every soul of man. It cannot be eluded, though in youth and health the spirit refuses to anticipate it. It is well to be prepared to meet it. 2. *Strength is wanted for the day of adversity.* This will be a time of assault, strain, pressure. The soul will then be besieged, buffeted, and in danger of being crushed. Therefore there is need of sufficient strength, not only for prosperous times, but for this harder occasion. The lighthouse must not only be strong enough to stand in calm weather; it should be able to resist the battering-rams of the tempest. The ship must be built for the storm. The army that can look smart in a review is useless if it goes to pieces on the field of battle. The model navy is an extravagant ornament if it will not serve us in action. The lamp is useless if it goes out in the hour of darkness. Religion is for the time of trial and temptation. The spiritual life needs to be strong enough to hold on through terror, temptation, and trouble; or it is a delusion. 3. *Faulty strength will fail in the day of adversity.* Trouble is trial. The season of affliction will assuredly be severe enough to prove our strength. It is vain for any one to live on empty boasts and idle pretences. The hollowness of such folly will be exposed at the fatal moment. The soft-metal sword will certainly double up in the battle and bring disaster on its unhappy owner.

II. FAITH AND COURAGE WILL GIVE STRENGTH IN THE DAY OF ADVERSITY. 1. *To faint in the day of adversity is to make one's strength small.* Such a collapse will undermine one's energy. The coward is always weak. To fear is to fail. But courage inspires strength, and he who is able to keep up a brave heart in the day of adversity is most likely to conquer. Few men have been called upon to endure such hardships and to face such perils as Livingstone, alone in the heart of Africa. Now, Livingstone was characterized by a wonderful buoyancy of temperament, by high spirits and unfailing cheerfulness. Nelson is said not to have known fear. Gordon was as ready to face death as to go to his daily duty. No doubt such heroic courage is largely due to the natural greatness of the men who possessed it. But it is not independent of

moral qualities. For: 2. *The secret of the highest courage is faith.* He who trusts God is armed with the might of God. This is higher than natural strength, because "even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isa. xl. 30, 31). Thus there is a strength that is perfected in weakness (2 Cor. xii. 9). 3. *Therefore we have no excuse to faint in the day of adversity.* With such stores of strength for the weakest, failure is culpable. Note: We are not to blame for meeting with adversity—we cannot escape it; nor for suffering under it—this is natural; but only for fainting, *i.e.* for collapse and despair. Yet even this may not mean utter failure. We may still have some strength, though it be sickly and fast ebbing away. Like Gideon's heroes, we may be "faint, yet pursuing" (Judg. viii. 4).

Vers. 11, 12.—*Culpable negligence.* Following the Revised Version and the now generally accepted rendering of these verses, we will read the first as an exhortation to deliver men from death, and the second as a warning against neglecting this duty.

I. THE EXHORTATION. "Deliver them that are carried away unto death, and those that are ready to be slain see that thou hold back." Note first the grounds, and then the application, of this exhortation. 1. *The grounds of it.* (1) It springs from human need. Men are in danger in war, famine, poverty, disease, sin. The world cannot go on without mutual assistance. The selfish policy of *sauve qui peut* would be fatal to society. (2) It is based on human brotherhood. God has made all men of one blood (Acts xvii. 26). Our fellow-creatures of the animal world have claims upon us; for, like us, they are sensitive, and God made both us and them. Much more are our fellow-men in our care. (3) It is urged by Divine commands. The Bible teaches duty to man as well as to God, on Divine authority. The mainly negative requirements of the ten commandments do not cover all our duty. We are called upon to love our neighbours as ourselves. (4) It is confirmed by the example of God. He has given us our lives, spared them when forfeited by sin, and saved them from many dangers. He has given his Son in death to save us from ruin. Such redeeming mercy makes churlish negligence on our part doubly culpable. 2. *The application of it.* (1) There should be mercy in war. It is heathenish to refuse quarter. The Christian soldier will dress the wounds of his enemy. (2) We should render assistance in cases of accident and danger. It is horrible to read in the newspapers of men who would watch a child drown because they were not officers of the Royal Humane Society, because it was not their business to save life, and even because they had good clothes which they did not wish to soil. Selfish people will see a man half murdered in a street-quarrel without interfering. (3) We should help the poor. This applies to our own poor first, then to those of our neighbourhood, but the obligation extends as far as a China famine. (4) Hospitals deserve support, for ministrations to the sick directly tend to preserve life. (5) Social reforms demand Christian assistance. (6) It is our supreme duty to spread the gospel throughout the world. This is a "Word of life" (Phil. ii. 16). To let men perish for lack of the bread of life is culpable negligence. The lepers of Samaria rebuke such conduct (2 Kings vii. 9).

II. THE WARNING. 1. *Ignorance is no excuse.* "Behold, we knew it" (or "him") "not." Of course, this does not apply to unavoidable ignorance. But the rich should know the condition of the poor. It is the duty of the West End to investigate the condition of the East End. While this duty is neglected the comfortable complacency of ignorance is unpardonable. Further, if the attempted excuse be that the sufferer is personally unknown to us, this must not be admitted. He is still our brother. The parable of the good Samaritan shows that the perfect stranger has claims upon us. 2. *God observes this negligence.* He "pondereth the heart." He reads our secret thoughts and weighs our motives. Thus he knows whether we are kept back by unavoidable ignorance or inability to help, or whether the negligence is wilful. With this awful fact before us, that there is One who "pondereth the heart," all flimsy excuses must shrivel up and leave the negligence of the needy in its naked guilt. 3. *God will treat us according to our treatment of our fellow-men.* "With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again" (Matt. vii. 2). Moreover, in regard to the duty now before us, it is to be observed that God takes note of omissions as well as

of transgressions. The "eternal fire" is not spoken of by our Lord for thieves, murderers, etc., but for those who failed to help the hungry, the thirsty, the needy (Matt. xxv. 41—46).

Ver. 16.—*The fall of a good man.* I. IT IS POSSIBLE FOR A GOOD MAN TO FALL. 1. *Here is a warning against presumption.* "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. x. 12). No one is so perfect as to be impeccable. Peter, who little expected it, failed in the moment of trial. 2. *He is a warning against wrong judgments.* If a good man stumbles it is commonly thought that he proves himself to have been a hypocrite from the first. No notion could be more unwarrantable. It is possible that the former life was honest and true and up to its profession, but that a sudden change for the worse has occurred through yielding to overpowering temptation. The citadel was honestly guarded; but in an unwary moment, when the custodian was sleeping, or careless, or weak, it fell before the assaults of the ever-watchful foe. This may even be repeated many times. We can scarcely think of a really good man lapsing utterly from the right way as many as seven times and as often returning to it. But some measure of sin is committed many times. There is not a Christian who does not fall into numerous sins.

II. IF A GOOD MAN FALLS HE IS LIKELY TO RISE UP AGAIN. We need not now discuss the thorny doctrine of "final perseverance." Without retreating into the tangled thicket of *à priori* dogmatics, we may discover certain plain and practical considerations which will encourage us to believe in the recovery of the lapsed. 1. *The bent of a good man's life is towards goodness.* He is a just man. Righteousness is characteristic of him. It is his habit. His fall is an event, his righteousness is his life. He is not the less guilty in his sin. He cannot shake it off and disown it, fortifying himself against the charge of it under the guise of his habitual righteousness. A long career of goodness is no excuse for a single wrong deed. Nevertheless, beneath and behind the sin into which the man has been surprised are the general tone and temper of his life. This will make his fall an agony. One look from Christ, and the shame-faced disciple goes out to weep bitterly (Matt. xxvi. 75). The Christian who has been surprised in an hour of weakness will be in the greatest distress afterwards. He can have no rest till he is forgiven and restored. Hence there is a hope for him which we cannot cherish on behalf of the bad man who has had no experience of the better way and who has no inclination to follow it. 2. *A good man may return.* There is danger in despair. The miserable penitent fears that he may have committed the unpardonable sin, forgetting that his very grief is a proof that that dark eternity of guilt has not yet been reached. God is long-suffering and merciful. Seven times the poor man falls; seven times he is forgiven and restored by his compassionate Lord. 3. *The grace of God assists recovery.* Indeed, without this it were impossible. But with it who shall despair? On the other hand, after a wicked man has indulged in sin he refuses to open his heart to Divine grace. The one means by which he might climb up out of his deep ruin is rejected by him.

In conclusion, we may gather from a consideration of this subject that the first essential is the character of a man's life, rather than that of isolated and perhaps exceptional deeds. God notes every deed, and not one can go unavenged. But the fundamental question is—How does a man live in the main? is the set of his life towards goodness? does he habitually face the light or the darkness? Though with many stumbles and shameful bruises, is he, on the whole, going up, not down? If so, he is one of God's sons.

Ver. 19.—*A needless trouble.* I. THERE IS A TEMPTATION TO BE DISTRESSED AT THE PROSPERITY OF BAD MEN. 1. *It is unjust.* This was an ancient source of perplexity and trouble of mind. While good men often suffer, bad men are often exceptionally free from the world's ills. This pains us as a frightful discord in the psalm of life. It raises doubts as to the presence, or the power, or the justice of God. If the just Lord is in our midst and is almighty to rule, why does he permit such a condition of society? 2. *It is hurtful.* Prosperity confers power. Thus great resources are at the disposal of bad men, who are able to expend them in extensive schemes of wickedness. A successful Napoleon can deluge a continent with blood, and

bring misery into thousands of households. The triumph of bad men not only enables them to inflict suffering to a frightful extent; it gives them exceptional opportunities for spreading the infectious malaria of their sin. When a bad man prospers he contaminates his trade, lowers the character of business generally, and tempts his *employés* to do wrong on a scale that is proportionate to his enterprises. 3. *It seems to be enviable.* Sin looks like a short cut to success. It is hard for a good man who resists temptations to be rewarded with distresses which he would have escaped if he had yielded.

II. IT IS FOOLISH TO BE DISTRESSED AT THE PROSPERITY OF BAD MEN. 1. *Prosperity is infinitely inferior to character.* The great question is not as to what a man has, but as to what he is. It is far more important to be upright and holy in life than to be rich, successful, and happy in one's circumstances. Surely he who values true goodness will feel that it is a pearl of great price—the cost of which would not be compensated for by all the wealth of the Indies. Therefore to envy the prosperity of the wicked is to turn aside from the higher possession which may be enjoyed in poverty and adversity. 2. *The prosperity of the wicked is delusive and unsatisfactory.* It professes to give pleasure, but it cannot afford real happiness, for it has nothing in it to respond to the deeper cravings of the soul. He who feasts upon it is like a man who would fill himself with chaff and saw-dust. In his very satiety he is miserably hungry. Full, he yet starves. Or worse, he is like one who drinks madly of salt water, and is plunged into an agony of thirst in consequence. If, as may happen, however, he feels a measure of satisfaction, this can only be by deadening his higher nature. Such a state is delusive and more terrible than open complaining. 3. *This prosperity is short-lived.* "The candle of the wicked shall be put out" (ver. 20). The psalmist who was alarmed at the prosperity of the wicked saw another picture when he came to consider their end. He who would share the purple and fine linen of Dives on earth must also share his bed of fire after death. It is only the short-sighted, earthly minded man who will much envy the prosperity of the wicked. A deeper-thinking man will dread it, and be well satisfied if he has the true blessedness of life eternal.

Ver. 29.—*Rendering evil for evil.* It is interesting to note that this conduct is not only rebuked by Jesus Christ, but also forbidden in the Old Testament, and even in the Book of Proverbs, which is thought to deal too much in temporal and self-regarding motives. So utterly is it foreign to right-mindedness. Yet it is most common, and apparently most natural.

I. LET US CONSIDER HOW IT SEEMS NATURAL TO RENDER EVIL FOR EVIL. 1. *It appears to be just.* There is a natural fitness in things, and this seems to be satisfied by the *lex talionis*, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." 2. *It offers to check evil.* It appears to be a natural form of punishment. Indeed, it was sanctioned in rough, primitive times, though subject to judicial inquiry (Exod. xxi. 24). 3. *It satisfies the craving for revenge.* This is the reason which encourages it far more than considerations of abstract justice or anxiety about the public weal. "Revenge is sweet," and to restrain the impulse to strike an offender in return for his blow is hard and painful. 4. *It agrees with prevalent customs.* It is "after the manner of man" to avenge a wrong, and apparently the habit springs from innate instincts. At all events, it works without reflection. Therefore it appears to be a part of the economy of nature. To refuse it is like denying a natural appetite.

II. LET US LEARN WHY IT IS WRONG TO RENDER EVIL FOR EVIL. 1. *The sense of revenge lies in our lower nature.* It is shared by the brute creation, like hunger and lust. But it is aggravated by the sin of hatred and by selfishness. There is nothing noble or elevating in it. On the contrary, it drags us down. Long-suffering braces the moral fibres of the soul; revenge relaxes them. 2. *We are not called upon to execute sentence on our fellow-men.* If there is to be a requital, this must come from God, to whom belongs just vengeance (Rom. xii. 19). We are usurping the rights of God when we impatiently take it into our own hands. Moreover, we are the worst possible judges of our own rights. When deeply wounded, or irritated by insults, or blinded by passion, we are not in a fit condition to exercise judicial functions. Yet it is just on such occasions that we are most tempted to wreak vengeance on the head of an offender. 3. *It is our duty to forgive and save our fellow-man.* Even if punishment

be due to him, vengeance from us is not owing. Our business is to seek to reclaim by "heaping coals of fire" on our wrong-doer. Instead of doing to him as he has done to us, our Christian motto is to do to him as we would that he should do to us. 4. *Revenge is un-Christlike.* Christians are called to follow in the footsteps of the patient and brave Jesus, who was patient under provocation, even praying for his enemies. 5. *Revenge is unseemly in those who need forgiveness.* We are dependent on the mercy of God. He has not taken vengeance on us. But if we forgive not men their trespasses, neither will our heavenly Father forgive us our trespasses. Thus Portia rightly says to Shylock—

> "Consider this—
> That in the course of justice, none of us
> Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy;
> And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
> The deeds of mercy."

Vers. 30—34.—*The field of the slothful.* Nothing is more characteristic of the Book of Proverbs than its scorn of slothfulness and its strenuous inculcation of industry. No doubt these subjects were especially important in view of the perennial indolence of Orientals. But slothfulness is not unknown in the West, and in the fierce competition of modern life a smaller indulgence in idleness will bring sure disasters. Men often blame their circumstances, the injustice of fate, etc., when they should accuse their own lack of energy. The difference between the successful and those who fail to attain anything in life is more often than not just that between hard work and self-indulgent, easy living. Moreover, many men who are diligent in business are most slothful in spiritual matters. Hence applications of the parable in the present day.

I. THE STATE OF THE FIELD. 1. *This is visible to the casual wayfarer.* The writer simply "went by" it; yet he took in enough at a glance to understand its condition. A man's character is impressed upon his work. A slovenly man will have a slovenly hand. The neglected field and the ill-kept vineyard reveal the idle and foolish nature of their owner. 2. *The field is seen to be in a miserable condition.* (1) It is overgrown with thorns and nettles. It is not left empty if it is untilled. Weeds grow on the neglected land. If we fail to do our duty, positive mischief will follow. If we neglect the field of the world, briars of ignorance, folly, and sin will spring up; if we fail to train the vineyard of our own family, nettles of evil will appear in the minds of our children, to sting us for our indolence. Thus was it with Eli, who failed to rebuke his sons. If we do not cultivate the gardens of our own souls, rank weeds of sin will certainly grow up there and bear their poisonous fruits. (2) Its defences are broken down. The indolent man lets his walls fall into dilapidation. Thus his property lies open to the robber and the destroyer. The wild boar from the wood will root up his vine. If we are not watchful and careful, evil will come in from without and spoil our work, our home, our souls. It needs care to guard against aggression.

II. THE CONDUCT OF THE OWNER. 1. *It is slothful.* (1) His evil is negative. He commits no offence. Yet he is ruined. We may be undone by simple omission without any transgression. (2) His evil is in delaying to do his duty. He does not mean to forego it. He only postpones fulfilment. Yet he is ruined and disgraced. We owe duties to time. We do wrong by not accomplishing our work promptly, though we intend to accomplish it ultimately. We have not unlimited time before us. To-day's neglected task cannot be performed to-morrow without hindering to-morrow's work. The foolish virgins failed by being too late. 2. *It is self-indulgent.* The sluggard enjoys his sleep. Selfishness is the root of idleness. But this, in turn, is stupefying. One does not note how the fresh morning glides away while he lies with his eyes closed in sinful sleep. So also the slumber of the soul that neglects the call to its highest duty is a selfish sleep. 3. *It is foolish.* The sleep is a poor compensation for poverty and shame.

III. THE CERTAIN CONSEQUENCES. 1. *Ruin follows.* Poverty comes on the slothful man of business as a natural punishment. Poverty of soul, emptiness, fruitlessness, and finally death follow spiritual sloth. 2. *This may be unsuspected.* "Like a highwayman." 3. *It will be irresistible.* The want will come "as an armed man."

CONCLUSION. Sloth is peculiarly liable to creep into one's habits without being noticed. Therefore the need of ver. 32.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Warning against evil company.* I. THE LOVE OF SOCIETY IS A NATURAL INSTINCT.

II. EVIL COMPANY IS OFTEN MOST FASCINATING.

III. THE ASSOCIATIONS THAT ARE FOUNDED UPON MERE FELLOWSHIP IN PLEASURE ARE SELDOM SATISFACTORY, OFTEN CORRUPTING.

IV. THE BAD MAN'S COMPANY IS MORE TO BE SHUNNED THAN THAT OF ONE SUFFERING FROM A CONTAGIOUS DISEASE. "Wicked companions," said a man of the world, the novelist Fielding, "invite us to hell." "They are like to be short graces when the devil plays the host," said another.—J.

Vers. 3—6.—*Wisdom edifies and invigorates.* How fine a word is "edification," *building up*, in its moral and Christian uses! Here the image of the house is directly introduced, and may be variously applied.

I. WISDOM THE FOUNDATION OF DOMESTIC STABILITY AND HAPPINESS. (Vers. 3, 4.) The same great principles apply in the least as well as the most important things. Every day brings humble occasions for the practice of the grandest laws, no less in the house, the farm, or the shop, than in the council-chamber or on the battle-field. "Method is as efficient in the packing of firewood in a shed, or the harvesting of fruits in a cellar, as in Peninsular campaigns or the files of a department of state." Let a man keep the Law, and his way will be strewn with satisfactions. There is more difference in the quality of our pleasures than in the amount. Comfort and abundance in the home are the certain signs of prudence and sense and action constantly applied.

II. WISDOM THE SOURCE OF MANLY STRENGTH. (Vers. 5, 6.) It was a great man who said, "Knowledge is power." It is not the force of brute strength, but that of spiritual energy, which in the long run rules the world. The illustration of the text is aptly selected from war, where, if anywhere, brute force might be supposed to prevail. Experience shows that it is not so. The complete failures of men like Hannibal and Napoleon show it in one way. Recent wars have illustrated the truth that it is the deliberate and matured designs of the strategist and far-seeing statesman which command success, rather than the "great battalions" on the side of which Providence was said to be. And in another application, sheer force of intellect is often surpassed and outdone by the steady and constant employment of humbler powers. Strength in any form without prudence is like a giant without eyes. Violence and craft may seem the readiest way to wealth; yet experience shows that prudence and piety lead most surely to desirable prosperity.—J.

Vers. 7—10.—*Some traits of folly and sin.* I. THE GROVELLING MIND. (Ver. 7.) Wisdom is too high for the indolent to climb to, for the sensual and earthly to admire and love. They are like Muck-rake, in Bunyan's parable. From such no good counsel ever comes. They are dumb "in the gate," on every important occasion, when help, light, sympathy, are needed. The base prudence which inspires many popular proverbs—the prudence "which adores the rule of three, which never subscribes, never gives, seldom lends, and asks but one question of any project, 'Will it bake bread?'"—is indeed folly. "Self's the man," says a Dutch proverb. But those who would gain all for self end by losing self and all.

II. THE MALICIOUS TEMPER. (Ver. 8.) There are degrees in vice as in virtue. It is a short step from grovelling egotism to active malice. Extract the root of self-seeking out of any dispute, private or public, in Church or state, and the other differences may soon be adjusted. To make mischief is a diabolic instinct, and it certainly springs up in the mind void of healthy occupation and of interest for the true, beautiful, and good; for the mind's principle is motion, and it cannot cease to act.

III. SIN IN THE THOUGHT AND THE MOOD. (Ver. 9.) When busy invention and meditation are at work in the mind of the wicked and the fool, nothing good is produced. Still more is it the case with the scoffer. In him the ripened and practised

powers of the mind are brought into alliance with evil desire. Such a habit of mind, once detected, excites the utmost odium and abhorrence. The man who can sneer at goodness, or hold what is by common consent good and beautiful in contempt, is already an outcast from his kind, and need not complain if he is treated as such.

IV. COWARDLY FAINT-HEARTEDNESS. (Ver. 10.) The pressure of circumstances should rouse in us the God-given strength. The man who makes duty his polar star, and trusts in God, can actually do more when things seem to be against him than when all is in his favour. Moral cowardice is closely connected with the root-sin of unbelief. Indulgence in it impoverishes and weakens the soul, so that the man ends by being actually unable to do what once he only fancied himself unable to do. Here is an illustration of Christ's saying, "To him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken that which he hath."—J.

Vers. 11, 12.—*Compassion for the wronged.* I. THE HEART AND HAND SHOULD EVER BE READY AT THE CALL OF DISTRESS. (Ver. 11.) The picture seems to be placed before us of one arriving at the place of judgment, seeing an innocent sufferer, yet, like the priest and the Levite in the parable, passing by "on the other side."

> "To see sad sights moves more than hear them told;
> For then the eye interprets to the ear
> The heavy motion that it doth behold."

To respond to these mute appeals from any of God's creatures is to obey a law immediately known within our breast; to resist them is to sin against him and against our own souls.

II. NEGLECT OF DUTY CANNOT ESCAPE PUNISHMENT. (Ver. 12.) 1. *Human nature is fertile in excuses.* For the burden of blame and of conscious guilt is the heaviest we can bear. But searching is the truth of the proverb, "Whoso excuses, accuses himself." Ignorance of duty needs no excuses; but excuses for neglect can never be valid. 2. *Excuses may avail with man, but not with God.* With fallible men they may and often do pass for truth. At all events, they must often be accepted by those who need in turn to make them. But God knows the truth of every heart, and in every case; and to him excuses are either needless or worse. 3. *Judgment will be executed in spite of our excuses.* For God is the Vindicator of the wronged, and the Recompenser of all according to their deeds. Scripture is very impressive on the sin of *neglect* of kindly duties to others, in regard to which the conscience is so often dull (Luke xiv. 18, etc.). Men content themselves with the reflection that they have not done others positive harm—a negative position. But the other negative position, that we have not done the good we had a call to do, on this the teaching of Christ fixes a deeper guilt. Noble as it is to save a life from bodily death, still more glorious in its consequences is it to save a *soul* from death, and hide a multitude of sins.—J.

Vers. 13, 14.—*Zeal in the pursuit of wisdom.* I. THE SWEETNESS OF WISDOM. (Ver. 13.) Not without deep meaning is the sense of knowing the truth compared to the sensuous relish of the palate for sweet food. Here is, indeed, a

> "Perpetual feast of nectared sweets,
> Where no crude surfeit reigns."

(Cf. Ps. xix. 11.)

II. ENCOURAGEMENT IN ITS PURSUIT. (Ver. 14.) It brings a true satisfaction both during the pursuit and at its end, which can be said of few other objects of eager ambition in this world. The seeker for truth may be compared to the maiden of the parable, who timely fills her lamp with oil, and "hope that reaps not shame." The pursuit of wisdom, or of truth as understood and taught in this book, is no chase of dreams or abstractions; it is the affair of all. Truth is all that touches and convinces man, whether as an individual, or as a member of society, or the citizen of a nation. It is that which tells him that he is not isolated in the midst of unknown beings; but that beyond his individual life he partakes in a life that is universal. All that in the past, whether facts, thoughts, or sentiments, are in question, that makes us contemporary with the facts, fellow-heirs with humanity in great thoughts, sympathetic with great sentiments, is truth.—J.

Vers. 15—18.—*Violence and shameful joy defeated.* I. THE ATTITUDE OF THE MAN OF FRAUD AND VIOLENCE DEPICTED. (Ver. 15.) He is like the prowling wild beast, seeking whom he may devour. God the Creator has not armed us with tooth or tusk or other means of defence, like the wild beasts which are formed for making war on others. We are strongly furnished for defence, not for attack. Ferocity is distinctly an unnatural vice in us.

II. HIS ACTIVITY IS DEVASTATING. Here, again, he resembles the wild beast in his blind fury, the boar that uproots and overturns in the cultivated garden.

III. THE SELF-RECOVERY OF THE RIGHTEOUS. (Ver. 16.) To fall into sin and to fall into trouble are two different things. Avoid the former, and God will not forsake thee in the latter. Seven falls stand for many—an indefinite number of falls. There is an elasticity in rectitude like that of the young sapling; bent to the earth, it rebounds with strong upspring. "It may calm the apprehension of calamity to see how quiet a bound nature has set to the utmost infliction of malice. We rapidly approach a brink over which no enemy can follow us." But evil, being purely negative, a zero, the absence of internal power and virtue, has but an illusory existence, and quickly passes away.

IV. BASE JOY TURNED INTO SHAME. (Vers. 17, 18.) He who rejoices in the trouble of another, his own trouble stands behind the door. Why should he fear who takes his post with Omnipotence at his back?

> "Souls that of God's own good life partake
> He loves as his own self; dear as his eye
> They are to him; he'll never them forsake.
> When they shall die, then God himself shall die;
> They live—they live in blest eternity."

The tyrant and his victim are made to change sides. The "wrath" which seems expressed in the calamities of the latter is transformed into the revelation of an "everlasting kindness," while terror strikes the heart of him who sought to infuse it into his foe (compare R. Browning's striking poem, 'Instans Tyrannus').—J.

Vers. 19—22.—*Religion fortifies the heart against envy.* I. THE TEMPTATION TO ENVY THE PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED. It is very marked in the Old Testament. It is a common temptation. For we look at the outside of man's condition, and are deceived by illusions. A pirate's vessel in the distance, a mansion built and inhabited by infamy, are beautiful objects of æsthetic contemplation. So it is that the show and bravery of success master our senses.

II. THE ANTIDOTE TO THESE FEELINGS. (Ver. 20.) "Consider the end"—darkness and the blackness of darkness. The wicked have *no* future. When this is once clearly seen, the charm on the surface fades away, and the edifice of proud but godless prosperity sinks almost into a smoking ruin.

III. RELIGION AND MORALITY THE ONLY FOUNDATION OF SECURITY AND BLESSEDNESS. (Vers. 21, 22.) The one comprehensive word for religion is the "fear of Jehovah," reverence for God, and for all that, being true, is of the very nature of God. And obedience to the king includes all those civil and social duties which we incur as members of an ordered commonwealth. Religion and loyalty go together; and the best way to make good subjects to the queen is to make men good servants of God. They will not make conscience of civil duties who make none of Divine.—J.

Vers. 23—25.—*Partiality and equality in judgment.* I. RESPECT OF PERSONS. The literal translation is, "To distinguish persons in judgment is not good." The judge should be impartial as the pair of scales, the emblem of his office, and blind to the persons who appear before him, that is, to their rank and position, as the symbolical figure of Justice is represented to be. "One foul sentence doth more hurt than many foul examples; these do but corrupt the stream, the other corrupteth the fountain."

II. THE WILFUL PERVERSION OF RIGHT. (Ver. 24.) When the just man is suffered to fail in his cause before his adversary, the very nerve of public right is unstrung. It strikes a direct blow at the common weal, and hence brings down the curses of peoples and the enmity of states.

III. EQUAL AND JUST JUDGMENT. (Ver. 25.) "A judge ought to prepare his way

to a just sentence, as God useth to prepare his way, by raising valleys and taking down hills; so when there appeareth on either side a high hand, violent persecution, cunning advantages taken, combination, power, great counsel, then is the virtue of a judge seen to make inequality equal; that he may plant his judgment as upon an even ground" (Bacon). In the present text the glance is towards a proper and due severity, which will not allow the wicked to escape. "Odium may equally be incurred by him who winks at crime and by him who has no regard to mercy. For in causes of life and death, judges ought, as far as the law permits, in justice to remember mercy, and to cast a severe eye upon the example, but a merciful eye upon the person" (Bacon). The purity of the judicial bench is one of the greatest of public blessings. Let us be thankful that we enjoy it in our country, and pray that it may ever continue.—J.

Vers. 26—29.—*Just conduct to our neighbour.* I. TRUE WITNESS. (Ver. 26.) He who gives true and faithful answers—especially in courts of justice—delights, even as the sweetest kiss upon the mouth delights. The poet alludes to the effect upon the *ear*. The understanding can no more be delighted with a lie than the will can choose an apparent evil. "Strange as it may seem," says one playfully, "the human mind loses truth." We may add, "when passion does not blind the intellect to its beauty." In the court of justice, all but the guilty and those interested in his fate see the beauty of truth, and prize it above all things. Hence to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, is the solemn oath of witnesses.

II. FALSE AND UNCALLED-FOR WITNESS. (Ver. 28.) To bear false witness strikes at the very root of conscience and moral obligation. But criminal, though in a less degree, is the volunteering of evidence without cause against another; *i.e.* when no object but private hatred and revenge is to be served. Compare the case of Doeg (1 Sam. xxii. 9, 10); the Pharisees with the wretched sinner in John viii.; the words of the Lord in John xv. 25. Speak evil of no man, not only that evil which is altogether false and groundless, but that which is true, when speaking of it will do more harm than good (Matthew Henry).

III. DELIBERATE DECEPTION. About a court of justice, which represents truth, there gathers a dark shade of roguery and falsehood; "persons that are full of sinister tricks and shifts, whereby they pervert the plain and direct courses of courts, and bring justice into oblique lines and labyrinths."

IV. BLIND INDULGENCE OF VINDICTIVE TEMPER. (Ver. 29; comp. ch. xx. 22.) Nothing is more deeply impressed in the Bible than the truth of compensation or retribution. But men must not take the law into their own hands. "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith Jehovah." "Revenge is a kind of wild justice, which the more man's nature runs to, the more ought law to weed it out. In taking revenge a man is but even with his enemy; but in passing it over he is superior. It is the glory of a man to pass by an offence. The man who studies revenge keeps his own wounds green, which otherwise would heal and do well" (Bacon).—J.

Ver. 27.—*The prudence and policy of industry.* I. ALL LABOUR IS ROOTED IN THE TILLAGE OF THE EARTH. 'Tis thus that bread was first wrung from her—by universal field-labour. Our ancestors were all agricultural labourers. All other industry must be fruitless and stop without the action of this spring. It is therefore the part of all prudent and good men to encourage cultivation, to improve the condition of the labourer and the farmer. All honour to the great statesmen of our time who have wrought in this cause. It is edifying to recollect that God has made Mother Earth the eternal mediator and minister to us of material blessings which lie at the foundation of all our life.

II. DOMESTIC COMFORT AND INDEPENDENCE REST UPON LABOUR. It is the "prudence of a higher strain" than that which begins and ends with mere sensual comfort that is taught in this book. It is attention to law, it is unbelief in luck, which constitutes its principle. Self-command, unslothful habits, constant exertion, put the bread a man eats at his own disposal, so that he stands not in bitter and false relations to other men.—J.

Vers. 30—34.—*The sluggard's vineyard: a parable of sloth.* I. A PICTURE OF

INDOLENCE. (Vers. 30, 31.) The vineyard in the East corresponds to the garden, orchard, or small farm in the West. In the parable it is overgrown with nettles and thorns. The stone fence is crumbling for want of repair. We may contrast the picture in Isa. v. 1, *sqq.*, of what a vineyard ought to be. The way in which God tilled the chosen people is the way in which he would have each of us attend to the garden of the soul.

II. THE SIGHT CARRIES A LESSON AND A WARNING. (Vers. 32—34.) Let us attend to the parables of Nature. The eye is the great critical organ, and we never want lessons if we use it. The *lesson* here is—the effect has a cause—the wildness of Nature betrays the sin of man. Neglect marks itself on her truthful face. The sluggard's soul is revealed in her aspect not less than in the unkempt hair and squalid face of the human being. Here is the "vile sin of self-neglect," which involves all other neglect, clearly mirrored. In such spectacles and in the gloomier ones of malarious swamps, once smiling fields, God writes his judgment on the broad earth's face against the crime of sloth. The *warning* is against poverty and want, which stride on with noiseless footsteps, rushing in at last with sudden surprise upon dreaming self-indulgence, like an armed robber. Sudden-seeming woes are long preparing, and no curse "causeless comes."

III. THE MORAL APPLICATION. 1. The analogy of Nature and the human spirit. Both are of God. Both contain principles of life, beauty, and use. Both need cultivation in order to their perfection. In both sloth and neglect are punished by loss and ruin. 2. The personal moral duty. To "awake from sleep," to "stir up the gift within us," to "work out our salvation," to be good husbandmen, good and faithful servants in this garden of the Lord—the soul. If not faithful here, how can it be expected that we shall be faithful in spheres more remote?—J.

Ver. 1.—(See homily on ch. xxiii. 17, 18.)—C.

Vers. 3—6.—*Building with wisdom.* God is the Divine Builder. "He that built all things is God" (Heb. iii. 4). Man, also, is a great builder. The whole scenery of the earth is not a little changed by the houses and temples, by the bridges and factories, by the manifold structures of every size and shape, that he has built. But these are not the most serious and important of his works. We look at—

I. THE HOUSES WE ARE BUILDING. Of these, three are the most deserving of attention. 1. *Our estate.* The position and provision we secure for ourselves and our family; an honourable place we take among men, as neighbours and fellow-citizens. Every man has to set this before him as a thing to be patiently pursued and ultimately attained. Some men think of little else or nothing else, therein making a fatal mistake; but it is the manifest duty as well as the clear interest of us all, to build up a house of this kind. 2. *Our character.* This is "a house" of the first importance. We are here for this express purpose—that we may be daily and hourly building up a noble and estimable character; such a character as God will himself approve; such as man will admire, and will do well to copy; such as will command the commendation of our own conscience; such as will stand firm and strong against all the perils by which it is beset; such as will contain many virtues and graces in its various "chambers" (ver. 4). "Precious and pleasant rubies," indeed, are these. 3. *Some cause of Christian usefulness.* We should all be diligently occupied in raising or sustaining some "work" of holy usefulness, by which the seeds of truth may be scattered, hearts may be comforted, lives may be brightened, souls may be won to righteousness and wisdom, Christ may be honoured, and his kingdom advanced.

II. THE INDISPENSABLE MATERIALS. The wisdom which is from above. "Through wisdom is a house built, and by understanding it is established" (ver. 3). For wisdom includes or secures: 1. *The fear and therefore the favour of God.* (See ch. i. 7; ix. 10.) (1) To walk and to work in the fear of God is to do all things uprightly and honourably, truly and faithfully, heartily and thoroughly; and this is the way to build up any one of these three "houses." (2) To enjoy the favour of God is to have behind us that energizing and sustaining power without which all labour is vain (Ps. cxxvii. 1); it is to possess the protecting care which will shield us from the storms that might otherwise overthrow us (Ps. cxxi.). 2. *The various orders of strength* which we need for good building (ver. 5). (1) It tends to physical health and strength. (2) It conduces

to mental strength and the increase of knowledge; it supplies us with good judgment, with tact, with prudence, with patience, with the very implements of successful labour. (3) It ministers to moral and spiritual strength; for it brings us into communion with God and to the study of his Word. 3. *The power of resistance and attack.* By "wise counsel we make war" (ver. 6). It is a very great matter, in all spheres of activity, to know when to make peace and when to show a fearless front of opposition. And when the latter course has to be taken, there is much true wisdom needed in order that our house, our stronghold, may not be carried and dismantled. We need courage, decision, watchfulness, energy, self-command, readiness to make terms at the right moment. To attain to the wisdom which will thus build up our house, we need to (1) yield our hearts fully to the only wise God and Saviour; (2) open our minds daily to receive his heavenly wisdom; (3) ask of him who "giveth to all men liberally, upbraiding not."—C.

Ver. 9.—"*The thought of foolishness.*" It will be well to be on our guard against a possible mistake here; for next in importance to our knowledge of what things are wrong and hurtful, is our freedom from imaginary fears and morbid anxieties respecting those things which are perfectly innocent and pure. We look, then, at—

I. THOUGHTS WHICH MAY SEEM TO BE, BUT ARE NOT, CONDEMNED BY THESE WORDS. 1. The serious but mistaken thoughts of childhood or of uneducated manhood. It is not every thought which cannot be characterized as wisdom that must be condemned as "foolishness." The honest attempts of artless simplicity to solve problems or to execute commands may be honourable and even commendable failures; they are the conditions of growth. 2. The lighter thoughts of the cultured and mature, thoughts of merriment and frolicsomeness, moving to honest laughter, are far from being sinful. They are clearly in accordance with the will of the Divine Father of our spirits, who is the Author of our nature, with its faculties and tendencies; they are often found to be a necessary relief under the otherwise intolerable strain of oppressive care and burdensome toil. One of the most serious and one of the most kind-hearted and successful servants of our race (Abraham Lincoln) was only saved from complete mental derangement during the terrible time of the civil war by finding occasional refuge in humour. But what are—

II. THE THOUGHTS WHICH ARE HERE CONDEMNED? The thoughts of foolishness. 1. *Our responsibility for our thoughts.* Impalpable and fugitive as they are, our thoughts are a very real part of ourselves, and they constitute a serious part of our responsibility to God. That they do so is clear; for: (1) On them everything in human life and action ultimately depends. Action depends on will, will on feeling, and feeling on thought. It is *what* we think and *how* we think that determines what we do and what we are. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Thought is the very foundation of character. (2) Thought is free. We may be compelled to speak or to act in certain prescribed ways; but we are masters of our own minds, and we can think as we like. How we think depends on our own volition. (3) We either choose deliberately the subject of our thoughts (by selecting our friends, our books and papers, our topics of conversation), or we are led to think as we do by the mental and moral character which we have been deliberately forming; we are responsible for the stream because we are responsible for the spring. 2. *The sinful character of foolish thoughts.* Foolish thoughts may be (1) *irreverent*, and all irreverence is sin; or they may be (2) *selfish*, and all selfishness is sin; or (3) *impure*, and all impurity is sin; or (4) *unkind* and inconsiderate, unloving or vindictive, and all unkindness is sin; or (5) *short-sighted and worldly*, and all worldliness is sin (1 John ii. 15—17). The conclusion of the whole matter is that if we would be right with God, "harmless and blameless," we must be right in our "inward thought" (see Heb. iv. 12); and that if we would be right there, in those central depths of our nature, we must (*a*) place our whole nature under the direct rule of the Holy One himself; (*b*) seek daily for the cleansing influences of his Holy Spirit, the continual renewal of our mind by his inspiration; (*c*) "keep our hearts beyond all keeping" (ch. ii. 23), especially by welcoming, with eagerness and delight, all the wisdom of God that we can gather from his Word.—C.

Vers. 10, 15.—*The test of adversity.* We have all of us to expect—

I. THE TESTING-TIME THAT COMES TO ALL MEN. It is true that prosperity has its own perils, and makes its own demands on the human spirit. But when the sky is clear above us, when loving friends stand round us with protecting care, when privileges abound on every side, it is comparatively easy to maintain an equable and obedient mind. We can all row with the stream and sail with the favouring wind. But the hour must come to us that comes to all in time, when we have to face difficulty, or to bear obloquy, or to sustain heavy loss, or to go on our way with a lonely heart, or to suffer some keen and all but crushing disappointment. When we are moved to say with Jacob, "All these things are against me;" with Elijah, "Lord, take away my life;" we faint and fall in the day of adversity.

II. THE RESOURCES THAT SHOULD BE AT OUR COMMAND. When that hour comes to us, as it certainly will, we should be prepared to bear ourselves bravely and well; for there are many sources of strength with which we should be supplied. There is: 1. *Ordinary human fortitude.* Such manliness and strength of will as have enabled many thousands of souls—even without any aid from religion—to confront danger or death, or to show an undisturbed equanimity of mind in the midst of severe sorrows. But beyond this there is for us: 2. *Christian resignation.* The willingness to leave the whole disposal of our lives to the wisdom and the love of God; readiness to endure the holy will of a Divine Father, of our best Friend. 3. *Christian faith.* The assurance that God is dealing with us in perfect wisdom and parental love at those times when we can least understand his way. 4. *Christian hope.* The confidence that "unto the upright there will arise light in the darkness;" that God will grant a happy issue out of all our afflictions; that though the just man fall seven times, he will rise again (see ver. 15); that though weeping may endure even for a long and stormy night, joy will come in the morning (Ps. xxx. 5). 5. *Communion with God.* To the distressed human spirit there remains that most precious refuge, the leaning of the heart on God, the appeal of the soul to him in earnest, believing prayer.

III. THE INFERENCE WE ARE OBLIGED TO DRAW. If, with all these resources at our command, we "faint;" (1) if we indulge a rebellious spirit, repining at our lot and thinking ourselves hardly used; or (2) if we yield ourselves to misery and melancholy, showing ourselves unequal to the duties that devolve upon us, resigning the useful activities in which we have been engaged;—then we must conclude that "our strength is small;" we have failed to enrich our souls with that spiritual power of which we might and should have become possessed. But that we may not have to deplore our weakness in the day of adversity, and that we may not give a sorry illustration of Christian life as it ought not to be seen, let us learn what is—

IV. OUR WISDOM AT THE PRESENT TIME. And that is to be gaining strength, to be continually becoming "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." This is an *imperative duty* (Eph. vi. 10; 2 Tim. ii. 1; 2 Pet. iii. 18). And we are not without the necessary means. If, in the days of sunshine and prosperity, we are daily nourishing our faith, our love, our hope, our prayerfulness, by *constant exercise* in devotion and in sacred duty, by *using* the privileges so amply supplied to us, by cultivating and cherishing our union with Jesus Christ our Lord, we shall be strong, and we shall not faint.—C.

Vers. 11, 12.—*Inexcusable indifference.* The principles contained in this passage are these—

I. THAT ALL HUMAN NEED IS A CLAIM FOR HELP. God has so "fashioned our hearts alike," and has so bound together our lives and our interests, that we are under serious obligation to one another. No man is at liberty to live an isolated life; he owes too much to those that have gone before him, and is too closely related to those who are around him, to allow of such a course. To wish it is unnatural, to attempt it is immoral. "We are members one of another;" we are brethren and sisters one of another. And whenever any one about us—whoever or whatever he or she may be—is in any kind of difficulty or distress, is in need of sympathy and succour, there is an imperative demand, as clear as if it came from an angel's trumpet or straight out of the heavens above us, that we should stop, should inquire, should help as best we can (see 1 John iii. 17, 18).

II. THAT THE EXTREMITY OF HUMAN NEED IS A MOST POWERFUL PLEA. If *any*

sufferer on life's highway is a man to be pitied and relieved, how much more are they who are "drawn unto death," who are "ready to be slain"! To see our brother or our sister—made like ourselves, and capable as we are of intense suffering, holding life as precious as we ourselves regard it—in circumstances of keen distress or of utmost danger, and to withhold our pity and our aid,—this is condemned of God. Whether we "pass by *on the other side*" (Luke x. 31), so as to hide our cruel indifference as well as we can from our own sight; or whether we pass close by, clearly recognizing our duty, but cynically and heartlessly declining to do it; or whether we stand awhile and pity, but conclude that help will be too costly, and so pass on without helping;—we are guilty, we are unbrotherly, inhuman, altogether unlike our Lord.

III. THAT EXCUSES WILL NOT AVAIL US. If we want to escape from our plain duty we seldom refuse it *point-blank*. We do not say to our Lord or to ourselves, "We will not;" we say, "We would if——," or "We will when——" When our brother is in difficulty or in sorrow, and urgently needs the extricating hand, the sympathizing word, we may plead, to ourselves or to our neighbours, our ignorance of the sufferer, our imperfect acquaintance with the circumstances, our want of time, our incapacity for assisting in that kind of trouble, our multitudinous and pressing duties and claims, etc. These may succeed with men, but they will not avail with God. God knows the hollowness of these poor pleas; to his eye they are only thin veils that do not hide our cruel selfishness; he judges that nothing justifies us in abandoning the perishing to their fate, and he condemns us.

IV. THAT GOD IS GRIEVED WITH US FOR OUR OWN SAKE. He "that keepeth our soul" knows it. And because God does "keep our soul," he is grieved to see us take up an attitude towards our brother which (1) proves us to be unbrotherly, and (2) helps to fix us in our cold-heartedness. For every act and instance of selfishness hardens our heart and makes it more capable of cruel indifference than before.

V. THAT CRUELTY AND KINDNESS MOVE TO THEIR REWARD. "Shall he not render," etc.? Cruelty and kindness must be cursed or blessed by the immediate effects they leave in the soul of the agent. But they also move toward a day of award. Then will a selfish indifference hear its strong, Divine condemnation (Matt. xxv. 41—45). Then, also, will a generous kindness listen to its warm, Divine commendation (Matt. xxv. 34—40).—C.

Vers. 17, 18, 29.—*The ignobler and the nobler spirit.* (See homily on ch. xx. 22.) There can be no question at all, for the testimony of human history is everywhere and at all times the same, as to—

I. OUR DISPOSITION UNDER SIN, IN VIEW OF OUR ENEMIES. These two passages indicate it. It is both passive and active. 1. A disposition to rejoice at their discomfiture; to exult in the secret places of the soul when we hear of their failure, of their defeat, or even of their suffering. 2. A disposition to inflict some injury on them by our own effort. The impulse of the man who is struck is to strike again; that of the man who is cheated is to take the next opportunity of overreaching the treacherous neighbour; the prevalent feeling, under the long reign and malignant influence of sin, is to compass, in some way or other, the humiliation, or the loss, or the anger of the man who has injured us. We rejoice when our enemy falls; we do more and worse than that—we do our best, we use our ingenuity and put forth even our patient labour, to bring about his overthrow. So common, so universal, is this sentiment of revenge and retaliation, that no one is in a position to speak severely of his neighbour or to condemn him harshly. Yet we understand now—

II. ITS UNWORTHINESS OF OUR NATURE. It was not to cherish such thoughts as these, nor was it to act in such a way as this, that our Divine Father called us into being, and gave to us our powers. 1. We were made to love and to pity; and for us to harbour in our souls a feeling of positive delight when we witness the misery or misfortune of a brother or a sister is *really* inhuman; it is a perversion, under the malign power of sin, of the end and purpose of our being. 2. We were made to help and bless; and for us to expend the powers with which we are endowed to injure, to inflict suffering and loss, to send as far as we can on the downward road a human heart or human life,—this is wholly unworthy of ourselves, it is a sad departure from the intention of our Creator. We see clearly—

III. ITS OFFENSIVENESS TO GOD. "Lest the Lord see it, and it displease him." 1. God has told us fully what is his mind respecting it (Matt. v. 43—48; Rom. xii. 14, 20). 2. It is altogether unlike his own action; for he is daily and momently blessing with life and health and innumerable bounties those who have forgotten or disregarded or even denied him. 3. There are two aspects in which it must be obnoxious to him. (1) He is the Father of our spirits, and how can he look with anything but sorrow on antagonism and hatred between his children? (2) He is the Holy and the Loving One, and how can he see with anything but displeasure the hearts of men filled with the feelings of malevolence, the hands of men occupied in dealing bitter blows against one another? What, however, is the way by which this deep-rooted disposition can be expelled, and another and nobler spirit be planted in our souls? What is the way to—

IV. THE WORTHIER AND NOBLER SPIRIT. The one way to rise above vindictiveness and retaliation and to enter into the loftier and purer air of forgiveness and magnanimity is to connect ourselves most closely with our Lord Jesus Christ. 1. To surrender ourselves wholly to him, and thus to receive his Divine Spirit into our hearts (John vii. 38, 39; xv. 4; xvii. 23). 2. To have our hearts filled with that transforming love to our Father and our Saviour which will make us to become, unconsciously and gradually, like him in spirit and behaviour. 3. To let our minds be filled with the knowledge of his will, by patient and prayerful study of his Word and of his life.—C.

Vers. 30—34.—*The neglected garden.* The whole scene is before us. The sluggard is asleep while everything is going wrong; instead of the flower is the thorn; the ground is coloured with the green weeds; the wall is breaking down; where should be beauty is unsightliness; where should be fruitfulness is barrenness or wilderness; ruin is written, on everything, everywhere. So is it with the farmer, with the tradesman, with the merchant or manufacturer, of the sluggard order. Consider it well. Negligence, dilatoriness, half-heartedness, in any department means decay, break-down, ruin. *Poverty* is on its way, and will certainly be knocking at the door; *want* will present itself with a force that cannot be resisted. 1. We have all of us a garden, an estate of our own, which God has given us to cultivate—that which is of more value than many thousands of acres of fertile soil, that which no riches can buy—*our own true self*, our own human spirit. God has solemnly charged us to cultivate that, to *weed* it of error and prejudice, of folly and of passion; to *plant truth* there, his own living, abiding truth; to *plant righteousness* there, purity of heart, integrity of soul; to *plant love* there, such as fills his own gracious Spirit; to *build* there walls of wise, strong, protecting *habits*, which will fence and guard the soul from intruding enemies. 2. There are all too many who treat this garden, this estate, with careless negligence; they throw their energy and force into everything else—business, love, politics, art, pleasure, society; but *themselves*, their own spirit, their own character, they leave to fare as best it may without care and without culture. 3. Very sad indeed are the results of this foolish and guilty negligence. This picture of the sluggard's garden will tell us what they are.

I. UNSIGHTLINESS. What a dreary picture—weeds, thistles, thorns, a broken wall! The eye turns from it with repugnance. And the neglected garden of the soul? Instead of the beautiful flowers of Christian reverence and love, and the fair fruits of holiness and zeal, and the strong walls of a noble character, there are seen by God and man the unsightly weeds of transgression, of selfishness, of untruthfulness—perhaps the thorns of intemperance and impurity and profanity.

II. WASTE. African travellers tell us that passing over uncultivated regions they have to make their way through all kinds of rank growth, grass, or shrub which is high, strong, or thorny, covering many miles at a stretch. What waste is there! What corn, what fruit, would not that land produce? Alas! for the pitiful waste of an uncultured human soul! What beauties might not be seen there, what fruits might not be grown there, what graces and virtues might not be produced there, if only the truth of Christ were received into the mind and welcomed to the heart!

III. MISCHIEF. These weeds will not be confined to the sluggard's garden; their seeds will be carried by the winds into his neighbour's, and do mischief enough there.

A neglected soul is a mischief-working soul. It cannot confine its influence to itself or its own life. Those influences cross the wall and get into the neighbour's ground. And the seeds of sin are hurtful, poisonous things, spreading error, falsehood, delusion, into the minds of men. If we are not blessing our neighbours by the lives we live, we are an injury and an evil to them.

IV. RUIN. The man who neglects his estate is really, steadily, ruining himself. He may not see it until it is too late. Poverty has been travelling toward him, but only at the last bend of the road does it come in sight. Want suddenly appears "as an armed man," strong, irresistible; there is no way of escape; bankruptcy is before him. The soul that is neglected is being ruined; day by day it is being enfeebled, enslaved, deteriorated; the good that was there is lessening and disappearing; the hard crust of selfishness and worldliness is thickening. The soul is being lost; it is perishing. "I considered it well"—"set my heart upon it" (marginal reading). This is, indeed, a thing to be well considered, to "set the heart upon," for the issues of it are those of life or death. There is time to restore it; but a little more negligence, and the hour of "ruin" will have struck.—C.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XXV.

Ver. 1—ch. xxix.—Part VI. SECOND GREAT COLLECTION OF SOLOMONIC PROVERBS, gathered by "the men of Hezekiah," in which wisdom is set forth as the greatest blessing to the king and his subjects.

Ver. 1.—The *superscription:* **These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah King of Judah copied out.** The word "also" implies that a previous collection was known to the compiler of the present book—probably the one which we have in ch. x.—xxii. 16, of which nine proverbs are inserted here. But there was still a large number of proverbial sayings attributed to Solomon, and preserved partly by oral tradition and partly in writing, which it was advisable to collect and secure before they were lost. The zeal of Hezekiah took this in hand. He was not, as far as we know, an author himself, but he evidently felt a warm interest in literature, and "the men of Hezekiah," not mentioned elsewhere, must have been his counsellors and scholars, to whom was entrusted the duty of gathering together into a volume the scattered sayings of the wise king. Among these contemporaries, doubtless, Isaiah was eminent, and it is not improbable that Shebna the scribe and Joah the chronicler were members of the learned fraternity (2 Kings xviii. 18). The verb rightly translated "copied out" (*athak*) means, properly, "to remove," "to transfer" from one place to another (*transtulerunt*, Vulgate); hence it signifies here to copy into a book words taken from other writings or people's mouths. The sayings thus collected, whether truly Solomon's or not, were extant under his name, and were regarded as worthy of his reputation for wisdom. The title is given in the Septuagint, thus: Αὗται αἱ παιδεῖαι Σαλωμῶντος αἱ ἀδιάκριτοι, ἃς ἐξεγραψαντο οἱ φίλοι Ἐζεκίου τοῦ βασιλέως τῆς Ἰουδαίας. What is meant by ἀδιάκριτοι is uncertain. It has been translated "impossible to distinguish," equivalent to "miscellaneous;" "beyond doubt," equivalent to "genuine," "hard to interpret," as in Polyb., xv. 12. 9. St. James (iii. 17) applies the term to wisdom, but the interpreters there are not agreed as to the meaning, it being rendered "without partiality," "without variance," "without doubtfulness," etc. It seems best to take the word as used by the LXX. to signify "mixed," or "miscellaneous."

Vers. 2—7.—Proverbs concerning kings.

Ver. 2.—**It is the glory of God to conceal a thing.** That which is the chief glory of God is his mysteriousness, the unfathomable character of his nature and attributes and doings. The more we search into these matters, the more complete we find our ignorance to be; finite faculties are utterly unable to comprehend the infinite; they can embrace merely what God chooses to reveal. "Secret things belong unto the Lord our God" (Deut. xxix. 29), and the great prophet, favoured with Divine revelations, can only confess, "Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself" (Isa. xlv. 15; comp. Eccles. viii. 17; Rom. xi. 33, etc.). **But the honour of kings is to search out a matter.** The same word is used for "glory" and "honour" in both clauses, and ought to have been rendered similarly. It is the king's glory to execute justice and to defend the rights and safety of his people. To do this effectually he must investigate matters brought before him, look keenly into political difficulties, get to the bottom of all complica-

tions, and watch against possible dangers. The contrast between the glory of God and that of the king lies in this—that whereas both God and the king desire man's welfare, the former promotes this by making him feel his ignorance and littleness and entire dependence upon this mysterious Being whose nature and designs mortals cannot understand; the latter advances the good of his subjects by giving them confidence in his zeal and power to discover truth, and using his knowledge for their benefit. Septuagint, "The glory of God concealeth a word (*λόγον*): but the glory of a king honoureth matters (*πράγματα*)."

Ver. 3.—This proverb is connected with the preceding by the idea of "searching" (*chakar*) common to both. Such emblematic proverbs are common in this second collection (see ver. 11). Three subjects are stated, of which is predicated the term **unsearchable, viz. The heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings.** As you can never rise to the illimitable height of the heavens, as you can never penetrate to the immeasurable depth of the earth, so you can never fathom the heart of a king, can never find out what he really thinks and intends (comp. Job xi. 8). It may be that tacitly a warning is intended against flattering one's self that one knows and can reckon on the favour of a king; his good disposition towards you may be only seeming, or may any moment become changed. The Septuagint has for "unsearchable" (חֵקֶר) *ἀνεξέλεγκτος*, "unquestionable." The commentators refer to a passage in Tacitus ('Ann.,' vi. 8), where M. Terentius defends himself for being a friend of Sejanus by the fact of the impossibility of investigating a great man's real sentiments. "To us," he says to Tiberius, "it appertains not to judge whom you exalt above all others and for what reason you do so. Facts which are obvious we all notice. We see who is the man upon whom you heap wealth and honours, who it is that has the chief power of dispensing rewards and punishments; that these were possessed by Sejanus no one can deny. But to pry into the hidden thoughts of a prince, and the designs which he meditates in secret, is unlawful and hazardous; nor would the attempt succeed."

Vers. 4, 5.—A tetrastich in an emblematical form.

Ver. 4.—**Take away the dross from the silver.** Silver was most extensively used by the Hebrews (see 'Dictionary of the Bible,' *sub voc.*), whether obtained from native mines or imported from foreign countries; and the process of separating the ore from the extraneous matters mixed with it was well known (Ps. xii. 6; Ezek. xxii. 20, etc.; see on ch. xvii. 3). **And there shall come forth a vessel for the finer** (*tsaraph*); the goldsmith. The pure silver is ready for the artist's work, who from this material can make a beautiful vessel. Septuagint, "Beat untested silver, and all shall be made entirely pure," where the allusion is to the process of reducing minerals by lamination.

Ver. 5.—**Take away the wicked** from **before the king.** Let the wicked be removed from the presence of the king, as dross is separated from the pure silver (see the same metaphor, Isa. i. 25; Jer. vi. 29, etc.). **And his throne shall be established in righteousness** (ch. xvi. 12; xxix. 14). The king detects the evil and punishes them; and this confirms his rule and secures the continuance of his dynasty. Thus righteousness triumphs, and wickedness is properly dealt with. Septuagint, "Slay the ungodly from the face of the king, and his throne shall prosper in righteousness."

Vers. 6, 7.—Another proverb (a pentastich) connected with kings and great men.

Ver. 6.—**Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king.** Do not make display of yourself as though vying with the king in outward circumstances. Septuagint, "Boast not thyself (*μὴ ἀλαζονεύου*) in the presence of a king." **Stand not in the place of great men.** Do not pretend to be the equal of those who occupy high places in the kingdom (ch. xviii. 16). Septuagint, "And take not your stand (*ὑφίστασο*) in the places of chieftains." Says a Latin gnome, "Qui cum fortuna convenit, dives est;" and Ovid wrote well ('Trist.,' iii. 4. 25, etc.)—

"Crede mihi; bene qui latuit, bene vixit; et intra
Fortunam debet quisque manere suam...
Tu quoque fortunæ nimium sublimia semper;
Propositique memor contrahe vela tui."

Ver. 7.—**For better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither.** It is better for the prince to select you for elevation to a high post; to call you up near his throne. The reference is not necessarily to position at a royal banquet, though the maxim lends itself readily to such application. This warning against arrogance and presumption was used by our blessed Lord in enforcing a lesson of humility and self-discipline (Luke xiv. 7, etc.). Septuagint, "For it is better for thee that it should be said, Come up unto me (*ἀνάβαινε πρὸς μέ*)" (*προσανάβηθι ἀνώτερον*, Luke xiv. 7). **Than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen.** The last words have been variously interpreted:

"to whom thou hast come with a request for preferment;" "into whose august presence thou hast been admitted, so as to see his face" (2 Sam. xiv. 24); "who knows all about thee, and will thus make thee feel thy humiliation all the more." But *nadib*, rendered "prince," is not the king, but any noble or great man; and what the maxim means is this—that it is wise to save yourself from the mortification of being turned out of a place which you have knowingly usurped. Your own eyes see that he is in the company; you are aware of what is his proper position; you have occupied a post which belongs to another; justly you are removed, and all present witness your humiliation. The moralist knew that the bad spirit of pride was fostered and encouraged by every act of self-assertion; hence the importance of his warning. The Septuagint makes a separate sentence of these last words, "Speak thou of what thine eyes saw." or, perhaps, like St. Jerome, the Syriac, and Symmachus, attach them to the next verse.

Ver. 8.—A tristich with no parallelism. **Go not forth hastily to strive.** The idea is either of one entering into litigation with undue haste, or of one hurrying to meet an adversary. St. Jerome, taking in the final words of the previous verse, renders, *Quæ viderunt oculi tui, ne proferas in jurgio cito*, "What thine eyes have seen reveal not hastily in a quarrel." This is like ver. 9 below, and Christ's injunction, "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone" (Matt. xviii. 15). **Lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof.** The Hebrew is elliptical, "Lest by chance (פֶּן) thou do something (bad, humiliating) in the end thereof." But Delitzsch, Nowack, and others consider the sentence as interrogative (as 1 Sam. xx. 10), and translate, "That it may not be said in the end thereof, What wilt thou do?" Either way, the warning comes to this—Do not enter hastily upon strife of any kind, lest thou be utterly at a loss what to do. **When thy neighbour hath put thee to shame,** by putting thee in the wrong, gaining his cause, or getting the victory over thee in some way. Septuagint, "Fall not quickly into a contest, lest thou repent at the last." There is an English proverb, "Anger begins with folly and ends with repentance;" and "Haste is the beginning of wrath, its end is repentance."

Vers. 9, 10.—A tetrastich without parallelism, connected with the preceding maxim.

Ver. 9.—**Debate thy cause with thy neighbour** himself (Matt. xviii. 15; see on ver. 8). If you have any quarrel with a neighbour, or are drawn into a controversy with him, deal with him privately in a friendly manner. **And discover not a secret to another;** rather, *the secret of another.* Do not bring in a third party, or make use of anything entrusted to you by another person, or of which you have become privately informed, in order to support your cause.

Ver. 10.—**Lest he that heareth it put thee to shame;** *i.e.* lest any one, not the offended neighbour only, who hears how treacherous you have been, makes your proceeding known and cries shame upon you. **And thine infamy turn not away.** The stigma attached to you be never obliterated. Thus Siracides: "Whoso discovereth secrets loseth his credit; and shall never find friend to his mind. Love thy friend, and be faithful unto him: but if thou bewrayest his secrets, follow no more after him. For as a man hath destroyed his enemy; so hast thou lost the love of thy neighbour" (Ecclus. xxvii. 16, etc.; comp. also xxii. 22). The motive presented in our text is not the highest, being grounded on the fear of shame and disgrace in men's eyes; but it is a very potent incentive to right action, and the moralist has good reason for employing it. That it does not reach to the height of Christian morality is obvious. The gnome is thus given in the Greek: "When thy friend shall reproach thee, retreat backward, despise him not, lest thy friend reproach thee still; and so thy quarrel and enmity shall not pass away, but shall be to thee like death." Then the LXX. adds a paragraph, reproduced partly by St. Jerome, "Kindness and friendship set a man free (ἐλεύθερον); preserve thou these, that thou become not liable to reproach (ἐπονείδιστος, *exprobabilis*); but guard thy ways in a conciliating spirit (εὐσυναλλάκτως)."

Ver. 11.—One of the emblematical distiches in which this collection is rich. **A word fitly spoken.** עַל־אָפְנָיו may be translated "in due season," or "upon its wheels" (Venetian, ἐπὶ τῶν τροχῶν αὐτῆς). In the latter case the phrase may mean a word quickly formed, or moving easily, spoken *ore rotundo*, or a speedy answer. But the metaphor is unusual and inappropriate; and it is best to understand a word spoken under due consideration of time and place. Vulgate, *Qui loquitur verbum in tempore suo;* Aquila and Theodotion, ἐπὶ ἁρμόζουσιν αὐτῷ, "in circumstances that suit it;" the Septuagint has simply οὕτως. **Is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.** In these emblematical distichs the words, "is like," in the Authorized Version, are an insertion. The Hebrew places the two ideas merely in sequence; the object with which something is compared usually coming before that which is compared with it, as here, "Apples of gold—a word fitly spoken" (so

in vers. 14, 18, 19, 26, 28). There is a doubt about the meaning of the word rendered "pictures," *maskith* (see on ch. xviii. 11). It seems to be used generally in the sense of "image," "sculpture," being derived from the verb שָׂכָה, "to see;" from this it comes to signify "ornament," and here most appropriately is "basket," and, as some understand, of filagree work. St. Jerome mistakes the word, rendering, *in lectis argenteis*. The Septuagint has, *ἐν ὁρμίσκῳ σαρδίου*, "on a necklace of sardius." "Apples of gold" are apples or other fruits of a golden colour, not made of gold, which would be very costly and heavy; nor would the comparison with artificial fruits be as suitable as that with natural. The "word" is the fruit set off by its circumstances, as the latter's beauty is enhanced by the grace of the vessel which contains it. The "apple" has been supposed to be the orange (called in late Latin *pomum aurantium*) or the citron. We may cite here the opinion of a competent traveller: "For my own part," says Canon Tristram ('Land of Israel,' p. 605), "I have no hesitation in expressing my conviction that the *apricot* alone is the 'apple' of Scripture. . . . Everywhere the apricot is common; perhaps it is, with the single exception of the fig, the most abundant fruit of the country. In highlands and lowlands alike, by the shores of the Mediterranean and on the banks of the Jordan, in the nooks of Judæa, under the heights of Lebanon, in the recesses of Galilee, and in the glades of Gilead, the apricot flourishes, and yields a crop of prodigious abundance. Its characteristics meet every condition of the 'tappuach' of Scripture. 'I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste' (Cant. ii. 3). Near Damascus, and on the banks of the Barada, we have pitched our tents under its shade, and spread our carpets secure from the rays of the sun. 'The smell of thy nose (shall be) like tappuach' (Cant. vii. 8). There can scarcely be a more deliciously perfumed fruit than the apricot; and what fruit can better fit the epithet of Solomon, 'apples of *gold* in pictures of silver,' than this golden fruit, as its branches bend under the weight in their setting of bright yet pale foliage?" Imagery similar to that found in this verse occurs in ch. x. 31; xii. 14; xiii. 2; xviii. 20. There is a famous article on the analogies between flowers and men's characters in the *Spectator*, No. 455.

Ver. 12.—Another distich concerning the seasonable word, of the same character as the last. **As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold.** In this, as in many of the proverbs, the comparison is not expressed, but is merely implied by juxtaposition. *Nezem*, in ch. xi. 22, was a nose-ring, here probably an earring is meant; *chali*, "ornament," is a trinket or jewel worn suspended on neck or breast. The two, whether worn by one person or more, form a lovely combination, and set off the wearer's grace and beauty. Vulgate, *Inauris aurea et margaritum fulgens*, "A golden earring and a brilliant pearl." Septuagint, "A golden earring a precious sardius also is set." **So is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear.** The obedient ear receives the precepts of the wise reprover, and wears them as a valued ornament. In ch. i. 9 the instruction of parents is compared to a chaplet on the head and a fair chain on the neck. Septuagint, "A wise word on an obedient ear."

Ver. 13.—A comparative tristich concerning words. **As the cold of snow in the time of harvest.** This, of course, does not mean a snowstorm or hailstorm in the time of harvest, which would be anything but a blessing (ch. xxvi. 1; 1 Sam. xii. 17, 18), but either the distant view of the snow on Hermon or Lebanon, which gave an idea of refreshment in the heat of autumn, or more probably snow used to cool drink in warm weather. This luxury was not unknown in the time of Solomon, who had a summer palace on Lebanon (1 Kings ix. 19), though it could have been enjoyed by very few, and would not speak to the personal experience of the burgher class, to whom the proverbs seem to have been addressed. Xenophon writes of the use of snow to cool wine ('Memorab.,' ii. 1. 30). Hitzig quotes a passage from the old history of the Crusades, called 'Gesta Dei per Francos,' which runs thus: "Nix frigidissima a monte Libano defertur, ut vino commixta, tanquam glaciem ipsum frigidum reddat." So in the present day snow is sold in Damascus bazaars. The LXX., not realizing what harm such an untimely storm might effect, translates, "As a fall (*ἔξοδος*) of snow in harvest is of use against heat, so a faithful messenger benefits those who sent him." **So is a faithful messenger to them that send him.** (For "faithful messenger," see on ch. xiii. 17; and for "them that send," see on ch. xxii. 21.) The comparison is explained. **For he refresheth the soul of his masters.** He brings as great refreshment to his masters' mind as would a drink of snow-cooled water in the burning harvest-field.

Ver. 14.—The Hebrew is, **Clouds and wind without rain—he that boasteth himself in a gift of falsehood** (see on ver. 11). The proverb is concerned with promises disappointed. Clouds and wind are generally in the East the precursors of heavy rain, as we read in 1 Kings xviii. 45, "In a little while the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain." Aft

such phenomena, which, according to current meteorological observation, gave every hope of a refreshing shower in the time of summer drought, to see the clouds pass away without affording a single drop of rain is a grievous disappointment. The metaphor is found in the New Testament. St. Jude (ver. 12) calls false teachers "clouds without water, carried along by winds." "A gift of falsehood," equivalent to "a false gift," one that deceives, because it is only promised and never given. A man makes a great parade of going to bestow a handsome present, and then sneaks out of it, and gives nothing. Such a one is, as St. Jerome renders, *Vir gloriosus, et promissa non complens.* The old commentators quote Ovid, 'Heroid.,' vi. 109—

"Mobilis Æsonide, vernaque incertior aura,
Cur tua pollicito pondere verba carent?"

"Deeds are fruits," says the proverb, "words are but leaves;" and "Vain-glory blossoms, but never bears fruit." Concerning the folly of making stupid boasts, the Bengalee proverb speaks of a pedlar in ginger getting tidings of his ship. The Septuagint is incorrect, "As winds, and clouds, and rains are most evident (*ἐπιφανέστατα*), so is he who boasts of a false gift."

Ver. 15.—**By long forbearing**; *i.e.* by patience, calmness that does not break out into passion whatever be the provocation, even, it is implied, in the face of a false and malicious accusation (comp. ch. xiv. 29). **Is a prince persuaded.** *Katson* is rather "an arbiter," or judge, than "a prince," and the proverb says that such an officer is led to take a favourable view of an accused person's case when he sees him calm and composed, ready to explain the matter without any undue heat or irritation, keeping steadily to the point, and not seduced by calumny or misrepresentation to forget himself and lose his temper. Such a bearing presupposes innocence and weighs favourably with the judge. The LXX. makes the gnome apply to monarchs alone, "In long-suffering is prosperity unto kings." **A soft tongue breaketh the bone.** A soft answer (ch. xv. 1), gentle, conciliating words, overcome opposition, and disarm the most determined enemy, and make tender in him that which was hardest and most uncompromising. "Gutta cavat lapidem, non vi, sed sæpe cadendo." Similar proverbs are found elsewhere, though probably in a different sense. Thus in modern Greek, "The tongue has no bones, yet it breaks bones;" in Turkish, "The tongue has no bone, yet it crushes;" again, "One drop of honey," says the Turk, "catches more bees than a ton of vinegar."

Ver. 16.—**Hast thou found honey?** Honey would be found in crevices of rocks, in hollow trees (1 Sam. xiv. 27), or in more unlikely situations (Judg. xiv. 8), and was extensively used as an article of food. All travellers in Palestine note the great abundance of bees therein, and how well it answers to its description as "a land flowing with milk and honey." **Eat so much as is sufficient for thee.** The agreeable sweetness of honey might lead the finder to eat too much of it. Against such excess the moralist warns: **Lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it.** Thus wrote Pindar, 'Nem.,' vii. 51—

'Αλλὰ γὰρ ἀνάπαυσις ἐν παντὶ γλυκεῖα ἔργῳ.
κόρον δ' ἔχει
Καὶ μέλι καὶ τὰ τέρπν' ἄνθε' 'Αφροδίσια.

*Μηδὲν ἄγαν, Ne quid nimis*, is a maxim continually urged by those who wished to teach moderation. Says Homer, 'Iliad,' xiii. 636—

"Men are with all things sated—sleep, and love,
Sweet sounds of music, and the joyous dance."

(Lord Derby.)

Says Horace, 'Sat.,' i. 1. 106—

"Est modus in rebus, sunt certi denique fines,
Quos ultra citraque nequit consistere rectum."

The honey is a figure of all that pleases the senses; but the maxim is to be extended beyond physical matters, though referring primarily to such pleasures. The mind may be overloaded as well as the body; only such instruction as can be digested and assimilated is serviceable to the spiritual nature; injudicious cramming produces satiety and disgust. Again, "To 'find honey,'" says St. Gregory ('Moral.,' xvi. 8), "is to taste the sweetness of holy intelligence, which is eaten enough of then when our perception, according to the measure of our faculty, is held tight under control. For he is 'filled with honey, and vomits it' who, in seeking to dive deeper than he has capacity for, loses that too from whence he might have derived nourishment." And in another place (ibid., xx. 18), "The sweetness of spiritual meaning he who seeks to eat beyond what he contains, even what he had eaten he 'vomiteth;' because, whilst he seeks to make out things above, beyond his powers, even the things that he had made out aright, he forfeits" (Oxford transl.).

Ver. 17.—**Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's house**; literally, *make thy foot precious, rare;* Septuagint, "Bring thy foot sparingly (*σπάνιον*) into thy friend's house." The proverb seems to be loosely connected with the preceding, as urging moderation. Do not pay too frequent visits

to your neighbours' house, or make yourself too much at home there. The Son of Sirach has an utterance on a somewhat similar subject, "Give place, thou stranger, to an honourable man; my brother cometh to be lodged, and I have need of mine house. These things are grievous to a man of understanding; the upbraiding of house-room, and reproaching of the lender" (Ecclus. xxix. 27, etc.). **Lest he be weary of thee, and so hate thee.** Such a result might easily arise from too constant intercourse. Cornelius à Lapide quotes from Seneca ('De Benefic.,' i. 15), "Rarum esse oportet quod diu carum velis," "That should be rare which you would enduringly bear." And Martial's cynical advice—

> "Nulli te facias nimis sodalem;
> Gaudebis minus, et minus dolebis."

The same poet ('Epigr.,' iv. 29. 3) writes—

> "Rara juvant; primis sic major gratia pomis,
> Hibernæ pretium sic meruere rosæ."

Ver. 18.—Hebrew, **A maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow—a man that beareth false witness against his neighbour** (see on ver. 11). One who bears false witness against his neighbour prepares for him the instruments of death, such as those mentioned here. "A maul" (*mephits*), usually a heavy wooden hammer (compare *malleus* and "mallet"); here a club, or mace, used in battle, ῥόπαλον (Septuagint; comp. Jer. li. 20). There is a kind of climax in the three offensive weapons named—the club bruises, the sword inflicts wounds, the arrow pierces to the heart; and the three may represent the various baneful effects of false testimony, how it bruises reputation, spoils possessions, deprives of life. The second clause is from the Decalogue (Exod. xx. 16).

Ver. 19.—Hebrew (see on ver. 11), **A broken tooth, and a foot out of joint—confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble.** A faithless man is as little to be relied on in a time of need as a loose or broken tooth, and a foot unsteady or actually dislocated. You cannot bite on the one, you cannot walk on the other; so the perfidious man fails you when most wanted. Septuagint, "The way [ὁδὸς, Vatican, is probably a clerical error for ὀδοὺς, *al.*] of the wicked, and the foot of the transgressor, shall perish in an evil day." A Bengal maxim runs, "A loose tooth and a feeble friend are equally bad" (Lane).

Ver. 20.—**As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather.** The proverb gives three instances of what is wrong, incongruous, or unwise, the first two leading up to the third, which is the pith of the maxim. But there is some doubt about the rendering of the first clause. The Authorized Version has the authority of the Syriac, Aquila, and others, and gives an appropriate sense, the unreasonable proceeding being the laying aside of some of one's own clothes in cold weather. But the verb here used, עָדָה (*adah*), may also mean "to adorn," *e.g.* with fine garments; hence some expositors understand the incongruity to be the dressing one's self in gay apparel in winter. But, as Delitzsch remarks, there is no reason why fine clothes should not be warm; and if they are so, there is nothing unreasonable in wearing them. The rendering of our version is probably correct. St. Jerome annexes this line to the preceding verse, as if it confirmed the previous instances of misplaced confidence, *Et amittit pallium in die frigoris*, "Such a one loses his cloak in a day of frost." **Vinegar upon nitre.** Our nitre, or saltpetre, is nitrate of potash, which is not the substance intended by נֶתֶר (*nether*). The substance signified by this term is a natural alkali, known to the ancients as natron, and composed of carbonate of soda with some other admixture. It was used extensively for washing purposes, and in cookery and bread-making. It effervesces with an acid, such as vinegar, and changes its character, becoming a salt, and being rendered useless for all the purposes to which it was applied in its alkaline condition. So he who pours vinegar on natron does a foolish thing, for he spoils a highly useful article, and produces one which is of no service to him. Septuagint, "As vinegar is inexpedient for a wound (ἕλκει), so suffering falling on the body pains the heart." Schultens, Ewald, and others, by referring *nether* to an Arabic source, obtain the meaning "wound," or "sore," thus: "As vinegar on a sore." This gives a most appropriate sense, and might well be adopted if it had sufficient authority. But this is doubtful. Cornelius à Lapide translates the Septuagint rendering, Ὥσπερ ὄξος ἕλκει δσύμφορον, "Sicut acetum trahit inutilo;" and explains that vinegar draws from the soil the nitre which is prejudicial to vegetation, and thus renders ground fertile—a fact in agricultural chemistry not generally known, though Columella vouches for it. A somewhat similar fact, however, is of common experience. Land occasionally becomes what farmers term "sour," and is thus sterile; if it is then dressed with salt, its fertility is restored. **So is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart.** The inconsistency lies in thinking to cheer a sorrowful heart by singing merry songs. "A tale out of season," says Siracides, "is as music in mourning" (Ecclus. xxii. 6). The Greeks denoted cruel incongruity by the proverb, Ἐν πενθοῦσι παίζειν; "Ludere inter mœrentes." As the old hymn says—

"Strains of gladness
Suit not souls with anguish torn."

The true Christian sympathy teaches to "rejoice with them that rejoice, to weep with them that weep" (Rom. xii. 15). Plumptre, in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' suggests that the effervescence caused by the mixture of acid and alkali is taken as a type of the irritation produced by the inopportune songs. But this is importing a modern view into a paragraph, such as would never have occurred to the writer. The Septuagint, followed partially by Jerome, the Syriac, and the Targum, introduces another proverb not found in the Hebrew, "As a moth in a garment, and a worm in wood, so the sorrow of a man hurts his heart."

Vers. 21, 22.—This famous tetrastrich is reproduced (with the exception of the fourth line) from the Septuagint by St. Paul (Rom. xii. 20).

Ver. 21.—The traditional hatred of enemies is here strongly repudiated (see ch. xxiv. 17, 18, and notes there). Thus Elisha treated the Syrians, introduced blindly into the midst of Samaria, ordering the King of Israel to set bread and water before them, and to send them away unharmed (2 Kings vi. 22). "Punish your enemy by benefiting him," say the Arabs, though they are far from practising the injunction; "Sweet words break the bones;" "Bread and salt humble even a robber," say the Russians.

Ver. 22.—**For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head.** This expression has been taken in various senses. It has been thought to mean that the forgiveness of the injured person brings to the cheek of the offender the burning blush of shame. But heaping coals on the head cannot naturally be taken to express such an idea. St. Chrysostom and other Fathers consider that Divine vengeance is implied, as in Ps. xi. 6, "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares; fire and brimstone and burning wind shall be their portion;" and Ps. cxl. 10, "Let burning coals fall upon them." Of course, in one view, kindness to an evil man only gives him occasion for fresh ingratitude and hatred, and therefore increases God's wrath against him. But it would be a wicked motive to act this beneficent part only to have the satisfaction of seeing your injurer humbled or punished. And the gnome implies that the sinner is benefited by the clemency shown to him, that the requital of evil by good brings the offender to a better mind, and aids his spiritual life. "Coals of fire" are a metaphor for the penetrating pain of remorse and repentance. The unmerited kindness which he receives forces upon him the consciousness of his ill doing, which is accompanied by the sharp pain of regret. St. Augustine, "Ne dubitaveris figurate dictum . . . ut intelligas carbones ignis esse urentes pœnitentiæ gemitus, quibus superbia sanatur ejus, qui dolet se inimicum fuisse hominis, a quo ejus miseriæ subvenitur" ('De Doctr. Christ.,' iii. 16). Lesêtre quotes St. Francis de Sales, who gives again a different view, "You are not obliged to seek reconciliation with one who has offended you; it may be rather his part to seek you; yet nevertheless go and follow the Saviour's counsel, prevent him with good, render him good for evil; heap coals of fire on his head and on his heart, which may burn up all ill will and constrain him to love you" ('De l'Am. de Dieu,' viii. 9). **And the Lord shall reward thee.** This consideration can scarcely be regarded as the chief motive for the liberality enjoined, though it would be present to the kind person's mind, and be a support and comfort to him in a course of conduct repugnant to the natural man. He would remember the glorious reward promised to godliness by the prophet (Isa. lviii. 8, etc.), and how Saul had expressed his consciousness of David's magnanimity in sparing his life. "Thou art more righteous than I; for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil . . . wherefore the Lord reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day" (1 Sam. xxiv. 17, 19 and xxvi. 21).

Ver. 23.—**The north wind driveth away rain.** So St. Jerome (*Ventus Aquilo dissipat pluvias*), Symmachus, Aben Ezra, and others. The north wind is called by the natives of Palestine "the heavenly," from the bright effect which it produces in the sky. "By means of the north wind cometh he (the sun) forth as gold" (Job xxxvii. 22). But the verb here used (חול) means "to bring forth, produce" (Ps. xc. 2); hence the Revised Version rightly renders, "The north wind bringeth forth rain." This is quite true if "north wind" be taken as equivalent to "wind from the dark quarter" (Umbreit), like ζόφος in Greek; and, in fact, the north-west wind in Palestine does bring rain. Septuagint, "The north wind arouseth (ἐξεγείρει) clouds." **So doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.** Carrying on the interpretation intended by the Authorized Version, this clause means that an angry look will check a slanderer and incline him to hold his peace from prudential motives. But with the rendering given above, "bringeth forth," another explanation is involved, viz. "So does a secret, slandering tongue cause a troubled countenance." When a man discovers that a secret slanderer is working against him, he shows it by his gloomy and angry look, as the sky is dark

with clouds when a storm is threatened. "Countenance" is plural in the Hebrew, denoting, as Hitzig points out, that the calumniator does not affect one person only, but occasions trouble far and wide, destroys friendly relations between many, excites suspicion and enmity in various quarters. Septuagint, "An impudent countenance provokes the tongue."

Ver. 24.—A repetition of ch. xxi. 9, taken therefore from the Solomonic collection.

Ver. 25.—**As cold waters to a thirsty soul.** The particle of comparison is not in this first clause in the Hebrew. (For "cold waters," comp. Jer. xviii. 14.) **So is good news from a far country.** The *nostalgia* of an exile, and the craving for tidings of him felt by his friends at home, are like a parching thirst. The relief to the latter, when they receive good news of the wanderer, is as refreshing as a draught of cool water to a fainting, weary man. We do not know that the Hebrews were great travellers in those days; but any communication from a distant country would be very uncertain in arriving at its destination, and would at any rate take a long time in transmission. In most cases there would be nothing to rest upon but vague report, or a message carried by some travelling merchant. There is a somewhat similar proverb found at ver. 13 and ch. xv. 30. The ancient commentators have seen in this news from a distant country the announcement of Christ's birth by the angels at Bethlehem, or the preaching of the gospel that tells of the joys of heaven, the land that is very far off (Isa. xxxiii. 17).

Ver. 26.—Hebrew (see on ver. 11), **A troubled fountain, and a corrupted spring—a righteous man giving way to the wicked.** A good man neglecting to assert himself and to hold his own in the face of sinners, is as useless to society and as harmful to the good cause as a spring that has been defiled by mud stirred up or extraneous matter introduced is unserviceable for drinking and prejudicial to those who use it. The mouth of the righteous should be "a well of life" (ch. x. 11), wholesome, refreshing, helpful; his conduct should be consistent and straightforward, fearless in upholding the right (Isa. li. 12, etc.), uncompromising in opposing sin. When such a man, for fear, or favour, or weakness, or weariness, yields to the wicked, compromises principle, no longer makes a stand for truth and purity and virtue, he loses his high character, brings a scandal on religion, and lowers his own spiritual nature. It is this moral cowardice which Christ so sternly rebukes (Matt. x. 33), "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." Some have assumed that the gnome is concerned with a good man's fall into misfortune owing to the machinations of sinners; but in this case the comparison loses its force; such persecution would not disturb the purity or lower the character of the righteous man; it would rather enhance his good qualities, give occasion for their exercise and development, and therefore could not be described as fouling a pure spring.

Ver. 27.—**It is not good to eat much honey.** The ill effects of a surfeit of honey have been already mentioned (ver. 16); but here the application is different, and occasions some difficulty. The Authorized Version, in order to clear up the obscurity of the text, inserts a negative, **So for men to search their own glory is not glory,** which seems to be a warning against conceit and self-adulation. This is hardly warranted by the present Hebrew text, which is literally, as Venetian renders, Ἔρευνά τε δόξας αὐτῶν δόξα, "The search of their glory [is] glory." But who are meant by "their"? No persons are mentioned in the verse to whom the suffix in כְּבוֹדָם can be referred, and it is not improbable that some words have dropped out of the text. At the same time, we might naturally in thought supply "for men" after "it is not good," such omissions being not uncommon in proverbial sayings; the suffix then would refer to them. Commentators have endeavoured to amend the text by alterations which do not commend themselves. Schultens supposes that the suffix had reference to the Divine law and revelations, and, as כבד may mean both "glory" and "weight," translates, "Vestigatio gravitatis eorum, gravitas." Bertheau takes *kabod* in two different senses, "The searching out of their glory is a burden." So Delitzsch, by a little manipulation of the pointing (כְּבֹרָם) obtains the rendering, "But to search out hard things is an honour." Taken thus, the maxim says that bodily pleasures sicken and cloy, but diligent study brings honour. This, however, is not satisfactory; it gives a word two different senses in the same clause, and it affords a very feeble contrast. One would naturally expect the proverb to say that the excess, which was deprecated in the first hemistich as regards one department, must be equally rejected in another sphere. This is somewhat the idea given by Jerome, *Sic qui scrutator est majestatis opprimetur a gloria.* The truth here stated will be explained by translating our text, "The investigation of weighty matters is a weight." Thus the clauses are shown to be well poised. Honey is good, study is good; but both may be used so as to be prejudicial. Eating may be carried to excess; study may attempt to investigate things too hard or too high. That this is a real danger we know well from the controversies about pro-

destination and election in time past, and those concerning spiritualism and theurgy in our own day (see Jeremy Taylor, 'Certainty of Salvation,' iii. 176, edit. Heb.; and 'Holy Living,' ch. iii. § 5). This is the view taken of the passage by St. Gregory ('Moral.,' xiv. 32), 'If the sweetness of honey be taken in greater measure than there is occasion for, from the same source whence the palate is gratified, the life of the eater is destroyed. The "searching into majesty" is also sweet; but he that seeks to dive into it deeper than the cognizance of human nature admits, finds the mere gloriousness thereof by itself oppresses him, in that, like honey taken in excess, it bursts the sense of the searcher which is not capable of holding it." And again (ibid., xx. 18), "For the glory of the invisible Creator, which when searched into with moderation lifts us up, being dived into beyond our powers bears us down" (Oxford transl.). (Comp. Deut. xxix. 29; Ecclus. iii. 21, etc.) Septuagint, "To eat much honey is not good, but it behoves us to honour glorious sayings."

Ver. 28.—A proverb like the last, concerned with self-control. In the Hebrew it runs thus (see on ver. 11): **A city that is broken down without wall—a man on whose spirit is no restraint.** "A city broken down" is explained by the next words. "without wall," and therefore undefended and open to the first invader (comp. 2 Chron. xxxii. 5; Neh. ii. 13). To such a city is compared the man who puts no restraint on his passions, desires, and affections; he is always in danger of being carried away by them and involved in sin and destruction; he has no defence when temptation assaults him, having lost self-control (comp. ch. xvi. 32). The old gnomes hold always true—

*Θυμοῦ κρατῆσαι καὶπιθυμίας καλόν.*

"Desire and passion it is good to rule."

*Ταμιεῖον ἀρετῆς ἐστι σωφροσύνη μόνη.*

"Virtue's true storehouse is wise self-control."

A Chinese maxim says, "Who can govern himself is fit to govern the world." Septuagint, "As a city whose walls are broken down and which is unwalled, so is a man who does aught without counsel." St. Jerome, by the addition of the words, *in loquendo*, applies the proverb to intemperance in language, "So is he who is not able to restrain his spirit in speaking." Commenting on this, St. Gregory ('Moral.,' vii. 59) says, "Because it is without the wall of silence, the city of the mind lies open to the darts of the enemy, and when it casts itself forth in words, it exhibits itself exposed to the adversary, and he gets the mastery of it without trouble, in proportion as the soul that he has to overcome combats against its own self by much talking" (Oxford transl.).

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*Ancient lore.* This superscription gives us a hint of a very interesting historical event of which we have no account elsewhere. It suggests a picture of the days of Hezekiah; we see his scribes busily engaged in ransacking the ancient libraries, and bringing together the long-forgotten sayings of his famous predecessor.

I. A REVIVAL OF RELIGION SHOULD LEAD TO A REVIVAL OF LEARNING. The Renaissance preceded the Reformation, and, because it had no deep spiritual basis, it threatened to degenerate into dilletantism and pedantry. But after the second movement had taken hold of Europe, real, solid learning received a powerful impulse, because men were then in earnest in the search for truth. It would seem that a similar result was produced in the days of Hezekiah. Then there was a religious reformation, and that was followed by a newly awakened interest in the national literature. Of course, this was the more natural among the Jews, because their national genius was religious, and their literature was the vehicle of their religious ideas. The danger of a time of religious excitement is that it shall be accompanied by attenuated knowledge. But the more the religious feelings are roused, the more reason is there that they should be directed by truth. Revival preachers should be studious men if they wish their work not to be perverted into wrong and false courses through ignorance.

II. IT IS WISE TO PROFIT BY THE THOUGHTS OF OTHER MEN. The men of Hezekiah were not above learning from Solomon, who had left a reputation for unparalleled wisdom. But lesser lights have also their claims. It is a mistake to live on one's own thoughts without guidance or nourishment derived from the thoughts of other men. Private thinking tends to narrowness unless it is enlarged by the reception of a variety of ideas from external sources. The mind will ultimately starve if it is left to feed upon its own juices. We must judge for ourselves, and only accept what we honestly believe to be

true—seek truth, and think out our own convictions. But we shall do those things the better if we also allow that others may have light to give us. Above all, the Christian thinker needs to found his meditations on the Bible. Of the New Testament it may be said, "A Greater than Solomon is here." If the men of Hezekiah did well to collect the proverbs of Solomon, much more is it desirable to treasure up the sayings of him who spake as never man spake.

III. WE MAY LEARN LESSONS FROM ANTIQUITY. Nearly three hundred years had passed between the days of Solomon and the time of Hezekiah—a period equal to that which separates us from the great Elizabethan writers; so that Solomon was as far anterior to Hezekiah as the poet Spenser is to our own generation. He belonged to the antique age. Yet the glamour of the great Hezekiah did not blind men to the glory of the greater Solomon. In the splendid achievements of the present day we are threatened with an extinction of antiquity. The nineteenth century is the new image of gold that has been set up on our Plain of Dura for all men to worship. We shall suffer an irreparable loss, and our mental and spiritual life will be sadly stunted, if we fail to hearken to the teachings of our forefathers. We are not to be the slaves of the past. The new age may have its new truths, as well as its new needs and duties. But what was true in the past cannot cease to be so by simply going out of fashion; for truth is eternal. The very diversity of the ages may instruct us by widening our notions and correcting the follies of prevalent customs. The age of Solomon was very different from that of Hezekiah; yet the wisdom of the royal sage could profit the newer generation.

Ver. 11.—*Apples of gold in a framework of silver.* This is a picture of Oriental decoration. A gorgeous chamber is richly and elaborately ornamented with the precious metals, by fruit carved in gold being set in dainty work of silver—as brilliant a piece of decoration as can well be imagined. This finely turned metaphor is chosen by the writer in order to give the highest possible praise to "the word fitly spoken."

I. THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF THE WORD FITLY SPOKEN. 1. *It is a word.* Here we see an immense value set upon a word. Words have weight to crush, force to drive, sharpness to pierce, brightness to illumine, beauty to delight, consolation to cheer. He is a foolish man who despises words. 2. *It may be but one word.* We cannot value words by the length of them, nor weigh them by their bulk. Many words may be worthless, while one word is beyond all price—if only it be the right word. 3. *It must be a real word.* It must not be a mere sound of the lips. A word is an uttered thought. The soul of it is its idea. When that has gone out of it, the empty sound is a dead thing, though it be voluminous and thunderous as the noise of many waters. 4. *It needs to be an apt word;* i.e. (1) true; (2) fit to be uttered by the speaker; (3) suitable for the hearer; (4) adapted to the occasion; (5) shaped with point and individual character—a word that will go home and stick. 5. *It should be a spoken word.* There is a world of difference between living speech and written or printed sentences. The press can never supersede the human voice. We see that the newspaper has not suspended the functions of the political orator; it has only given breadth and additional enthusiasm to his utterances. The publication of the daily paper has not prevented St. James's Hall from being crowded nor Hyde Park from being thronged by thousands of eager listeners when some great question is agitating the public mind. It is the same with the pulpit. The vocation of the preacher can never cease while the sympathy of personal presence is a power. In private life a short word goes further than a long letter. 6. *It ought to be wisely spoken.* Here, too, aptness is needed, to find the right moment and speak in the best manner. Formalism, pomposity, hardness or coldness of manner, may spoil the effect of the most suitable word.

II. THE SUPREME EXCELLENCE OF THE WORD FITLY SPOKEN. 1. *It is rare.* Such decoration as is described in the text could not have been often witnessed even amid the "barbaric splendour" of Solomon's days. It is not often that the best words are spoken. We live in a din of speech; it rains words. But most of the words we hear are neither gold nor silver. 2. *It is costly.* The ornamentation of gold and silver would be very expensive, first in material, then in artistic skill. It cannot always be truly said that "kind words cost little." The best words cost time, care, consideration, self-suppression, sympathy. What costs the speaker nothing is likely to be valued by the

hearer at the same price. 3. *It is beautiful.* The metaphor describes what would be regarded as exceedingly lovely in Oriental art. But good words are more beautiful still. Poetry is more lovely than sculpture, for it has more soul and life and thought in it. Words of wisdom and love have the beauty of the graces that inspire them. 4. *It is precious.* Some costly things are of little value, for one may squander wealth for what is worthless. But words of truth and goodness are beyond price. How supremely is this true of the words of Christ! How well also does it apply to the wise proclamation of the gospel!

Vers. 21, 22.—"*Coals of fire.*" I. THE CHRIST-LIKE DUTY. 1. *It is positive.* It is more than turning the other cheek to the smiter, or letting the thief of the cloak carry off the coat also. Passive non-resistance is to be surpassed by active kindness. The command is not merely to refrain from acts of vengeance; it is to bestir one's self in active benevolence for the good of an enemy—to return good for evil. 2. *It is difficult.* Perhaps this is not so exceedingly difficult as silence under provocation; for nothing seems so hard as to be still when one is wronged. Now, a new channel for the energy of vengeance is provided—to do good to the offender. Still this is very difficult. 3. *It is Christ-like.* We have—what Solomon had not—the great example of Christ; not merely led as a lamb to the slaughter, but also freely giving himself in suffering and death for the salvation of those who persecuted him. If we would be Christians, we must walk in the footsteps of our Master. Here, indeed, is a case in which the disciple is called upon to deny himself—to deny the natural impulse of revenge—and to take up his cross and follow Christ. 4. *It is only possible with Divine grace.* We ask for grace to bear our troubles. We should seek further grace to inspire us with more than a forgiving spirit—with active benevolence towards a foe.

II. ITS MIRACULOUS CONSEQUENCES. 1. *Enmity is conquered.* This is the last result that worldly men would expect. They would rather suppose that, if they gave their enemy an inch, he would take an ell. But there are two ways of conquering a foe—by coercing him and by destroying his enmity. When one makes a friend out of an old enemy he does most effectually vanquish and utterly destroy his enmity. 2. *This results from the rousing of generous sentiments.* It goes on the presumption that there are noble sentiments present, if latent, in the breast of an antagonist. The tendency of enmity is to paint our foe with the blackest colours. But he may be no worse than we are. Or, if he be an exceptionally bad man, still he is not a perfect demon. Though a man does wrong, we dare not assume that there is no capacity for better things in him. Now, the heathen method is to address him only on his evil side; but the Christian method—already anticipated in the Old Testament—is to appeal to his higher self. This is God's way in saving sinners. We deserve wrath and vengeance. But instead of our deserts, God has given us grace and a gospel of salvation. He heaps coals of fire on our heads, and conquers enmity with love. The enemy who is thus treated loses the satisfaction of having provoked his victim. He is chagrined at discovering his own impotence. It is useless to spit malice at a man who is strong and grand enough to give back kindness. Such action reflects on the degradation of the conduct of the enemy. If he has a sense of self-respect, it comes to him as burning coals of shame. 3. *This method may be successful in various regions.* (1) In private quarrels. (2) In religious differences. If the sects laboured to help one another, instead of biting and devouring each other, sectarianism would be consumed in the burning coals of Christian love. (3) In national quarrels. We have tried the old heathen method of war long enough, and with no good results. It is time we turned to the Christian method of magnanimity. 4. *This method receives the approval of God.* Besides conquering the foe, it secures God's favour, which the method of revenge loses.

Ver. 25.—"*Good news from a far country.*" I. THE LITERAL APPLICATION OF THE PROVERB. 1. It may be that a rumour has come that a distant ally is marching to succour a nation in its distress, when it had thought itself forgotten, isolated, and helpless. 2. Or perhaps, when there is famine in the land, the news arrives that "there is corn in Egypt." 3. Or, again, the nation, like Tyre in antiquity, like Venice and Holland later, like England in the present day, may do business on the great waters. She has possessions in distant lands, and her wealth is entrusted to the sea. As she

learns that her enterprises are prospering, she rejoices at the good news from a far country. 4. Another way of applying the proverb is in relation to our kinsfolk across the sea. It would be well if England took more interest in her colonies. Coldness, inconsiderateness, and officialism may do much to alienate our children in the new worlds. If we would be drawn together in closer ties of mutual assistance, we must give more attention to colonial affairs. 5. Those who have relations in distant lands anxiously watch for the post. How refreshing to his widowed mother is the soldier's cheering letter from a distant land, telling of his safety! how much more so if it breathes words of love and gratitude, and reveals a heart kept true among sore temptations! 6. Lastly, good news from the mission-field is most refreshing for the Churches at home. We should all be the better for taking a wider view of the world, and rejoicing in everything good and hopeful among our fellow-men.

II. THE SYMBOLICAL SUGGESTION OF THIS PROVERB. Such a proverb as that before us cannot but suggest a reference to the good news of which the angels sang at the birth of Christ, and, although we cannot assert that any such idea was in the mind of Solomon, the principle being true in itself, may be applied by us to the Christian gospel. 1. *This comes from a far country.* (1) It comes from heaven. Christ came down from heaven, sent to us by his Father. The highest truth is a revelation. Christianity is a God-given religion. If we had to deal with "cunningly devised fables," it would not be worth while to pay much attention to the Christian legend. Its great importance rests on its truth as a message from God. (2) Heaven is a far country, while we are in our sin. Though God is locally near, spiritually he is far away. The prodigal has strayed into a far country. Yet even there he is not forgotten. God has sent from his distant heavens a message to his wandering children. 2. *It is good news.* (1) It tells of God's love and mercy. (2) It declares Christ's mission to save—his incarnation, ministry, death, and resurrection. (3) It brings to us the offer of free deliverance from all evil and of a heavenly inheritance. The Siberian exile learns from the capital that he is pardoned. The pauper is told that he is heir to untold wealth in a distant land. (4) It is of universal application. The good news is for all. 3. *It is most refreshing.* It is "as cold waters to a thirsty soul." (1) It is much needed. The soul of man naturally thirsts for knowledge of the unseen. A deeper need is that of blessedness in union with God. (2) It refreshes. We have not enough truth to clear up all mysteries, but we have enough to invigorate us and cheer us on our way. Not yet the full feast, but refreshing waters on the journey.

Ver. 28.—"*A city that is broken down.*" Elsewhere the wise man has told us that it is greater for a man to get the victory over his own passions than to take a city (ch. xvi. 32). Now we learn the reverse truth—the shame, misery, and ruin of lack of self-control.

I. THE LACK OF SELF-CONTROL. We need to see what this condition really is. Every man is permitted, in a large measure, to be his own sovereign. No tyrant can invade the secret sanctuary of his thoughts. His ideas, passions, and will are his own. Moreover, God has given to us freedom of will, so that we can give the rein to our passions or restrain them. The inner man is like a city full of life. We are each called upon to keep order in our own cities, and, if we do not respond to the call, the result will be riotous confusion. There are wild beasts within that must be chained and caged, or they will break loose and ravage the streets—murderous propensities that must be shut in a deep dungeon; ugly and vile tendencies to sin that need to be crushed lest they usurp the control of the life. When the will is not fortified and exercised against these evil things, we suffer from lack of self-control.

II. THE CONSEQUENCES OF LACK OF SELF-CONTROL. The "city is broken down, and without walls." 1. *Dilapidation.* The city falls into ruins; its palaces and temples are wrecked; rain penetrates its broken roofs; the wind blows through the crevices of its ill-kept tenements. There is such a thing as a dilapidated soul. Remains of its former glory may yet be detected, but they only add to the shame of its present condition. By failing to control himself, the foolish man has let his passions tear his very soul to pieces. His character is a wreck. 2. *An unprotected condition.* The walls have vanished. The city lies open to the invader. Self-control serves as a wall to protect the soul from temptation; when this disappears, the soul's shelter is lost. Then worse evils follow. Wolves from the forest join with the unclean creatures of the city

in wasting the miserable place. It is given over to the enemy. Such is the final condition of one without self-control. He is subject to all sorts of bad foreign influences. In the end he becomes like a city sacked by devils.

III. THE CAUSE AND THE REMEDY OF THE LACK OF SELF-CONTROL. 1. *The cause*—weak self-indulgence. At first the man might have held himself under; but he commenced to indulge his passions, and now they have the mastery over him. He did not begin by choosing evil; indeed, he has never decidedly chosen it. All he has done has been to permit "sin to reign" in his "mortal body." This was not the choice of sin, but it was culpable weakness. 2. *The remedy*—Divine strength. We are all too weak to stand alone; but when we have lost control over ourselves, there is no remedy but in the mighty salvation of Christ. This gives strength for the future, by means of which we may crucify the flesh. If we cannot rule our spirits, we may seek that Christ shall take possession of them and reign within. He will build up the broken walls and restore the ruined dwellings.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 2—5.—*Kings: their attributes and duties.* I. CONTRAST BETWEEN DIVINE AND HUMAN GOVERNMENT. Divine government is a mystery in its principles and its ends. Partial revelation only is given of its method in the Scriptures and in the actual course of the world. Actual relations are one thing, their secret spring another. The former may be known, the latter is veiled from our scrutiny. On the contrary, human government should be founded on principles intelligible to all and commendable to the conscience and reason of all. In the kingdom of God, says Luther, we must not seek to be wise, and wish to know the why and wherefore, but have faith in everything. In the kingdom of the world a governor should know and ask the why and wherefore, and trust in nothing.

II. THE RESERVE OF RULERS. (Ver. 3.) If the heart in general is unsearchable, much more must theirs be who have not their own merely, but the secrets of nations in their keeping. The lesson is taught of abstaining from hasty censure of the actions and policy of those in power; the grounds of that policy may be far deeper than anything that meets the eye.

III. THE DUTY OF DISCERNMENT IN RULERS. (Vers. 4, 5.) As the refiner separates the dross from the silver, which mars its beauty and purity, so should the king exclude from his presence and counsels the profligate and the base. A pure or vicious court has immense influence on the manners and morals of the community. Christ speaks in like manner of gathering out of his kingdom at the day of judgment all offenders and workers of iniquity.

IV. THE TRUE FOUNDATION OF AUTHORITY. (Ver. 5.) Not force, but moral power; not might, but right. How often in our time have thrones tottered or the occupant fallen when physical force alone was recognized as the basis of security! Justice is imprinted upon the nature of man. And let rulers who would maintain their power ever appeal to reason and to right. He who takes the motto, "Be just and fear not," for the maxim of his policy lays the only stable foundation of law and government.—J.

Vers. 6, 7.—*A lesson in courtly manners.* Nothing in conduct is unimportant. Fitting and graceful manners are those which become our station in life. Here the relations to our superiors are touched upon.

I. WE SHOULD KNOW OUR PLACE, AND NOT STEP OUT OF IT. (Ver. 6.) As the Arabic proverb finely says, "Sit in thy place, and no man can make thee rise." "All that good manners demand," says a great writer, "is composure and self-content." We may add to this "an equal willingness to allow the social claims of others as to rely upon our own." Self-respect is complemented by deference. We need a ready perception of worth and beauty in our companions. If it is folly to refuse respect to admitted external rank, much more to the native rank of the soul.

II. WE SHOULD ASSUME THE LOWEST RATHER THAN THE HIGHEST PLACE. (Ver. 7.) The lesson runs all through life, from the outward to the inward and the spiritual (see Luke xiv. 8—11). "*Comme il faut*—'as we must be'—is the Frenchman's description

of good society." The lesson is mainly against *presumption* in any and all of its forms, an offence hateful to man and God. To take the lowly place in religion here becomes us, and it leads to exaltation; to grasp at more than our due is to lose all and earn our condemnation. Christianity has a deep relation to manners. There is nothing so beautiful as the code of manners given in the New Testament.

"How near to good is what is fair!
Which we no sooner see,
But with the lines and outward air,
Our senses taken be." J.

Vers. 8—10.—*Some social pests.* I. THE CONTENTIOUS PERSON. (Ver. 8.) He is irritable, easily takes offence, is readily provoked, barbs even the playful darts of jest with poison. When the consequences of this ill temper have broken out in full force, its mischief is seen and exposed too late. Beware, then, of "entrance to a quarrel." The contentious man may make real in the end the enmity of which he only dreams.

II. MANFUL CONDUCT IN DISPUTES. (Ver. 9.) If an unavoidable dispute has begun, bear thyself in it with energy, but with honour. It is unmanly and base to employ against one's opponent the secrets that have been learned from him in some earlier confidential moment. Go first to your adversary, and seek a cordial explanation of the difference, and a fair and honourable settlement. And do not be tempted to mix up foreign matters with it. "Agree with thine adversary quickly."

III. THE EVIL OF NOURISHING QUARRELS. (Ver. 10.) Lawsuits consume time, money, rest, and friends. Worst of all consequences, however, is that in the man's own mind. He lights a fire in his own bosom, and keeps it ever supplied with the fuel of passion, and may turn his heart, and perhaps his home, into a hell.—J.

Vers. 11—15.—*Similitudes of moral beauty and goodness.* I. THE APT WORD. Compared to "golden apples in silver frames." Carved work adorning the ceilings of rooms is perhaps alluded to. The beauty of the ground sets off the worth of the object. Just so the good word is set off by the seasonableness of the moment of its utterance (1 Pet. iv. 11). The apt word is "a word upon wheels, not forced or dragged, but rolling smoothly along like chariot-wheels." Our Lord's discourses (*e.g.* on the bread and water of life) sprang naturally out of the course of passing conversation (John iv.; Luke xiv.). So with Paul's famous discourse on Mars' Hill (Acts xvii.).

II. WISE CENSURE IN THE WILLING EAR IS COMPARED TO A GOLDEN EARRING. (Ver. 12.) For if all wisdom is precious as pure gold, and beautiful as ornaments in that material, to receive and wear with meekness in the memory and heart such counsels is better than any other decoration. "The wisest princes need not think it any diminution to their greatness or derogation to their sufficiency to rely upon counsel. God himself is not without, but hath made it one of the great names of his blessed Son, 'The Counsellor'" (Bacon). He who willingly gives heed to wise chastisement does a better service to his ears than if he adorned them with the finest gold and with genuine pearls.

III. A FAITHFUL MESSENGER IS COMPARED TO COOLING SNOW. (Ver. 13.) In the heat of harvest-labour a draught of melted snow from Lebanon is like a "winter in summer" (Xen., 'Mem.,' ii. 1. 30). A traveller says, "Snow so cold is brought down from Mount Lebanon that, mixed with wine, it renders ice itself cold." So refreshing is faithfulness in service. The true servant is not to be paid with gold.

IV. IDLE PRETENSIONS COMPARED TO CLOUDS AND WIND WITHOUT RAIN. (Ver. 14.) Promise without performance. Let men be what they would seem to be. "What has he done? is the Divine question which searches men and transpierces every false reputation. . . . Pretension may sit still, but cannot act. Pretension never feigned an act of real greatness. Pretension never wrote an 'Iliad,' nor drove back Xerxes, nor Christianized the world, nor abolished slavery."

V. THE POWER OF PATIENCE. (Ver. 15.) Time and patience are persuasive; a proverb compares them to an inaudible file. Here patience is viewed as a noiseless hammer, silently crushing resistance. "He who would break through a wall with his hand,"

says an old commentator, "will hardly succeed!" But how do gentleness and mildness win their way! "I Paul beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (2 Cor. x. 1).—J.

Vers. 16—20.—*Excesses and errors.* I. WARNING AGAINST SATIETY. (Vers. 16, 17.) The stories of Samson and of Jonathan may be read in illustration of the saying (Judg. xiv. 8, 9; 1 Sam. xiv. 26). Ver. 27 points the warning against incurring the pain of satiety. "Honey, too, hath satiety," says Pindar—

"A surfeit of the sweetest things,
The deepest loathing to the stomach brings."

1. We should beware of a too frequent repetition of even innocent pleasures. "If a man will not allow himself leisure to be thirsty, he can never know the true pleasure of drinking." Self-indulgence far more than suffering unnerves the soul. It may well be asked—How can men bear the ills of life, if its very pleasures fatigue them? 2. A special application of the warning. Do not weary your friends. There should be a sacred reserve of a delicate mutual respect even in the most intimate relations of friendship. To invade a busy privacy, with a view to enjoy a snatch of gossip or secure some paltry convenience, is an offence against the minor morals. Defect in manners is usually owing to want of delicacy of perception. Kindly utterance must rest on the conscientious observance of great Christian principles; let daily life be evangelized by their all-pervading power. Let us make our "foot precious" to our neighbour by not intruding it too often in his home. Better that our visits should be like angels', few and far between, than frequent and wearisome as those of a beggar or a dun.

II. THE TONGUE OF THE FALSE WITNESS. (Ver. 18.) Compared to destructive weapons (comp. Ps. lii. 4; lvii. 4; lxiv. 4; cxx. 4). "The slanderer wounds three at once—himself, him he speaks of, and him that hears" (Leighton). Not only falsehood, but the perverse and distorted way of telling the truth, comes under this ban. "In the case of the witness against our Lord, the words were true, the evidence false; while they reported the words, they misrepresented the sense; and thus swore a true falsehood, and were truly foresworn (Matt. xxvi. 60)" (Bishop Hall).

III. MISPLACED CONFIDENCE. (Ver. 19.) Compared to a broken tooth and a disjointed foot. It is a too common experience, and suggests the counsel to select as confidants only good men. "Be continually with a godly man, whom thou knowest to keep the commandments of the Lord, whose mind is according to thy mind, and will sorrow with thee, if thou shalt miscarry; . . . and above all, pray to the Most High, that he will direct thy way in truth" (Ecclus. xxxvii. 12—15). Above all, "let God be true, and every man a liar."

IV. INAPT AND UNREASONABLE MIRTH. (Ver. 20.) It is like the mixture of acid with soda, by which the latter is destroyed; while the combination with oil, etc., produces a useful compound. It is like laying aside a garment in cold weather. Discordant behaviour, the words or the manner out of tune with the occasion, is the fault pointed at. It springs from thoughtlessness and want of sympathy. The Spirit of Christ teaches us to cultivate imagination and sympathy with others. "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."—J.

Vers. 21, 22.—*Love to our enemy.* I. LOVE DELIGHTS IN ITS OPPORTUNITY. (Ver. 21.) And to true Christian love there is no opportunity sweeter than the distress of a foe.

II. LOVE DELIGHTS IN SUPPLYING NEED. It is the opposite of egotism, which clamours for personal satisfaction, and closes the avenues of pity to the distressed.

III. LOVE IS VICTORIOUS OVER EVIL. (Ver. 22.) A wholesome pain is excited in the mind of the enemy. He begins to feel regret and remorse. The torch of a love divinely kindled dissolves the barrier of ice between soul and soul. Evil is overcome by good.

IV. LOVE IS SURE OF ITS REWARD. Both present, in conscience; and eternal in the fruits and in the award of God. Not a cup of cold water shall be forgotten.—J.

Vers. 23—28.—*Moral invectives.* I. AGAINST SLANDER. (Ver. 23.) Here is a striking picture. Cunning and slanderous habits beget a dark and gloomy expression on the brow; as a homely German proverb says, "He makes a face like three days' rainy weather." The countenance, rightly read, is the mirror of the soul. Without the candid soul the brow cannot be clear and open. If we look into the mirror, we may see the condemnation which nature (that is, God) stamps upon our evil and unholy moods.

II. AGAINST CONTENTIOUSNESS. (Ver. 24.) Better solitude than the presence of the quarrelsome in the home. A wife is either the husband's most satisfying delight or the cruellest thorn in his side.

III. UNHOLY COWARDICE. (Ver. 26.) Faint-heartedness springs from need of genuine faith. To see the chief struck down in battle dismays the band.

> "He is gone from the mountain, he is lost to the forest,
> Like a summer-dried fountain, when our need was the sorest!"

And if the good man is a fountain of help and encouragement by his example, how does the drying up of such a spring—the failure to assert the truth and confront the gainsayer—dismay and paralyze those who look on!

IV. EXCESS IN SPECULATIVE THOUGHT. (Ver. 27.) There may be *too much* of any good thing, even of the pursuit of knowledge. It is too much when it disturbs the health; as a common proverb of the Germans says, "To know everything gives the headache." It is too much when it disturbs the moral balance and unfits for society. We must know when to leave the heights of speculation and nestle in the lowly vale of faith.

V. WANT OF SELF-CONTROL. (Ver. 28.) It is like an undefended city or one in ruins. How weak is it to be able to endure nothing, to deem it a mark of strength to resist every provocation and injury! Let us learn, after Christ's example, to be abused without being angry; to give soft words and hard arguments; and to cultivate self-control in matters of small moment, in preparation for those of greater. For "if we have run with the footmen, and they have wearied us, how shall we contend with horses?"—J.

Ver. 25.—*Good news from abroad.* I. IT IS REFRESHING AND EVER WELCOME. This needs no illustration. Absence and distance raise a thousand fears in the fancy. Division and space from loved ones chill the heart. The arrival of good tidings bridges over great gulfs in thought.

II. IT IS A PARABLE OF THE SPIRITUAL SPHERE. God has sent us good news from what, in our sins and ignorance, seems a far country. We have friends there. There is a real link between us. We are really near. There is the prospect of a final reunion.—J.

Ver. 2.—*God's glory in concealing.* A contrast is here drawn between the glory of God and the honour of man, especially of one class of men—the order of kings.

I. THE HONOUR OF MAN IN INVESTIGATING. 1. *The honour of royalty.* This is "to search out a matter." The king is acting in a way that honours him when (1) he searches human nature and knows all that he can learn about mankind, all, therefore, that he can know about his subjects; (2) he acquaints himself with the character, the disposition, the career, of those immediately about him, in whom he trusts, on whom he leans; (3) he investigates different affairs as they arise, probing and sifting most carefully, not satisfied until he has searched the whole thing through. It becomes a king to make the most complete and patient investigation into all national affairs. 2. *The honour of mankind generally.* This is to "search out" and become practically familiar with (1) all the resources this earth will yield us for our use and our enlargement; (2) the physical, mental, moral, and spiritual necessities of those around us; (3) what is the true way to supply their need. This is that which most honours the disciples of that Son of man who came to minister and to redeem.

II. THE GLORY OF GOD IN CONCEALING. The thought of the writer is obscure. We shall certainly get into the track of it if we consider the three truths: 1. *That God has no need to investigate.* "All things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do;" all the dark places of the earth, the hearts of men, the

most abstruse problems which are so perplexing in our sight. 2. *That he himself is the Inscrutable One.* "His thoughts are very deep," his "ways past finding out." 3. *That it is necessary for him to conceal* in order that he may *truly bless;* that he knows more than he can wisely reveal at once. Parents readily understand this, for they have frequently, constantly, to keep some truths out of sight, ready for a later day and fuller powers; also to decline to reveal, and to leave their children to find out by their own patience and ingenuity. This is very frequently the case with our heavenly Father. For our own sake he half reveals to us and half conceals from us (1) the way to become materially enriched, leaving us to find out what we need to know about agriculture and the stores of wealth that are far below the surface; (2) the way to be mentally enlarged and established; (3) the way to moral and spiritual good. God has designedly and for our ultimate benefit and blessing left much to be searched for and brought out of the *Bible*—his *providential* dealings with us, *our future*, both here and hereafter. It is the glory of man that he can discover and reveal what his fellow-men are unable to make out. It is the glory of God that he cannot make known to us all that is present to his eye, or such revelation of present good and future blessedness would injure us; that he must hide from us a part of his infinite wisdom, some of his inexhaustible stores, and leave us to search and ascertain, that by our searching we may be "lifted up and strengthened."—C.

Vers. 6, 7.—*Modesty and self-assertion.* Some amount of self-assertion is no doubt necessary for honourable success and fruitful achievement. But nothing is more common than for this quality to go beyond its true limit and become distasteful and even offensive both to God and man. What Solomon here deprecates, our Lord also condemns; what he honours, the Divine Teacher also prefers (see Luke xiv. 9).

I. THE DANGER OF SELF-ASSERTION. Its temptation is to assume such proportions that (1) it becomes immodesty, and this is a positive evil, a blemish in character, and a blot upon the life; and (2) it defeats its own ends, for it provokes antagonism and is discomfited and dishonoured. Every one is pleased when the presumptuous man is humiliated.

II. THE PREFERENCE OF MODESTY. 1. It is *frequently successful.* Modesty commends us to the good; we secure their good will; they are inclined to help us and to further our desires; they promote our prosperity. Every one is gratified when the man who "does not think more highly of himself than he ought to think" is the object of esteem, and takes the place of honour. 2. It is *always beautiful.* It is quite possible that, as a matter of worldly policy, modesty may not "answer." It may be, it will often happen, that a strong complacency and vigorous self-assertion will pass it in the race of life. Yet is it the fitting, the becoming, the beautiful thing. It is an adornment of the soul (see 1 Pet. iii. 3). It makes the other virtues and graces which are possessed to shine with peculiar lustre. It gives attractiveness to Christian character and lends a sweetness and influence which nothing else could confer. *To be lowly minded* is a far better portion than to *have the gains and honours* which an ugly assertiveness may command (see homily on Luke xiv. 7—11).—C.

Vers. 8, 9.—*The wise way of settlement.* We look at—

I. THE INEVITABLENESS OF DISPUTES. It is quite impossible that, with our present complication of interests—individual, domestic, social, civic, national—differences and difficulties should not arise amongst us. There must be a conflict of opinion, a clash of wishes and purposes, the divergence which may issue in dissension. What reason would teach us to anticipate experience shows us to exist.

II. THE TEMPTATION OF THE HASTY. This is to enter at once upon *strife;* to "carry it to the court," to "enter an action," to make a serious charge; or (in the case of a community) to take such hostile action as threatens, if it does not end in, war. The folly of this procedure is seen in the considerations: 1. That it interposes an insurmountable barrier between ourselves and our neighbours; we shall never again live in perfect amity with the man with whom we have thus striven; we are sowing seeds of bitterness and discord which will bear fruit all our days. 2. That we are likely enough to be discomfited and ashamed. (1) Those who judge "hastily" are usually in the wrong. (2) No man is a wise and good judge in his own cause; to

every man that which makes for himself seems stronger, and that which makes for his opponent seems weaker, than it appears to a disinterested observer. (3) Whether a case will prosper or not at law depends on several uncertainties; and even if we have a righteous cause we may be entirely defeated—a brilliant advocate against us will easily "make the worse appear the better cause." (4) The issue may be such that we shall be impoverished and ashamed. And that which will aggravate our misery will be that we have so foolishly neglected—

III. THE WAY OF THE WISE. To go at once to the offender and to state our complaint to him. This is in every way right and wise. 1. It is the way of manliness and honour. To talk to a third person about it is more easy and pleasant "to the flesh," but it is not the straightforward and manly course. 2. It is the way that is becoming. It is not the fitting thing to disclose our secrets to another; personal and domestic and ecclesiastical contentions are hidden by the wise and the worthy rather than made known to the world. 3. It is the way of peace; for, in the majority of cases, a very little explanation or a very simple apology *at the beginning* will set everything right. 4. It is the distinctly Christian way (Matt. v. 25, 26; xviii. 15).—C.

Ver. 11.—*Welcome words.* But what are—

I. THE WORDS THAT ARE WELCOME. They are: 1. Words that *travel;* "words upon wheels" (literally). They are words that do not "fall to the ground like water which cannot be gathered up again;" but words which are *not* allowed "to fall to the ground," which pass from lip to lip, from soul to soul, from land to land, from age to age. 2. Words that are *level with our human understanding;* which do not require special learning, or profundity, or experience to be appreciated, but which make their appeal to the common intelligence of mankind. 3. Words that *meet our spiritual necessities;* that direct us in doubt, that comfort us in sorrow, that strengthen us in weakness, that nerve us in duty, that calm us in excitement, that sustain us in disappointment, that give us hope in death.

II. THEIR COMMENDATION. They are like golden apples in silver caskets; *i.e.* they are things that *excite our admiration and bring us refreshment.* We do well to *admire* the true and wise word; the saying or the proverb, the terse, sagacious utterance which holds a little world of wisdom in its sentences, is a thing to be admired by us all. The man who first launches it is a benefactor of his people. And we do still better to *appropriate and employ it;* to find refreshment and even nourishment in it. Many a wise word has given needed strength to a human soul in the very crisis of its destiny.

III. THEIR CULTIVATION. How shall we learn to speak these "words upon wheels"—these fitting, wholesome, strengthening words? They come: 1. From a *true* heart; a heart that is true and loyal to its God and Saviour. First of all we must be right with him; only from a pure fountain will come the healing stream. 2. From a *kind* heart. It is love, pity, sympathy, that will prompt the right utterance. Where the learned deliverance or the brilliant *bon-mot* would entirely fail, the simple utterance of affection will do the truest work, will hit the mark in the very centre. Love is the best interpreter and the ablest spokesman as we make the pilgrimage and bear the burdens of our life. 3. From a *thoughtful spirit.* It is not the superficial talker, that discourses upon every possible topic, but rather the man who thinks, who ponders and weighs what he knows and sees, who tries to look *into* things, and who takes the trouble to look back and to look onward,—it is he who has something to say which it will be worth our while to listen to. 4. From *practised lips.* We do not acquire this sacred art of wise and helpful speech in a day or in a year; it is the happy and exquisite product of patient effort, it is a growth, it is a holy and beneficent habit, it is a thing to be cultivated; we may begin poorly enough, but by earnest endeavour we shall succeed if we will only "continue in well-doing."—C.

Vers. 16, 27.—*The wisdom of moderation.* We can only eat a small quantity of honey; if we go beyond the limit we find out our mistake. Of this, as of all very sweet things, the words of the great dramatist are true, that "a little more than enough is by much too much." This is particularly applicable to that to which it is here referred.

I. SELF-PRAISE. We may go a little way in that direction, but not far. If we

transgress the narrow bounds allowed, we shall soon find that we have done ourselves harm in the estimation of our neighbour. And even to talk, without praise, of ourselves is a habit to be held well in check, or it will run into an offensive and injurious egotism (see homily on ch. xvii. 2).

II. SELF-EXAMINATION. To "search out our own glory" is not glorious, but rather inglorious. It is allowable enough for a man sometimes to recall what he has been to others, and what he has done for others; but he may not practise this beyond a very circumscribed limit. To hold up his own achievements before his own eyes is to beget a very perilous complacency; to find them out for other people's edification is quite as dangerous. And, on the other hand, for men to be searching their hearts or their lives to discover what is evil in them, to be instituting a constant examination of their souls to ascertain whereabouts they stand,—this is open to grave mistake, and may soon become unwise and hurtful. Self-examination is very good up to a certain point; beyond that point it becomes morbid and is a serious mistake.

III. BODILY EXERCISE AND INDULGENCE. This is very pleasant and (the latter) very "sweet," like the eating of honey. And to go some way in both of these is good and wise. But let the athlete beware lest his very love of bodily exercise betrays him into excesses which undermine his strength and bring on premature decline and death. And as to bodily indulgence, let us be often reminding ourselves that only in the cup of strict moderation—whatever that cup may be—is real pleasure or lasting health to be found. All excess here is as foolish as it is sinful.

IV. SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT. Can we have too much of this? Undoubtedly we can. Those who are perpetually partaking of one particular kind of religious nourishment, however good that may be in its way and measure, are over-eating of one kind of food, and they will suffer for so doing. They will not grow as God meant them to grow, proportionately and symmetrically; there will be a lopsidedness about their mind or character which is very noticeable and very ugly. Whether it be the contemplative, or the poetical, or the speculative, or the evangelistic, or the didactic, or any other side of truth in which men surfeit their souls, they make a mistake in so doing. They should understand that Divine truth has many sides and aspects, that there is not any one of them that constitutes wisdom or is sufficient to fill the mind and build up the character of a man. Our wisdom is to partake of the various dishes which are on the table our bountiful Host has provided for us; for as the body is the better for eating of many "meats," so is the soul all the stronger and all the fairer for partaking in moderation of all the various sources of spiritual nutrition that are within its reach.—C.

Vers. 20, 25.—*The inopportune and the acceptable.* "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly" (ch. xviii. 24). And if we would do this we must be careful to choose our time for speaking the truth to our friends, and must study to do not only the right but the appropriate thing. We must—

I. ABSTAIN FROM THE INOPPORTUNE. (Ver. 20.) It should require but a very humble share of delicacy to understand that what is very valuable at one time is altogether misplaced and unpalatable at another. We should carefully abstain from: 1. All merriment in the presence of great sorrow. By indulgence in it then we only add fuel to the fire of grief. 2. The discussion of business or the proposals of pleasure in the presence of earnest spiritual solicitude. When men are profoundly anxious about their relations with God, they do not want us to harass and burden them with talk about temporal affairs or about social entertainments; these are good in their time, but not at such a time as that. 3. Entering into the affairs of life in the presence of the dying. Those who stand very near indeed to the future world do not want to be vexed with matters which they are leaving behind for ever. Similarly, it is a mistake to be always or even often discussing death and the future with those who, while not unready for either, are charged with the duties and responsibilities of active life. 4. An urgent insistance upon spiritual obligations in presence of acute bodily suffering or severe destitution. The Christian course, in such a case, is to call in the doctor or the baker.

II. CULTIVATE THE ACCEPTABLE. (Ver. 25.) How acceptable to the human heart is: 1. Good news from our friends and kindred when afar off from us. It is worth while

to take much trouble, to "put ourselves quite out of our way," in order to convey this; it is one of the friendliest of friendly acts. 2. Society in loneliness; the kindly visit paid to the solitary, a conversation (however brief and simple) with those whose hearth is uncheered by companionship. 3. Encouragement in depression. The heart often aches and hungers for a word of cheer, and one very short sentence may lift it up from depths of disappointment and depression into the bracing air of hopefulness and determination. 4. Sympathy in sorrow. Grief does not crave many or fine words; it asks for genuine *sympathy*—the "feeling with" it; if it has this, it will gratefully accept any simplest utterance in word or deed, and will be comforted and strengthened by it. Real sympathy is *always* the acceptable thing. 5. Guidance in perplexity. When we do not know which way to turn, then the brief word of direction from one who has "gone that way before us" is valuable indeed. There is no kinder friend than the true and faithful guide. If we would take our part well and be to our brethren all that it is in our power to become, we must study to do the congenial and acceptable thing. The man who has acquired this art is worthy of our admiration and our love; we are sure that he will not go without our Master's commendation; for is it not he who is feeding the hungry, and giving the thirsty to drink? is it not he who is clothing the naked and healing the sick? While we do these two things, should we not also—

III. BE PREPARED FOR EVERY POSSIBLE CONDITION? We may be sure that uncongenial and congenial things will be said to us, timely and untimely attitudes will be taken toward us; some men will aggravate and others will heal our spirits. The wise man will see to it that he is (1) rooted in those principles which never change but always sustain; (2) has his strength in the One "with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning."—C.

Ver. 21.—*The true triumph.* (See homily on ch. xxiv. 17, 18, 29.) To the truth on this subject there affirmed, may be added the consideration that to return good for evil is the true triumph; for—

I. TO BE AVENGED IS REALLY UNSATISFACTORY. It is, indeed, to have a *momentary gratification.* But of what character is this satisfaction? Is it not one that we share with the wild beast, with the savage, nay, even with the fiend? Is it one that we can approve in our calmer hour, that we can look back upon with any thankfulness or pure delight? In fact, it is to be really and *inwardly defeated;* for we then give way to a malevolent passion—we are "overcome of evil" instead of overcoming it. We allow thoughts to enter our mind and feelings to harbour in our heart of which, in worthier moments, we are utterly ashamed.

II. TO ACT MAGNANIMOUSLY IS THE VICTORIOUS THING. 1. It is to gain a very real victory over our self, over our lower passions. 2. It is to win our enemy. To make him suffer, to wound him, to damage his reputation, to cause him serious loss and injury,—that is a very poor thing indeed to do. Any one is, in a moral sense, equal to that; mere malevolence can do that and can be at home in the act of doing it. But to *win* an enemy, to turn his hatred into love, his contempt into esteem, his cruelty into kindness, his hostility into friendship,—that is to triumph over him indeed, it is to "heap coals of fire upon his head."

III. TO ACT MAGNANIMOUSLY IS TO ACT DIVINELY. For it is: 1. To carry out a Divine commandment (text; Matt. v. 43—48; Rom. xii. 14, 19, 21). 2. To act as the Divine Father does, and as Jesus Christ did when he was with us (Matt. v. 45; Luke xxiii. 24). 3. To receive a Divine reward (text). God will bestow a bountiful, spiritual blessing on those who thus resolutely keep his word, gain dominion over themselves, bless their neighbour, and follow in the footsteps of their Lord.—C.

Ver. 26.—(See homily on ch. xxvi. 1.)—C.

Ver. 28.—(See homily on ch. xvi. 32.)—C.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XXVI.

Vers. 1—12.—Certain proverbs concerning the fool (*kesil*), with the exception, perhaps, of ver. 2 (see on ch. i. 22).

Ver. 1.—**As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest.** Snow in summer would be quite unnatural and unheard of (see on ch. xxv. 13). Rain falls in the usual course of things only at stated times; whence arose the phrase of "the early and of latter rains" (see on ch. xvi. 15). From spring to October or November was the dry season, and a storm at harvest-time was regarded, not merely as destructive or inconvenient, but as portentous and even supernatural (see 1 Sam. xii. 17, etc.). The two cases are types of all that is incongruous and unsuitable. The LXX., apparently regarding their experience in Egypt rather than the actual text, translate, "As dew in harvest, and as rain in summer." **So honour is not seemly for a fool** (ver. 8; ch. xix. 10). It is quite out of place to show respect to a stupid and ungodly man, or to raise him to a post of dignity; such conduct will only confirm him in his folly, give others a wrong impression concerning him, and afford him increased power of mischief. The Greeks had a proverb about giving honour to unsuitable objects: they called it washing an ass's head with nitre.

Ver. 2.—**As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying.** "Bird" (*tsippor*) is the sparrow, which is found throughout Palestine; "swallow" (*deror*), the free flier. The Authorized Version hardly gives the sense. The line should be rendered, *as the sparrow in* (in respect of) *its wandering, as the swallow in its flying.* The point of comparison is the vagueness and aimlessness of the birds' flight, or the uselessness of trying to catch them in their course. **So the curse causeless shall not come.** It shall, as it were, spend its force in the air, and fall not on the head on which it was invoked. A causeless curse is that which is uttered against one who has done nothing to deserve such denunciation. Septuagint, "As birds and sparrows fly, so a causeless (*parala*) curse shall come upon no one" (comp. 1 Sam. xvii. 43; Neh. xiii. 2.) Bailey, 'Festus'—

"Blessings star forth for ever; but a curse
Is like a cloud—it passes."

Closely connected with the superstition that dreads a curse is that which is alarmed by omens. Against this irrational fear we find some Eastern proverbs directed; *e.g.* "The jackal howls: will my old buffalo die?" "The dog barks—still the caravan passes: will the barking of the dog reach the skies?" (Lane). Instead of אַל, "not," the Keri reads לֹו, "to him." This makes the proverb say that the unprovoked curse shall return upon him who uttered it. But this reading is not to be accepted, as it does not suit the terms of comparison, though it seems to have been used by St. Jerome, who translates, *Sic maledictum frustra prolatum in quempiam superveniet.* This retributive justice is often alluded to elsewhere; *e.g.* ver. 27 (where see note). So we find in various languages proverbs to the same effect. Thus in English, "Harm watch, harm catch;" Spanish, "Who sows thorns, let him not walk barefoot;" Turkish, "Curses, like chickens, always come home to roost;" Yoruba, "Ashes always fly back in the face of him that throws them" (Trench).

Ver. 3.—**A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass.** We should be inclined to invert the words, and say a bridle for the horse, and a whip for the ass; but it must be remembered that in early times the horse was not ridden, but only driven. The animals used in riding were the ass and mule, and sometimes the camel. The Eastern ass is really a fine animal, larger, more spirited, and more active than the poor creature which we are wont to see. Or the whip and bridle may be intended to apply to both animals, though divided between the two for rhythmical or antithetical reasons (see on ch. x. 1). **A rod for the fool's back.** Sharp correction is both useful and necessary for the fool (so ch. x. 13; xix. 29). Similar treatment Siracides advises to be employed in the case of an idle servant (Ecclus. xxx. 24—28). Septuagint, "As a whip for a horse and a goad for an ass, so is a rod for a lawless nation."

Ver. 4.—**Answer not a fool according to his folly.** Do not lower yourself to the fool's level by answering his silly questions or arguing with him as if he were a sensible man. **Lest thou also be like unto him;** lest you be led to utter folly yourself or to side with him in his opinions and practices. Our blessed Saviour never responded to foolish and captious questions in the way that the questioner hoped and desired. He put them by or gave an unexpected turn to them which silenced the adversary. Instances may be seen in Matt. xxi. 23, etc.; xxii. 21, 22; Luke xiii. 23, etc.; John xxi. 21, etc.

Ver. 5.—**Answer a fool according to his folly.** This maxim at first sight seems

absolutely antagonistic to the purport of the preceding verse; but it is not so really. The words, "according to his folly," in this verse mean, as his folly deserves, in so plain a way as to expose it, and shame him, and bring him to a better mind. **Lest he be wise in his own conceit;** thinking, it may be, that he has said something worth hearing, or put you to silence by his superior intelligence.

Ver. 6.—**He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool.** This clause comes in the Hebrew after the next. **Cutteth off the feet, and drinketh damage.** To entrust an important commission to a fool is to deprive one's self of the means of having it properly executed, and to bring upon one's self shame and injury. A man who is so silly as to employ such an unfit messenger, as it were, cuts off the feet which should bear him on his errand, and, instead of enjoying the satisfaction of seeing the business well performed, he will be mortified and damaged by the blunder and stupidity of his emissary. Septuagint, "He maketh for himself reproach from his own ways (ὁδῶν, ? ποδῶν) who sendeth a word by a foolish messenger." The Vulgate reads the first participle in a passive sense, *claudus pedibus;* but this is unnecessary. We have similar phrases to "drinketh damage" elsewhere; *e.g.* Job xv. 16, "drinketh in iniquity;" xxxiv. 7, "drinketh up scorn;" and with a different word, ch. xix. 28, "devoureth iniquity."

Ver. 7.—**The legs of a lame man are not equal.** The first word of this verse, דַּלְיֵי, has occasioned some difficulty. It is considered as an imperative from דלה, "draw off," "take away." Thus the Septuagint, ἀφελοῦ; Venetian, ἑπάρατε. But the verb seems never to have this meaning; nor, if it had, would the sense be very satisfactory, for, as Delitzsch points out, lame legs are better than none, and there is a great difference between the perfectly crippled or paralytic who has to be carried, and the lame man (פִּסֵּחַ) who can limp or get along on crutches. And when we explain the proverb in this sense (as Plumptre), "Take away the legs of the lame man and the parable from the mouth of fools," for both alike are useless to their possessors, and their loss would not be felt—we must recognize that the conclusion is not true. No one would think of amputating a man's legs simply because he was lame, and such a one's legs cannot be considered absolutely useless. Others regard the word as third plural kal, "the legs hang loose;" though the form is not sufficiently accounted for. All explanations of the word as a verbal form have such difficulties, that some take it as a noun, meaning "dancing," which is Luther's interpretation, "As dancing to a cripple, so it becometh a fool to talk of wisdom." But the word could never signify anything but "limping," and could not express the elegant motion of dancing. The Authorized Version considers the Hebrew to mean, "are lifted up," *i.e.* are unequal, one being longer or stronger than the other; but this loses the force of the comparison. There seems to be no better interpretation than that mentioned above, "The legs of the lame hang loose," *i.e.* are unserviceable, however sound in appearance. St. Jerome has expressed this, though in a strange fashion, "As it is vain for a lame man to have seemly legs." **So is a parable in the mouth of a fool.** "Parable" (*mashal*), sententious saying, the enunciation of which, as well as the recital of stories, was always a great feature in Eastern companies, and afforded a test of a man's ability. A fool fails in the exhibition; he misses the point of the wise saying which he produces; it falls lame from his mouth, affords no instruction to others, and makes no way with its hearers. Siracides gives another reason for the incongruity, "A parable shall be rejected when it cometh out of a fool's mouth; for he will not speak it in its season" (Ecclus. xx. 20). Septuagint, "Take away the motion of legs, and transgression (παρανομίαν, ? παροιμίαν, Lag.) from the mouth of fools."

Ver. 8.—**As he that bindeth a stone in a sling.** So Septuagint, Ὃς ἀποδεσμεύει λίθον ἐν σφενδόνῃ. This gives a very good sense, the point being either that the stone, after being firmly fitted in its place, quickly passes away from the sling, or, if more stress is laid on the word "bindeth," that the stone is so firmly fixed that it cannot be slung, and therefore never reaches the mark. The alternative rendering adopted by the Revised Version is this, "As a bag of gems in a heap of stones;" where the incongruity would consist either in exposing jewels on a cairn, or sepulchral monument, whence they could easily be filched, or in attracting undesirable attention. But there are grammatical and etymological reasons against this interpretation; and the Authorized Version is to be considered correct. The Vulgate is curious: *Sicut qui mittit lapidem in acervum Mercurii.* This rendering points to the custom, with which Jerome must have been familiar, of erecting statues of Mercury on the highways, which were thus placed under his protection. Round these statues were ranged heaps of stones, to which every wayfarer contributed by throwing a pebble as he passed. The absence of the critical faculty which discerned no absurdity in this anachronism is sufficiently remarkable. The Latin saying

seems intended to denote useless labour, as we speak of "carrying coals to Newcastle." **So is he that giveth honour to a fool.** You pay respect to a fool, or place him in an honourable position, but your labour is wasted; he cannot act up to his dignity, he cannot maintain the honour; it passes away like the stone from the sling, or, if it remains, it is useless to him.

Ver. 9.—**As a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard.** There is here no idea of the drunkard's hand being pierced with a thorn while he is insensible to the pain, but rather of his being armed with it, and ripe for mischief. So it is best to render, "A thornbush cometh into the hand of a drunkard;" he somehow gets possession of it, and in his stupid excitement is liable to become dangerous. Some understand עלה of the growth of the thorn; thus the Septuagint, "Thorns grow in the hand of a drunkard;" Vulgate, "As if a thorn grew in the hand of a drunkard." But one does not see the bearing of such an expression; and the translation given above is more appropriate. **So is a parable,** etc. (as ver. 7). In that passage the wise saying in a fool's mouth was compared with something useless, here it is compared with something injurious. He employs it purposely to wound others; or by the ignorant use of some sharp-edged word he does much mischief. In this hemistich the LXX. has read משל with a different vocalization, and renders, "servitude (δουλεία) in the hand of fools." This seems to mean that it comes natural to fools to be manacled and restrained by force.

Ver. 10.—Few passages have given greater difficulty than this verse; almost every word has been differently explained. The Authorized Version is, **The great God that formed all things both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors;** Revised Version, *As an archer* (Job xvi. 13) *that woundeth all, so is he that hireth the fool and he that hireth them that pass by.* At first sight one would hardly suppose that these could be versions of the same passage. To show the diversity that obtained in early times we quote the Greek and Latin versions. Septuagint, "All the flesh of fools is much distressed (πολλὰ χειμάζεται), for their distraction (ἔκστασις) is brought to nought;" Vulgate, "Judgment decides causes, and he who imposes silence on a fool appeases wrath." From the various interpretations of which this proverb is capable, it may be surmised that it was originally one of those hard sayings which were intended to exercise the ingenuity of auditors. It has certainly had that effect in modern times. We may at once eliminate the rendering of the Authorized Version, though the sense is good and scriptural, denoting that the great Creator recompenses the good and punishes sinners. So the mediæval jingle—

"Ante Dei vultum nihil unquam restat inultum."

"God" is not in the Hebrew, and *rab*, "great," is never used absolutely as equivalent to "God." Nor is the word used elsewhere to mean "head-workman;" so the Revised Version margin, "a master-worker formeth all things," is suspicious. Some translate, "A great man woundeth [equivalent to 'punisheth'] all; he renders their due to fools and to transgressors." One does not see why this should be attributed to the great man; it certainly is not generally true. Rosenmüller, "The mighty man causes terror; so does he who hires the fool and the transgressor;" but it is not clear why the hiring of a fool should occasion terror. The rendering in the Revised Version, or something very similar, has found favour with many modern commentators, though quite unknown to the more ancient versions. According to this interpretation, the proverb says that a careless, random way of doing business, taking into one's service fools, or entrusting matters of importance to any chance loiterer, is as dangerous as shooting arrows about recklessly without caring whither they flew or whom they wounded. To this view Nowack objects that it is unparalleled to present an archer as a picture of what is unusual and profitless; that it does not explain why "hireth" is twice repeated; that the connection between shooter and the hire of fool and loiterer is not obvious; and that עברים does not mean "vagabonds" or "passers-by." None of these objections are of much importance; and this interpretation still holds its ground. There is also much to be said for the rendering of the Revised Version margin, which is virtually that of Gesenius, Fleischer, Wordsworth, Nutt, and others: A skilful man, a master-workman, produces, makes, everything by his own care and superintendence; but he that hires a fool to do his work hires, as it were, any casual vagabond who may know nothing of the business. One objection to this interpretation is that the verb חולל does not elsewhere have the meaning here attributed to it. Considering all the above interpretations unsatisfactory, Hitzig, after Umbreit, followed herein by Delitzsch and Nowack, translates, "Much bringeth forth all," which means that he who possesses much can do anything, or, as St. Matt. xiii. 12, "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given" (comp. ch. i. 5). But the second hemistich comes in rather lamely, "But he who hires a fool is as one who hires a vagabond." Hence Delitzsch reads

וְשֹׂכֵר for the first שָׂכַר, and renders, "But the hire and the hirer of the fool pass away," *i.e.* what the fool gets as wages is soon squandered, and the person who took him into his service is ruined by his incapacity. In this case the connection of the two clauses would be this: A rich man, in the nature of things, grows richer; but there are exceptions to this rule; for he who employs stupid and incapable people to do his business suffers for it in property, reputation, and probably in person also; and the incompetent person derives no benefit from the connection. It is impossible to give a decided preference to any of these expositions; and the passage must be left as a crux. It is most probable that the Hebrew text is defective. This would account for the great variations in the versions.

Ver. 11.—**As the dog returneth to his vomit** (see 2 Pet. ii. 22, which, however, is not quoted from the Septuagint), so **a fool returneth to his folly**; or, *repeateth his folly*. The fool never frees himself from the trammels of his foolishness; his deeds and words always bear the same character to the end. The same truth holds good of the sinner, especially the drunkard and the sensualist. If they feel temporary compunction, and reject their sin by partial repentance, they do not really shake it off wholly; it has become a second nature to them, and they soon relapse into it. Septuagint, "As when a dog goes to his own vomit and becomes hateful, so is a fool who returns in his wickedness to his own sin." The LXX. adds a distich which is found in Ecclus. iv. 21, "There is a shame that bringeth sin, and there is a shame that is glory and grace."

Ver. 12.—**Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit?** (ch. iii. 7). Nothing so shuts the door against improvement as self-conceit. "Woe unto them," says Isaiah (v. 21), "that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight." Such persons, professing themselves wise, become fools (Rom. i. 22; xii. 16; Rev. iii. 17, 18). Touching conceit, *Qui sibi sapit, summe desipit.* The Oriental speaks of the fox finding his shadow very large, and of the wolf when alone thinking himself a lion. There is **more hope of a fool than of him** (ch. xxix. 20). A fool who is conscious of unwisdom may be set right; but one who fancies himself perfect, and needing no improvement, is beyond cure; his case is hopeless. So the sinner who feels and acknowledges his iniquity may be converted; but the self-righteous Pharisee, who considers himself to have no need of repentance, will never be reformed (see Matt. ix. 12; Luke xv. 7; xviii. 14). St. Chrysostom ('Hom. in Phil.,' vii.), "Haughtiness is a great evil; it is better to be a fool than haughty; for in the one case the folly is only a perversion of intellect, but in the other case it is still worse; for it is folly joined with madness. The fool is an evil to himself; but the haughty man is a plague to others too. One cannot be haughty-minded without being a fool. . . . The soul which is puffed up has a worse disease than dropsy, while that which is under restraint is freed from all evil" (Oxford transl.).

Vers. 13—16.—Proverbs concerning the sluggard.

Ver. 13.—This is virtually the same as ch. xxii. 13. The words for "lion" are different in two parts of the verse, *shakhal* being the lion of advanced age, *ari* the full-grown animal; the latter may possibly be assumed to be the more dangerous of the two, and so a climax would be denoted. There is a proverb current in Bechuana, which says, "The month of seed-time is the season of headaches."

Ver. 14.—**As the door turneth upon its hinges.** The door moves on its hinges and makes no progress beyond its own confined sphere of motion; so the slothful man turns himself on his bed from side to side, but never leaves it to do his work. Other analogies have been found in this proverb. Thus: The door opens to let the diligent go forth to his daily business, while the sluggard is rolling upon his bed; the door creaks when it is moved, so the lazy man groans when he is aroused; the door now is opened, now is shut, so the sluggard at one time intends to rise, and then falls back in his bed, and returns to his sleep (comp. ch. vi. 9, 10; xxiv. 33).

Ver. 15.—Very nearly identical with ch. xix. 24. It forms a climax to the two preceding verses. Wordsworth takes "the dish" as a type of sensual pleasure, which the slothful loves, while he has no liking for active work.

Ver. 16.—**The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit.** The sluggard is here one who is too idle to think a matter out, and considers his own cursory view as sure to be right. He is one who deems study to be an unnecessary weariness of the flesh (Eccles. xii. 12), and flatters himself that he is quite able without it to give a satisfactory account of any question presented to him. **Than seven men that can render a reason.** "Seven" is the number of completeness (comp. ch. vi. 31; ix. 1; xxiv. 16). The idle fool sets more value by his own judgment than by the sense of any number of wise men. Revised Version margin, "that can answer discreetly," is perhaps nearer the Hebrew, which implies the being able to return a wise and proper answer to anything asked of them. The LXX. reading a little differently, renders, "Wiser seems a

sluggard to himself than one who in satiety (ἐν πλησμονῇ) brings back a message." This is explained to mean that a sluggard thinks himself wise in not helping a neighbour with an errand or a message, though he would have probably been repaid with a good dinner for his kindness.

Vers. 17—28.—A series of proverbs connected more or less with peacefulness and its opposite.

Ver. 17.—**He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife** belonging **not to him.** "Meddleth with strife" should be "vexes, excites himself, with a quarrel." Is like **one that taketh a dog by the ears, and thus needlessly provokes him to bark and bite. Regarding the position of the two participles in this verse, without any connecting link, Delitzsch takes "passing by" as attributed to the dog, thus: "He seizes by the ears a dog passing by, who is excited by a strife that concerns him not." The stray dog corresponds to the quarrel with which one has nothing to do. The present accentuation does not support this view; otherwise it is suitable and probable. Septuagint, "As he who lays hold of a dog's tail, so is he who sets himself forth as champion in another's cause." Ecclus. xi. 9, "Strive not in a matter that concerns thee not." Says a Greek gnome—

Πολυπραγμονεῖν τἀλλότρια μὴ βοῦλου κακά.

Our English proverb says, "He that intermeddles with all things may go shoe the goslings." The Telugu compares such interference to a monkey holding a snake in his paw; it is hard to hold, dangerous to let go (Lane).

Vers. 18, 19.—A tetrastich, but without parallelisms. **As a mad man who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death.** The word rendered "madman" is an ἅπαξ λεγόμενον, and has been variously explained; but the Authorized Version is probably correct. "Firebrands" are darts with some blazing material attached to them. "Death" forms a climax with the other dangers mentioned, which the madman deals forth recklessly and indiscriminately. **So is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?** When a man has injured his neighbour by lies or malice, the plea that he was only in joke is not allowed; the injury is not less real because he excuses it by alleging it was done not seriously, but playfully; no more than the fatal effects of the use of murderous weapons are lessened by their being employed by the hands of a maniac. Practical joking is often a most serious matter. A mediæval adage says wisely—

"Cum jocus est verus, jocus est malus atque severus."

Septuagint, "Even as those who are under medical treatment (ἰάμενοι) throw words at men, and he who first meets the word will be overthrown; so are all they that lay wait for their own friends, and when they are seen, say, I did it in jest." As insane persons who abuse and ill treat their physicians are excused by reason of their infirmity, so those who injure friends in secret try to excuse themselves when found out by alleging that they were only joking.

Ver. 20.—Some proverbs follow concerning the slanderer. **Where no wood is,** there the **fire goeth out.** Where the wood fails, and that was the only fuel then used, the fire must go out. **So where** there is **no talebearer, the strife ceaseth;** comes to silence (ch. xxii. 10). (For *nirgan*, "whisper," see on ch. xvi. 28.) Septuagint, "With much wood fire groweth, but where there is not one discordant (δίθυμος), strife is at rest."

Ver. 21.—**As coals are to burning coals.** As black, cold charcoal feeds glowing charcoal, as wood feeds a lighted fire, so a quarrelsome man (ch. xxi. 9; xxvii. 15) supports and nourishes strife. The verse is the counterpart of the preceding. Septuagint, "A hearth for coal and logs for fire, and a reviling man for tumult of strife."

Ver. 22.—(See ch. xviii. 8, where the gnome occurs.) Septuagint, "The words of knaves (κερκώπων) are soft, but they strike to the secret chambers of the bowels."

Ver. 23.—The next proverbs are concerned with hypocrisy. The Hebrew denotes the comparison simply by position (see on ch. xxv. 11), thus: **An earthen vessel** (or, *potsherd*) **overlaid with silver dross—glowing lips and a wicked heart.** So-called "silver dross" is litharge, an oxide of lead used to this day to put a glaze on pottery (comp. Ecclus. xxxviii. 30). The comparatively worthless article is thus made to assume a fine appearance. Thus lips that seem to burn with affection, and give the kiss of glowing love, may mask a heart filled with envy and hatred. Judas kisses and words of friendship hide the bad feelings that lurk within. Septuagint, "Silver given with guile is to be considered as a potsherd; smooth (λεῖα) lips hide a grievous heart" (comp. Matt. xxiii. 27).

Ver. 24.—**He that hateth dissembleth with his lips.** This and the next verse form a tetrastich. St. Jerome, *Labiis suis intelligitur inimicus.* But the verb here used, נכר, bears the meaning "to make one's self unknown," as well as "to make one's self known," and hence "to make one's self unrecognizable" by dress or change of countenance (1 Kings xiv. 5). This is much more appropriate in the present connection than the other explanation. The man cloaks his hatred with honeyed words. **And layeth**

up deceit within him; meditating all the time treachery in his heart (Jer. ix. 8). Septuagint, "An enemy weeping promises all things with his lips, but in his heart he contriveth deceits." The tears in this case are hypocritical signs of sorrow, intended to deceive the dupe.

Ver. 25.—**When he speaketh fair, believe him not.** When he lowers his voice to a winning, agreeable tone, put no trust in him. Septuagint, "If thine enemy entreat thee with a loud voice, be not persuaded." **For there are seven abominations in his heart.** His heart is filled with a host of evil thoughts (see on ver. 16), as if seven devils had entered in and dwelt there (Matt. xii. 45; Mark xvi. 9). Ecclus. xii. 10, etc., "Never trust thine enemy; for like as iron rusteth, so is his wickedness. Though he humble himself, and go crouching, yet take good heed and beware of him." Plato's verdict concerning hypocrisy is often quoted, Ἐσχάτη ἀδικία δοκεῖν δίκαιον εἶναι μὴ ὄντα, "It is the very worst form of injustice to appear to be just without being so in reality" ('De Rep.,' ii. p. 361, A). With this Cicero agrees ('De Offic.,' i. 13), "Totius injustitiæ nulla capitalior est quam eorum, qui tum cum maxime fallunt id agunt ut viri boni esse videantur."

Ver. 26.—Whose **hatred is covered by deceit**; or, *hatred may be concealed by deceit*, as was said above (ver. 24). (But) **his wickedness shall be showed before the** whole **congregation.** The hater's real wickedness, at some time or other, in spite of all his efforts to hide it, will be openly displayed. He will show it before some third party and thus it will be divulged. At any rate, this will be the case at the judgment-day, when he who hateth his brother shall be shown to be not only a murderer, but a hater of God also (1 John iii. 15; iv. 20). Septuagint, "He that hideth enmity prepareth deceit, but he revealeth his own sins, being well known in assemblies."

Ver. 27.—**Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein.** This thought is found often elsewhere; *e.g.* Ps. vii. 16; ix. 16; Eccles. x. 8; Ecclus. xxvii. 25, 26. The pit is such a one as was made to catch wild animals; the maker is supposed to approach incautiously one of these traps, and to fall into it. **And he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him.** This does not refer to throwing stones into the air, which fall upon the head of the thrower, but to rolling stones up a height in order to hurl them down upon the enemy (comp. Judg. ix. 53; 2 Sam. xi. 21). Of such retributive justice we have numerous examples; *e.g.* Haman hung on the gallows which he had prepared for Mordecai (Esth. vii. 9, etc.). So the old story tells how Perillus, the inventor of the brazen bull in which prisoners were to be burned alive, was himself made to prove the efficacy of his own invention by the tyrant Phalaris; as Ovid says—

"Et Phalaris tauro violenti membra Perilli
Torruit; infelix imbuit auctor opus."
('Art. Amat.,' i. 653.)

So we have, "Damnosus aliis, damnosus est sibi;" Ἡ δὲ βουλὴ τῷ βουλεύσαντι κακίστη. St. Chrysostom speaks of the blindness of malice: "Let us not plot against others, lest we injure ourselves. When we supplant the reputation of others, let us consider that we injure ourselves, it is against ourselves that we plot. For perchance with men we do him harm, if we have power, but ourselves in the sight of God, by provoking him against us. Let us not, then, injure ourselves. For as we injure ourselves when we injure our neighbours, so by benefiting them we benefit ourselves" ('Hom. xiv. in Phil.,' Oxford transl.).

Ver. 28.—**A lying tongue hateth** those that **are afflicted by it**; or, *those whom it crusheth* (ch. xxv. 15). There is a consensus of the Vulgate, Septuagint, Syriac, and Targum to translate דכיו "truth," thinking apparently of the Aramæan דַּכָּא, "that which is pure." But the hemistich would thus state the baldest truism, and modern commentators unite in assigning to the word some such sense as that given above in the Authorized Version. A liar shows his want of charity by slandering his neighbour; and that men dislike those whom they have injured is a common experience. "It is a characteristic of human nature," says Tacitus ('Agric.,' 42), "to hate those whom one has injured." Seneca, 'De Ira,' ii. 33, "Hoc habent pessimum animi magna fortuna insolentes, quos læserunt, et oderunt." **A flattering mouth worketh ruin**; brings destruction on those who succumb to its seductive words. Vulgate, *Os lubricum operatur ruinas;* Septuagint, "A mouth uncovered (ἄστεγον) causeth tumults." (For "the smooth mouth," comp. ch. v. 3; Ps. xii. 3; lv. 21; Isa. xxx. 10.) The word for "tumults" is ἀκαταστασίας, which does not occur elsewhere in the Septuagint, but is common in the New Testament; *e.g.* Luke xxi. 9; 1 Cor. xiv. 33.

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 2.—*The curse causeless.* I. GOD WILL NOT HEAR A SINFUL PRAYER. A curse is a prayer. No one has the power of inflicting direct harm upon his victim by sheer force of malignant words. Only the superstition of magic could suppose any such thing to be possible. A curse is just a prayer for evil to come on the head of the devoted person. But God will not heed such a petition if he disapproves of it. Prayer is not a force that compels God; it is but a petition that seeks his aid, and the response to it is entirely dependent on his will.

II. THERE IS A PROVIDENCE OVER LIFE. Curses cannot fly about like black-plumed birds of evil, roosting wherever their authors choose. Above the most potent and direful curse of man is the calm, fair, equable government of God. Though the whole human race combined to curse one on whom God smiled, not a shadow of real evil could light on his head. Balaam saw the uselessness of trying to curse a people whom God had blessed (Numb. xxiii. 8).

III. IT IS MORE IMPORTANT TO WIN THE FAVOUR OF GOD THAN TO ESCAPE FROM THE CURSES OF MAN. This conclusion must necessarily result from the previous considerations. Man cannot really curse or bless. Our whole future depends, not on man's opinions, but on God's treatment of us. Yet many men are in an agony of distress when they are visited with the disapproval of society, while they take no steps to secure the favour of God. This "fear of man bringeth a snare." It is a cowardly thing, and reveals great weakness. We need a more tough moral fibre. How grand was the courage of John Bright, when, after standing on the pinnacle of popular fame in his triumph over the corn laws, he suddenly stepped down into a position of isolation and unpopularity by denouncing the Crimean War!

IV. IT IS WORSE TO DESERVE THE CURSE THAT IS NOT GIVEN THAN TO RECEIVE THE CURSE THAT IS NOT DESERVED. It may be that vile conduct is concealed or condoned by a low tone of social morality; while right conduct is misinterpreted or condemned by a false standard. Men shudder at crimes when they are guilty of more sinful vices. Nevertheless, what is evil deserves execration, and for the quick conscience ill desert is more dreadful than public disapproval.

V. NO MALIGNITY CAN ULTIMATELY FRUSTRATE THE CAUSE OF TRUTH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS. The curse causeless was flung at Christ. It appeared to alight on his head and he died in gloom a shameful death. Then he rose and triumphed, and shook off the harmless curse in his joyous victory. The enemies of Christ have cursed his gospel. But they have failed to destroy it. On the contrary, it flourishes under the curses of bad men. Though Satan and all his hosts combined against it they could not stay its glorious progress.

VI. NO SATANIC CURSES CAN HURT THE TRUE DISCIPLE OF CHRIST. All the curses of hell cannot touch a hair of the head of him who is sheltered by the grace of Christ. Even the deserved curses of his sin are not to hurt the Christian, pardoned and renewed.

Vers. 4, 5.—*The wise treatment of folly.* These two verses need not be taken as mutually contradictory. They balance one another.

I. IT IS DIFFICULT TO ANSWER FOLLY. Whichever way we take it, we are in danger of blundering. If we meet it on its own ground we may share its shame. If we treat it soberly we may only incur ridicule. Both courses are beset with difficulties. This is especially true of folly in the biblical sense of the word, according to which it is not so much stupidity as wilful perverseness, light-hearted but depraved. It is not easy to find any point of attachment through which to influence this condition of soul. We need great grace in endeavouring to recover the thoughtless, foolish evil-livers. The sad may be approached through their troubles, but the frivolous elude our grasp.

II. IT IS A FATAL MISTAKE TO IMITATE THE FOLLY OF THE FOOLISH. St. Paul would become all things to all men in the hope that he might by any means save some. But he would never descend to frivolity; that would have been lowering to his true dignity as a servant of Christ. It is not necessary to be always grave. We may arouse and interest thoughtless people by using methods that would not be desirable

or acceptable in the case of earnest men and women. Assuredly there is no virtue in pretence, pomposity, pride, a stilted style, etc. But it can never be right nor wise to say or do anything that would lower the majesty of truth and righteousness or degrade the ideal of Christian conduct. It may be possible to "draw" crowds by such more than questionable methods, but it is certainly impossible to "raise" them by such means, and what is the use of massing people together under pretence of religious work when our course of action is not likely to inspire the reverence which is the root of religion? It would be a far more successful method, as well as a more worthy one, to have much humbler aims in regard to numbers, but much higher ones in regard to the spiritual character of our work.

III. IT IS NECESSARY TO TREAT THE FOOLISH IN REGARD TO THEIR FOLLY. We are not to give back foolish answers to foolish questions, nor to attempt to attract the frivolous by frivolous methods. But, on the other hand, it is not wise, nor is it right, to treat foolish people as though they were serious and thoughtful. Thus, if questions are raised in mockery, it is our duty to treat them accordingly, and therefore to refuse to answer them. If it is evident that an inquirer is not in earnest it is not for his good nor for the honour of truth to meet him with the language which would be suitable for an honest truth-seeker. To do so would be to cast pearls before swine. It may be well to meet folly with gravity and to rebuke frivolity. This is answering a fool according to his folly, in the right way; for it is taking note of his folly and directing attention to it. Mockery should not go unchastised. Insincerity ought to be exposed. Pompous folly is sometimes best met by ridicule. Thus Erasmus castigated hypocritical pretences to piety with the keen rapier of his wit. It is wise to prick a wind-bag.

Ver. 12.—*Self-conceit.* I. ITS CHARACTER. Self-conceit is just the cherishing of an undue opinion of one's own worth, powers, character, or attainments. This is not pride, because pride need not make special pretences, so long as it asserts itself with dignity, while self-conceit is concerned with the actual contents of the mental life. This is not vanity, for it is not merely a desire to be admired; it may, and probably will, stimulate this desire; but possibly it will be too proud to cherish it. Self-conceit is absorbed with an inordinate conception of its possessor's own inner wealth. It makes a weak man believe that he can carry the gates of Gaza like a second Samson, and a foolish man think that he can solve the riddle of the Sphinx. It is profoundly honest in this. No Don Quixote could be more grave in the service of an illusion than the self-conceited man in pursuit of his hopeless aims.

II. ITS MISCHIEF. 1. *It blinds to self-knowledge.* It stands between a man and a true vision of his condition and character. It substitutes its own inventions for the facts of his inner life. Instead of seeing himself as he is, the conceited man only sees himself as he is painted by his besetting weakness. He mistakes the flattering picture for a photographic likeness. 2. *It shuts the door on true knowledge.* The conceited man will not learn, for he will not believe in his own ignorance. He starts with a consciousness of omniscience. 3. *It refuses to follow guidance.* In his exalted opinion of himself the poor deluded self-worshipper declines to be guided by those who are far more capable than he is. The captain dispenses with the pilot, the patient doctors himself, the suitor conducts his own case; in religious matters the self-conceited man prefers his own notions to the teachings of prophets and apostles. His "views" outweigh Bible truths.

III. ITS CAUSES. 1. *It springs from self-love.* Dwelling much on one's own excellences generates an inordinate conception of them. Love is a flatterer, and self-love flatters self. 2. *It is nourished in ignorance.* It is usually through a lack of perception of the narrowness of the horizon that the self-conceited man believes so much in himself. His village is the world. In looking at a panorama the picture seems to retreat into a great distance, whereas it is but a few feet from the observer. 3. *It is sheltered by indolence.* The conceited man will not rouse himself to inquire.

IV. ITS REMEDIES. These must follow the diagnosis of the disease and its causes. 1. *Enlarged knowledge.* As knowledge grows, the consciousness of ignorance increases. 2. *Failure.* Give it time, and self-conceit will work its own cure, through humiliating disasters. 3. *Grace.* A vision of the truth and righteousness of God and an endowment of the grace of Divine wisdom and goodness will humble a man into shame at

his own previous self-conceit. So Nicodemus was humbled when Christ sent him back to his cradle.

Ver. 13.—"*A lion in the way.*" I. INDOLENCE CREATES DIFFICULTIES. The hindrance is not real; it is purely imaginary. The lion is not *in the way*, but in the fancy of the slothful man. If a man is not in earnest in undertaking any work, he is certain to picture to himself insuperable obstacles. Thus missionary enterprises are discouraged by those who have no missionary zeal. The call of Christ to service and sacrifice is shirked by men whose inventive ingenuity has manufactured unsound excuses. The course of the Christian life is forsaken by some who see it beset with dangers that only spring out of their own reluctance to deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Christ. Often when the slothful man cries, "There is a lion in the way," it is a lie; there is no lion.

II. INDOLENCE IS COWARDLY. It is possible that the indolent person really believes that the beast of the forest has actually invaded the city, is indeed prowling about its streets. He shrinks from a danger that he truly fears. Perhaps there is real danger. We do meet with difficulties and dangers in life. Threatening lions roar on the devoted servant of Christ. But then the true-hearted man will be brave to face difficulty, and only the coward will shrink and fail.

III. DANGER IS NO EXCUSE FOR INDOLENCE. If there be a lion in the street it may be all the more incumbent on a true man to go out of his house. For the lion has no right to be in the city. He should be slain forthwith. To leave him there at large is to yield to him. Are the streets to be given up to the daring intruder because no one is bold enough to face him? Meanwhile he may work fearful havoc. There may be children in the street. While the idle coward bolts and bars his doors and sits shivering in his house, the helpless little ones are left unprotected, a sure prey for the fierce brute. To shrink from the task of expelling the lion is to be guilty of shameful negligence. Because of the hindrances and difficulties of Christ's work cowardly and idle people permit the souls of their fellow-men and the poor ignorant children of miserable degraded families to be destroyed.

IV. DANGER IS OVERCOME BY BEING FACED. Perhaps the lion's roar is worse than his bite. Who can tell but that he is a coward and will turn tail directly he is faced? Possibly, like Bunyan's lions, he is chained. But we shall never know till we go boldly up to him. Many apparent dangers are but empty threats. There are difficulties that need only to be confronted to vanish. The valiant Christian soldier will find that his enemies will give way before the "sword of the Spirit."

V. FOR THE INDOLENT MAN THERE IS A LION IN THE HOUSE. While he shrinks with terror from venturing forth there is greater danger at home. The hypochondriacal patient who dreads meeting the chill of fresh air for fear of catching cold becomes a martyr to dyspepsia at home. The idle man is slain by his own indolence. Satan, who goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, is kept out by no locks and finds his victims in their most private retreats.

Ver. 20.—*The fuel of strife.* I. STRIFE WILL DIE OUT IF IT BE NOT SUPPLIED WITH FRESH FUEL. The fire will not burn after the stock of wood is all exhausted. The quarrel will not continue if the angry feelings that rage in it are not fed by fresh provocations. The unhappy experience of most quarrels is that these provocations are too readily supplied. But if one party to a quarrel really wishes for peace, he can often obtain it by simply abstaining from maintaining his contention. His opponent will tire of a one-sided war. Patience, meekness, and quiet endurance will thus make peace in the end. This was Christ's method. He brought peace by peaceably submitting to wrong.

II. STRIFE IS TOO OFTEN MAINTAINED WITH THE FRESH FUEL ADDED BY STRANGERS. If the two principals in a quarrel were left to themselves, they might tire of perpetual disputes. But a third party interferes, not as a peacemaker, but to take one side; or to meddle in pure mischief-making, delighting to stir up the embers of strife; or to show his own power and importance. This conduct is the opposite of that of one who serves the Prince of Peace.

III. TALE-BEARING ADDS FUEL TO STRIFE. 1. *It may be true.* We may hear some-

thing of one party in a quarrel which we know to be correct, and report it to the other, though it was never intended to be repeated. This rouses angry passions and renews the old battle. Immense harm is done by merely inconsiderate gossip. When an element of spite is added and there is a deliberate attempt to aggravate a quarrel, the conduct of the tale-bearer is simply diabolical. 2. *It is likely to be exaggerated.* Most tales, like snowballs, grow as they proceed. Passing from one to another, they are unintentionally exaggerated. Surmise and inference are mixed up with the original narrative as part of the story. Rhetorical point is gained at the expense of accuracy.

IV. IT IS THE DUTY OF THE CHRISTIAN TO ALLAY STRIFE. His should be the blessedness of the peacemaker (Matt. v. 9). If we have Christian love we shall desire to do this, for charity covers a multitude of sins (1 Pet. iv. 8). Immense harm would be prevented by the merely negative course of refraining from repeating all words that have the slightest tendency to provoke ill will between other people. There is virtue in reticence. Silence here is indeed golden. But sometimes we should go further, and endeavour to make the best of people to one another, and so to heal quarrels.

V. NO TALE-BEARER CAN REVIVE THE STRIFE BETWEEN THE SOUL AND GOD. If there be no more fuel, this will vanish. God desires to be reconciled with his children. If they will but lay down their arms, the old quarrel will cease at once. 1. *God knows the worst of us.* He knows all. Therefore he never makes discoveries that will rouse his wrath against our pardoned past. 2. *He cannot be misled by deceivers.* Tale-bearers may malign our character before men, never before God. 3. *The only thing to continue our strife with God is to continue our rebellious lives.* While we seek peace, peace is secure.

Ver. 27.—*Caught in one's own snare.* One man may be supposed to have dug a pit in some dark place in the road, or to have concealed it by covering it with boughs and earth—like an Indian tiger-trap—so that he may catch some wild animal, or perhaps make a prisoner or a victim of his enemy. Then, not heeding its whereabouts, he falls into his own snare. Another may be rolling a stone against his enemy, when it falls back and crushes the author of the mischief. Consider first some cases in which these things might happen, and then the principle that underlies them.

I. INSTANCES. 1. *The deceiver.* The pit is a snare. It is meant to deceive. Those who deceive others are likely to be deceived. They brand and blind the faculty of truth. They acclimatize themselves in a zone of falsehood. In the very belief that they think this well for them, they prove themselves deluded. 2. *The swindler.* This man may entrap unwary folk who trust his offers, and at first he may thrive and fatten on his ill-gotten gains; but his success is almost sure to be short-lived. Swindlers rarely prosper till old age. 3. *The tempter.* One who imitates the work of the devil may have the devil's wicked triumph over weakness and ignorance. He may succeed in luring his victims to shame and ruin, and he may find a hellish glee in the awful ease with which he overcomes their virtue. But he is a short-sighted self-deceiver. There is a pit prepared for the devil and his angels, and the tempter is one of the latter. Satan makes hell, and every tempter prepares his own pit of destruction. 4. *The opponent of Christ.* The Jews rejected their Lord and laid snares for catching him. He was keen to reply, and turned the shame on the head of each party in succession —Pharisee, Sadducee, Herodian. In the end they accomplished his death. But they were punished in the frightful overthrow of their city. The world's rejection of Christ would mean the world's ruin. Every soul that plots against the kingdom of heaven unwarily plots for its own undoing.

II. THE UNDERLYING PRINCIPLE. This principle is that sin brings its own retribution. There is no need for the conception of a *Deus ex machinâ.* No heralds of justice are wanted to proclaim the guilt of the offender; no heavenly executioners with flaming swords are required to bring swift vengeance on the guilty. If only the foolish sinner is left to himself, he will certainly reap the fatal consequences of his wickedness. Sin is naturally fatal. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." The vile harvest of death grows in the soil of the man's own life. He is his own executioner. No doubt this terrible fact is based on a Divine decree that lies deeply embedded in the very constitution of the universe. Therefore, as the forest traveller unconsciously makes a circuit and

returns to his old camp-fire, so the sinner comes back to his own evil deeds, but to find them now as snares to entrap him and stones to crush him.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—3.—*Sayings against folly.* I. THE INAPTNESS OF HONOURS TO THE FOOLISH MAN. (Ver. 1.) According to Jerome, it is something unheard of or impossible to experience, rain in the harvest-time (see 1 Sam. xii. 17, *sqq.*). The advancement of the fool appears to all men unseasonable, even shocking. High place reveals the more clearly the smallness of small souls. Honour is the just reward of virtue and ability. Let men be virtuous and wise, that they may be honoured, and that external distinctions may not rather invite the contempt of observers.

II. THE HARMLESSNESS OF UNMERITED CURSES. (Ver. 2.) Aimless as the wayward flight of sparrow or swallow, they fail to strike their object (see that in 2 Sam. xvi. 5, *sqq.*; 1 Kings ii. 8). "I would not hesitate to say," observes Trench, "that the great glory of proverbs in their highest aspect, and that which makes them so full of blessing to those who cordially accept them, is the conviction, of which they are full, that, despite all appearances to the contrary, this world is God's world, and not the world of the devil or of those wicked men who may be prospering for the hour. *A lie has no legs.*" Truth may be temporarily depressed, but cannot fall to the ground (Ps. xciv. 15; 2 Cor. iv. 9). But as for the lie; its priests may set it on its feet again after it has once fallen before the presence of the truth, yet this will all be labour in vain; it will only be, like Dagon, again to fall.

III. FOLLY INVITES ITS OWN CHASTISEMENT. (Ver. 3.) The instincts of flesh and blood show like untamed and unbroken-in animals, especially in idleness, and demand the like severe treatment. "Our flesh and sense must be subdued," not flattered and fed. If we do not practise self-control, God will administer his chastisements.—J.

Vers. 4—12.—*Discussion of folly and its treatment.* I. HOW TO ANSWER THE FOOL. (Vers. 4, 5.) 1. *Not according* to his folly; *i.e.* so chiming in with his nonsense that you become as he is. Do not descend into the arena with a fool. Preserve self-respect, and observe the conduct of the Saviour when to folly he "answered not again." 2. *According* to his folly; that is, with the sharp and cutting reply his folly invites and deserves. We have also examples of this in the conduct of our Lord; *e.g.* in reference to the inquiry of the Jews concerning the purging of the temple, which he answered by a reference to John's baptism (Matt. xxi. 25, etc.). The twofold treatment of the fool reminds that the spirit and motive must determine the act, and that opposite methods may be equally good at different times.

II. THE FOOL IS NOT TO BE TRUSTED. (Vers. 6, 7.) 1. *With messages and commissions.* (Ver. 6.) He who does so is like one who amputates his own limbs, deprives himself of the means of gaining his object, or who voluntarily drinks of an evil brewage. 2. *His words are not to be trusted.* (Ver. 7.) Sayings in the mouth of the fool are purposeless and pointless, when they even do no harm. Fools will not be prudent, says Luther, and yet would ever play the part of wise men. "A wise saying doth as ill become a fool as dancing does a cripple." The wise and weighty saying becomes in his mouth a jest. He who would instruct others in Divine wisdom must first have embraced it himself. Solemnity may be a cover for a sot; and the greatest folly is to impose on one's self.

III. THE FOOL IS NOT TO BE HONOURED. (Ver. 8.) To lift him out of his place by compliments or honours is as inapt as to lay a jewel upon a common heap of stones. The sling makes the stone bound in it an implement of death; and to flatter the undeserving brings disgrace upon one's self. It is like putting sword or pistol into a madman's hand. But the other interpretation is better. Ver. 9 shows how mischievous are even good things in the lips and hands of those who only abuse them. Luther quaintly says, "If a drunkard sports with a briar, he scratches more with it than he allows to smell the roses on it; so does a fool often work more mischief with the Scripture than good." (The meaning of ver. 10 is so obscure, it must be left to exegetes; it appears to coincide with the foregoing—the fool is not to be trusted.)

IV. THE FOOL IS INCORRIGIBLE. (Vers. 11, 12; see 2 Pet. ii. 22.) He returns to his exploded nonsense, his often-repeated fallacies; and to his exposed errors of conduct (Matt. xii. 45; John v. 14; Heb. vi. 4—8). Relapses into sin, as into sickness, are dangerous and deadly. "A raw sin is like a blow to a broken leg, a burden to a crushed arm." The cause of these relapses and this incorrigibility is pointed out—deep-rooted self-conceit. This is the fruitful mother of follies. Let none deem himself perfect, but let every one cultivate humility as his dearest possession. God giveth grace to the lowly, but resisteth the proud and them that are wise in their own conceits.—J.

Vers. 13—16.—*The vice of idleness.* I. IT IS FULL OF EXCUSES. (Ver. 13.) There is always some pretext for evading duty, however frivolous and absurd, with the idle man. Idleness is the parent of almost every sin; here of cowardice. He who excuses, accuses himself. Every manly act of exertion is imagined to be full of danger by the lazy mind. The sluggard does not see what danger of another and deadlier kind there is in stagnation. Danger is the brave man's opportunity, difficulty the lion in the way, by victory over which he may earn the laurel of victory and gain the joy of new conscious power.

II. IT LOVES REPOSE AND SELF-INDULGENCE. (Ver. 14.) As the door swings perpetually upon its hinges, without moving a step from its fixed position, so with the sluggard. He "turns round and round, with dull stupidity, like the dyer's horse in the ring" (ch. xix. 24). How often the *cannot* of the slave of vice or evil habit only disguises the *will not* of the sloth-eaten heart! To make mere rest our life-object is to contend against the order of God.

III. IT HATES EXERTION. (Ver. 15.) Even the most necessary exertion may become by habit distasteful. To take his hand from his bosom, even merely to reach after the bread of life, is too much labour for him. And thus his life, instead of being a continual feast, sinks into spiritual indigence and starvation. "The idle soul shall suffer hunger."

IV. IT BREEDS CONCEIT AND FOLLY. (Ver. 16.) This is the strange irony of the vice, that the empty hand shall fancy itself full of wisdom. But such fancies are the very growth of the soil of indolence. It is impossible to make such a one understand his ignorance, for it requires knowledge to perceive it; and he who can perceive it has it not (Jeremy Taylor). The evil may creep into the Church. One may fall into an idle and passive piety, content with sitting still, hearing, praying, singing, from one end of the year to the other, without advancing one step in the practical Christian life (1 Thess. v. 6).—J.

Vers. 17—19.—*Wanton petulance.* I. MEDDLING IN OTHERS' QUARRELS. (Ver. 17.) By a very homely image the folly of this is marked. To interfere in disputes which do not concern one is to get hurt one's self. No doubt the proverb admits of a very selfish application. We may excuse indifference to right on such a plea. But a true instinct of Christian justice and love will find a middle course. We should be sure of our *call to act* before we meddle in others' affairs. It is rare that it can be our duty to volunteer the office of judge. Benevolent neutrality is generally our most helpful attitude.

II. MAKING SPORT OF MISCHIEF. (Vers. 18, 19.) There is an ape-like line of mischief in human nature that needs to be watched. Amusing in trifling matters, it may, if encouraged, fly at high game. He that purposely deceives his neighbour under colour of a jest is no less prejudicial to him than a lunatic that doth wrong out of frenzy and distraction (Bishop Hall). The habit of teasing should be corrected in children. What seems comparatively harmless in itself at first may readily become a habit and harden into a vice. It is in the little delicacies of daily life, no less than in the greatest matters, that we are called to practise the golden rule. We must consider the *effect*, as well as the *intention*, of our actions; for, as in the old fable, what is sport to us may be grievous hurt to another.—J.

Vers. 20—28.—*Spite, cunning, and deceit.* I. THE TALE-BEARER AND MISCHIEF-MAKER. (Vers. 20—22.) 1. *His inflammatory character.* (Vers. 20, 21.) He keeps alive quarrels which, but for his vice, would die down for want of fuel. It is easy to fire the imagination with tales of evil, not so easy to quench the flames thus kindled. If the character is odious, let us beware of countenancing it by opening our ears to

scandal. Personal gossip has in our day become an offence in the public press. But were there no receivers, there would be no thieves. If we cannot stop the scandal-monger's mouth, we can stop our own ears; and "let him see in our face that he has no room in our heart." 2. *The pain he causes.* (Ver. 22.) Slander is deadly—it "outvenoms all the worms of Nile." "A whispered word may stab a gentle heart." "What weapon can be nearer to nothing than the sting of a wasp? yet what a painful wound may it give! The scarce-visible point how it envenoms and rankles and swells up the flesh! The tenderness of the part adds much to the grief." If God has given us a sting, or turn for satire, may we use it for its proper work—to cover evil with contempt, and folly with ridicule, and not at the devilish instigation of envy and spite. Let us dread and discourage the character of the amusing social slanderer.

II. THE BAD HEART. (Vers. 23—25.) 1. *It may be varnished over, but is still the bad heart.* It is like the common sherd covered with impure silver, the common wood with veneer. The *burning lips* seem here to mean glowing professions of friendship, like the kiss of Judas. 2. *Duplicity is the sign of the bad heart.* The dissembler smiles, and murders while he smiles. The fair face hides what the false heart doth know.

> "Neither man nor angel can discern
> Hypocrisy, the only evil that walks
> Invisible, except to God alone.
> Oft, though wisdom wakes, suspicion sleeps
> At wisdom's gate, and to simplicity
> Resigns her charge, while goodness thinks no ill
> Where no ill seems."

3. *The need of prudence and reserve.* "Trust not him that seems to be a saint." Indeed, it is an error to place perfect trust in anything human or finite. But the special warning here is against suffering flattery to blind us to the real character of one who has once been revealed in his true colours.

III. THE EXPOSURE OF WICKEDNESS. (Vers. 26, 27.) Vain is the attempt of men to conceal for any length of time their real character. What they say and what they do not say, do and do not do, reveals them sooner or later. And the revelation brings its retribution. The intriguer falls into his own pit, is crushed beneath the stone he set in motion. Curses come home to roost; the biter is bitten; and the villain suffers from the recoil of his own weapon. This appears also to be the sense of ver. 28. Though a lie has no legs, it has wings, and may fly far and wide, but it "hates its own master" (according to one rendering), and flies back to perch on his shoulder and betray him to his ruin.—J.

Vers. 1, 6, 9.—*Honouring the unworthy.* There are different ways in which we may honour men, whether the wise or the unwise. We may (1) put them in positions of rank and dignity, in which men bow (or fall) before them (ch. xxv. 26); or (2) entrust to them offices of importance and responsibility (ver. 6); or (3) allow them to undertake the work of public instruction (vers. 7, 9). It is only the wise and good that we should honour in these ways. Unfortunately, in the confusion and perversity which sin has wrought in the world, it often happens that it is not the wise man but the fool who is chosen for the post or the task. How foolish it is to honour the unworthy is seen if we consider—

I. ITS PAINFUL INCONGRUITY. "As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honour is not seemly for a fool." To hear a fool attempting lamely to discourse wisdom is suggestive of the motion of a man whose "legs are not equal." For the post of honour to be occupied by one who has disgraced himself by guilty foolishness, or who has neglected his opportunities, and is empty-minded and incapable, this is something which is manifestly unfitting; it offends our sense of the appropriate and the becoming. Shamelessness and honour, stupidity and responsibility, have no sort of agreement; they are miserably and painfully ill-mated.

II. ITS POSITIVE REVERSAL OF THE TRUE ORDER OF THINGS. The fool ought to be *positively dishonoured.* He need not be actually despised. There is too much of capacity, of indefinitely great possibility in every human spirit to make it right for us to despise our brethren. We are to "honour all men" because they *are* men, because

they are, with us, the offspring of God, and may be his children in the highest and deepest sense (1 Pet. ii. 17). Yet is it our clear duty to see that folly is dishonoured, that it is made to take the lowest place, that the man who does shameful things is put to shame before his fellows. Let those who dishonour God, disregard their fellows, and disgrace themselves, feel the edge of holy indignation; they should be smitten in faithfulness that they may be healed in mercy.

III. ITS INJURIOUSNESS. To honour the fool by giving him rank, or responsibility, or the opportunity of speech, is: 1. *To injure him.* For it is to make him "think himself to be something [or, 'somebody'] when he is nothing [or, 'nobody']." It is to fasten him in his present position of unworthiness, and thus to do him the most serious harm we can inflict upon him. The flatterer of the fool is his deadliest enemy. 2. *To injure the community.* It is "to drink damage," to bind a stone in a sling that is most likely to hit and hurt our neighbour, to smart with a wound from some sharp thorn. The foolish, the guilty, the wrong in heart and mind, do serious harm when they hold the reins of office or sit in the seat of honour. Their very elevation is itself an encouragement to folly and vice, and a discouragement to wisdom and virtue. They administer injustice instead of justice. They let all things down instead of raising them up. They advance those who are like-minded with themselves, and neglect those who deserve honour and promotion. Speaking from "the chair," they make falsity and foolishness to appear to be truth and wisdom, and so they mislead the minds and darken the lives and betray the souls of men.—C.

Vers. 2, 3.—*What to fear.* Fear enters largely into human experience. It is an emotion which is sometimes stamped upon the countenance so that it is legible to all who look upon it. Under its baleful shadow some men have spent a large part of their life. We may well ask what to fear and how to be delivered from its evil. There are some—

I. THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN, BUT NEED NOT HAVE BEEN, FEARED. 1. Men and women have dreaded "the evil eye" of their fellow-men. They have been alarmed by evil omens, by signs and portents that have boded misfortune or calamity, by presentiments of approaching death, etc. All these things have been purely imaginary, and they have added largely and lamentably to the burdens and sorrows of existence. It is painful to think how many thousands, how many millions of mankind have had their hearts troubled and their lives darkened, or even blighted, by fears that have been wholly needless—fears of some evil which has never been more or nearer to them in fact than the shadow of the bird's wing as it circles in the air or flies away into the forest. 2. Of these imaginary evils that which is conspicuous among others is *the curse of the wicked*—"the curse that is causeless." The bitter imprecation of the heart that is full of unholy hatred may make the spirit quiver at the moment, but its effect should be momentary. Let reason do its rightful work and the anxiety will disappear. What possible harm can come of the bad man's curse? He has no power to bring about its fulfilment. Not in his hand are the laws of nature, the issues of events, the future of the holy. Let the feeling of apprehension pass away with a reflection that all these things are in the hand of the Supreme. Let it be as the wing of the flitting bird, out of sight in a moment. Let it be "as the idle wind which we regard not."

II. THINGS THAT MUST SOMETIMES BE BRAVED. Although we may entirely disregard the malediction of the guilty and the godless, we are obliged to attach some importance to their active opposition. When imprecation passes into determined hostility, we have then to lay our account with it. We have then to consider what we must do to meet it. But if we are obviously and consciously in the right, we can afford to brave and breast it. We are not alone. God is with us. Almighty power, irresistible wisdom, Divine sympathy, are with us; we may go on our way, doing our duty and bearing our testimony, fearless of our foes and of all their machinations. There is, however—

III. ONE THING FROM WHICH IT IS NATURAL TO SHRINK; the enmity of a human heart. We may make light of the weapons of our adversaries; we may be fearless of their designs and their doings; but from the feeling of hatred in their hearts we do well to shrink. It is far from being nothing that human hearts are actually hating us, malevolently wishing us evil, prepared to rejoice in our sorrow, in our downfall. We

should not surely be entirely unaffected by the thought. It is a consideration that should move us to *pity* and to *prayer*. We should have a sorrowful feeling that ends in prayer that God would turn their heart, that leads also to the first available opportunity of winning them to a better mind. And there are those who should cherish—

IV. ONE SALUTARY FEAR. (Ver. 3.) Those who are wrong in heart and life may dread the coming down upon them of that rod of correction which is found to be the only weapon that will avail.—C.

Vers. 4, 5.—*The two ways of meeting folly.* They are these—

I. THE CAREFUL AVOIDANCE OF REPEATING IT. (Ver. 4.) Only too often men allow the foolish to draw them into a repetition of their folly, so that one fool makes another. Folly is contagious, and we are all in some danger of catching it. This is the case with us when: 1. We let the word of anger provoke us to a responsive bitterness; then we are "overcome of evil" instead of "overcoming evil with good" (Rom. xii. 21). 2. We allow one exaggeration to lead us into another. When two men are in conversation, one is often tempted to lead the other into statements that exceed the truth; and exaggeration is only another name for falsehood. 3. We accept a foolish challenge. The young, more particularly, are fond of exciting one another to deeds of folly, and it often requires courage, steadfastness, even nobility of spirit, to refuse to follow the leading of unwisdom. 4. We indulge in idle gossip; letting the first statement about our neighbour, which is unfounded and slanderous, conduct us to idle and mischievous talk in the same foolish strain. 5. We permit ourselves to follow the lead of the man whose thoughts and words are in the direction of a doubtful, or a dishonourable, or a defiling region. In all these cases it behoves us "not to answer a fool according to his folly," to be silent altogether; or else to break away into another and worthier strain; or even to "take up our parable" against that which has been said in our hearing. But here we reach the other method, viz.—

II. THE WISE CONDEMNATION OF IT. Folly is sometimes to be rebuked (ver. 5). Silence on our part would be mistaken and abused; it would be regarded as acquiescence or as incapacity to meet what has been said, and folly would go on its way, its empty head held higher than before. We must use discretion here; must understand "when only silence suiteth best," and also when silence would be a mistake and even a sin. The times to answer a fool according to his folly, *i.e.* in the way which is demanded by his folly, are surely these: 1. When ignorance needs to be exposed. 2. When pretentiousness and presumptuousness want to be put down. 3. When irreverence or actual profanity requires to be rebuked and silenced. 4. When vice or cruelty deserves to be smitten and abashed. Then let the true and brave man speak; let the name and the honour of his holy Saviour, let the cause of truth and righteousness, let the interests of the young and the poor and the weak unloose his tongue, and let him pour forth his indignation. In so doing he will be following in the footsteps of the Lord of truth and love, and of the noblest and worthiest of his followers.—C.

Ver. 13.—(See homily on ch. xxii. 13.)—C.

Vers. 18, 19.—*The condemnation of sin.* We have here, in a few strong sentences, a most forcible presentation of the evil and the guiltiness of wrong-doing. We see—

I. ITS UGLIEST FEATURE—DECEPTION. "The man that deceiveth his neighbour" is not here simply the man who overreaches his customer or who introduces a low cunning into his business; he is rather the man who deliberately misleads his acquaintance, his "friend," and induces him to do that which is unwise and unworthy. He is the man who knows better himself, but who indoctrinates the inexperienced and the unwary with the principles, or rather the vain imaginations, of folly. He stoops so low that he does not hesitate: 1. To recommend forbidden pleasure as an object worthy of pursuit, though he knows well (or ought to know, if he can learn from experience) that guilty gratification is the very costliest thing that any man can buy. 2. To persuade men that an unprincipled life is a profitable life, as if "a man's life consisted in the abundance of the things which he possessed;" as if a life without integrity were not the most utter and miserable failure. 3. To recommend selfishness and indulgence as a condition of liberty, when in fact it *is* the beginning and is sure to end in the most

humiliating bondage. 4. To represent the service of God and of man as a drudgery and a dreariness, when in truth it is the height of human nobility and the very essence of enjoyment. 5. To prevail upon the young to snatch at honour and success instead of honestly labouring and patiently waiting for it. There is no more painful and repulsive thing under heaven than the sight of experience and maturity breathing its fallacies, its sophisms, its delusions, into the ear of inexperience and innocency.

II. ITS BITTER FRUIT. What do these delusions bring forth? The deceiver is a man who "scatters firebrands, arrows, and death." The ultimate consequences of the "deceitfulness of sin" are sad indeed; they are: 1. Impoverishment in circumstance. 2. The loss of the love and the honour of the wise and good. 3. Remorse of soul and, frequently, if not usually, the departure of self-respect. 4. Hopelessness and death. 5. The extension of the evil which has been imbibed to those around; becoming a source of poisonous error, a fountain of evil and wrong and misery.

III. ITS PRACTICAL INSANITY. The fool who does wantonly scatter the seeds of deadly delusions in the minds of men is "as a madman." There is no small measure of insanity in sin. Sin is a spiritual disease; it is our spiritual nature in a state of complete derangement, our mind filled with false ideas, our heart affected with delusive hopes and fears. There is no soundness, no wholeness or health about us, so far as we are under the dominion of sin. We do things which we could not possibly have done if only reason and rectitude held sway within us.

IV. ITS POOR AND PITIFUL APOLOGY. "He saith, Am not I in sport?" When a man deludes and betrays, when he wrongs and ruins a human soul, and then makes a joke of it, he only adds meanness to his transgression. Who, outside the bottomless pit, can see any fun in a blighted life, in a wounded and bleeding spirit, in a soiled and stained soul, in the ruin of reputation, in the blasting of a noble hope, in the shadow of spiritual death? Human life and character and destiny are infinitely serious things; they are not to be the butt of fools.—C.

Ver. 22.—(See homily on ch. xvii. 9.)—C.

Vers. 23—28.—*On guard.* Unfortunately, we have to treat men as we find them, not as we wish that they were and as their Creator meant them to be. We are compelled to learn caution as we pass on our way.

I. OUR FIRST DUTY AND ITS NATURAL REWARD. Our first duty, natural to the young and the unsophisticated, is to be frank, open-minded, sincere, trustful; to say all that is in our heart, and to expect others to do the same; to believe that men mean what they say and say what they mean. And the reward of this simplicity and truthfulness on our part is an ingenuous, an unsuspicious spirit, a spirit as far removed as possible from that of cunning, of artifice, of worldliness.

II. THE CORRECTION OF EXPERIENCE. All too soon we discover that we cannot act on this theory without being wounded and hurt. We find that what looks like pure silver may be nothing better than "earthenware of the coarsest kind lacquered over with silver dross." Behind the lips that burn and breathe affection for us and interest in us is a wicked heart in which are "seven abominations," in which dwells every evil imagination. We find that those who affect to be our friends when they stand in our presence are in fact our bitterest and most active enemies. We discover that our words, spoken in good faith and purity of heart, are misrepresented, and are made a sword to smite us. Experience compels caution, reticence, sometimes absolute silence.

III. THE TWO MAIN EVILS AGAINST WHICH TO GUARD. These are: 1. *Fair speaking which is false.* The false words that are ostensibly spoken in our interest, by one that means us harm; words which would lead to trust and expectation when we should be alive with solicitude and alert to avoid the danger which impends. By these our treasure, our position, our friendship, our reputation, our happiness, may be seriously endangered. 2. *Flattery.* The invention and utterance of that which is not felt at all, or the careless and perhaps well-meant exaggeration of a feeling which *is* entertained in the heart. Few things are more potent for harm than flattery. (1) It is readily received. (2) It is carefully treasured; men's self-love prompts them to accept and to retain that which, if it were of an opposite character, they would reject. (3) It is harmful in three different directions: (*a*) It gives a wrong impression of our estate, and

may lead to financial "ruin" (ver. 28). (*b*) It encourages an over-estimate of our capacity, and may lead to our undertaking that for which we are incompetent, and thus to an humiliating and distressing failure. (*c*) It engenders a false idea of our personal worth, and may lead to spiritual infatuation, and thus to the *ruin of ourselves.*

IV. THE DUTY AND THE WISDOM OF WARINESS. As these things are so, as human society does hold a large number of dissemblers (ver. 24), as it is possible that the next acquaintance we make may be an illustration of this sad fact, it follows that absolute trustfulness is a serious mistake. We must be on our guard. We must not open our hearts too freely. We must know men before we trust them. We must cultivate the art of penetration, of reading character. To be able to distinguish between the true and the false in this great sphere is a very large part of wisdom. Next to knowing God, and to acquainting ourselves with our own hearts, is the duty of studying men and discerning between the lacquered potsherd and the pure silver.

V. THE DOOM OF DECEIT. To be rigorously exposed, to be unsparingly denounced, to be utterly ashamed (vers. 26, 27).—C.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XXVII.

Vers. 1—6.—These verses are grouped in pairs, each two being connected in subject.

Ver. 1.—**Boast not thyself of to-morrow.** He boasts himself (ch. xxv. 14) of to-morrow who counts upon it presumptuously, settles that he will do this or that, as if his life was in his own power, and he could make sure of time. This is blindness and arrogance. **For thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.** Our Lord gave a lesson on this matter in the parable of the rich fool (Luke xii.); and an analogous warning, based on our verse, is given by St. James (iv. 13, etc.). On this topic moralists and poets are always dilating. Very familiar are the words of Horace ('Carm.,' iv. 7. 17)—

"Quis scit, an adjiciant hodiernæ crastina summæ
Tempora di superi?"

Euripides, 'Alc.,' 783—

Οὐκ ἔστι θνητῶν ὅστις ἐξεπίσταται
Τὴν αὔριον μέλλουσαν εἰ βιώσεται.
Τὸ τῆς τύχης γὰρ ἀφανὲς οἳ προβήσεται,
Κἄστ' οὐ διδακτόν, οὐδ' ἁλίσκεται τέχνῃ.

"Every day in thy life," says the Arab, "is a leaf in thy history." Seneca wrote ('Thyest.,' 621)—

"Nemo tam divos habuit faventes,
Crastinum ut possit sibi polliceri,
Res deus nostras celeri citatas
Turbine versat."

There is the adage, "Nescis quid serus vesper vehat." The LXX. has, as at ch. iii. 28, "Thou knowest not what the next day (ἡ ἐπιοῦσα) shall bring forth." (For the expression, ἡ ἐπιοῦσα, comp. Acts vii. 26; xvi. 11.)

Ver. 2.—**Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth;** Septuagint, "Let thy neighbour (ὁ πέλας) laud thee." **A stranger;** נָכְרִי, properly, "an unknown person from an unknown country;" but, like זר in the former hemistich, used indifferently for "another" (see on ch. ii. 16). "If I honour myself," said our Lord (John viii. 54), "my honour is nothing." And as St. Paul testifies (2 Cor. x. 18), "Not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth."

Ὑπὲρ σεαυτοῦ μὴ φράσῃς ἐγκώμια,

said the Greek gnomist; and

Φίλων ἔπαινον μᾶλλον ἢ σαυτοῦ λέγε.

And a trite maxim runs, "In ore proprio laus sordet;" and an English one decides, "He who praises himself is a debtor to others." Delitzsch quotes a German proverb (which loses the jingle in translation), "Eigen-lob stinkt, Freundes Lob hinkt, fremdes Lob klingt," "Self-praise stinks, friends' praise limps, strangers' praise sounds."

Ver. 3.—**A stone is heavy, and the sand weighty;** literally, *heaviness of a stone, weight of the sand.* The substantives are more forcible than the corresponding adjectives would be; the versions rather weaken the form of the expression by rendering, *Grave est saxum,* etc. The quality in the things mentioned is weight, heaviness, ponderosity; that is what we are bidden regard. **A fool's wrath is heavier than them both.** The ill temper and anger of a headstrong fool, which he vents on those about him, are harder to endure than any material weight is to carry. Ecclus. xxii. 15, "Sand and salt and a mass of iron are easier to bear than a man without understanding." The previous verse asks, "What is heavier than lead? and what is the name thereof

[*i.e.* of the heavier thing], but a fool?" Job speaks of his grief being heavier than the sand of the sea (Job vi. 3).

Ver. 4.—**Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous.** Again substantives are used, as in ver. 3, "Cruelty of wrath, and overflowing of anger." Figure to yourself the fierceness and cruelty of a sudden excitement of anger, or the bursting forth of passion which, like a flood, carries all before it; these may be violent for a time, yet they will subside when they have spent themselves. **But who is able to stand before envy?** or rather, *jealousy*. The reference is not so much to the general feeling of envy as to the outraged love in the relation of husband and wife (see ch. vi. 34, and note there). Cant. viii. 6, "Love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the flashes thereof are flashes of fire, a very vehement flame." Such jealousy does not blaze forth in some sudden outbreak, and then die away; it lives and broods and feeds itself hourly with fresh aliment, and is ready to act at any moment, hesitating at no means to gratify itself, and sacrificing without mercy its victim. Septuagint, "Pitiless is wrath, and sharp is anger; but jealousy (ζῆλος) submits to nothing."

Ver. 5.—**Open rebuke is better than secret love.** Love that is hidden and never discloses itself in acts of self-denial or generosity, especially that which from fear of offending does not rebuke a friend, nor speak the truth in love (Eph. iv. 15), when there is good reason for such openness—such disguised love is worse, more objectionable, less beneficial, than the plain speaking which bravely censures a fault, and dares to correct what is wrong by well-timed blame. To hold back blame, it has been said, is to hold back love. "I love not my friend," wrote Seneca ('Ep.,' 25), "if I do not offend him." Plautus, 'Trinum.,' i. 2. 57—

"Sed tu ex amicis certis mi es certissimus.
Si quid scis me fecisse inscite aut improbe,
Si id non me accusas, tu ipse objurgandus."

Publ. Syr., 'Sent.,' 16, "Amici vitia si feras, facis tua," which Erasmus expounds by adding, "If you take no notice of your friend's faults, they will be imputed to you." Cicero ('De Amicit.,' xxiv., xxv.) has some sensible remarks on this subject: "When a man's ears are shut against the truth, so that he cannot hear the truth from a friend, the welfare of such a one is hopeless. Shrewd is the observation of Cato, that some are better served by bitter enemies than by friends who seem to be agreeable; for the former often speak the truth, the latter never. . . . As therefore both to give and receive advice is the characteristic of true friendship, and that the one should act with freedom, but not harshly, and that the other should accept remonstrance patiently and without resistance, so it should be considered that there is no deadlier bane to friendship than adulation, fawning, and flattery."

Ver. 6.—**Faithful are the wounds of a friend.** This and the next verse afford examples of the antithetic form of proverb, where the second line gives, as it were, the reverse side of the picture presented by the first. The wounds which a real friend inflicts by his just rebukes are directed by truth and discriminating affection (see Ps. cxli. 5). **But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.** So St. Jerome, *Fraudulenta oscula odientis*. But the verb here used (עתר) has the meaning, among others, "to be abundant or frequent;" hence it is better to take it in this sense here, as "plentiful, profuse." An enemy is lavish with his Judas kisses to hide his perfidy and hatred. Septuagint, "More to be trusted are the wounds of a friend than the spontaneous (ἑκούσια) kisses of an enemy." "Non omnis qui parcit," wrote St. Augustine ('Ep.,' 48, 'ad Vincent.'), "amicus est, neque omnis qui verberat, inimicus."

Ver. 7.—**The full soul loatheth an honeycomb.** For "loathes" the Hebrew is literally "treads upon," "tramples underfoot," which is the expression of the greatest disgust and contempt; or it may mean that the well-fed man will not stoop to pick up the comb which may have dropped in his path from some tree or rock. But whichever way we take it, the same truth is told—Self-restraint increases enjoyment; over-indulgence produces satiety, fatigue, and indolence. Horace, 'Sat.,' ii. 2. 38—

"Jejunus raro stomachus vulgaria temnit."

**But to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.** So the prodigal in the parable would fain fill himself with the husks which the swine did eat. So we say, "Hunger is the best sauce;" the Germans, "Hunger makes raw beans sweet;" and the Portuguese, "Brackish water is sweet in a dry land."

Ver. 8.—**As a bird that wandereth from her nest.** Jerome's *avis transmigrans* conveys to us a notion of a migratory bird taking its annual journey. But the idea here is of a bird which leaves its own nest either wantonly or from some external reason, and thereby exposes itself to discomfort and danger (comp. Isa. xvi. 2). **So is a man that wandereth from his place;** *i.e.* his own home (comp. Ecclus. xxix. 21, etc., and xxxvi. 28 in Vet. Lat., "Quis credit ei qui non habet nidum, et deflectens ubi-

cumque obscuraverit, quasi succinctus latro exsiliens de civitate in civitatem?"). The proverb indirectly inculcates love of one's home and one's native land. To be "a fugitive and a vagabond" (Gen. iv. 12) was a terrible punishment, as the Jews have learned by the experience of many centuries. Language and religion placed a barrier against residence in any country but their own (see Ps. lxxxiv.); and though at the time when this book was probably written they knew little of foreign travel, yet they regarded sojourn in a strange land as an evil, and centred all their ideas of happiness and comfort in a home life surrounded by friends and countrymen. The word "wander" may have the notion of going into exile. Septuagint, "As when a bird flies down from its own nest, so is a man brought into bondage when he is banished (ἀποξενωθῇ) from his own place." Some have reasoned from this expression that the idea of exile had become familiar to the writer, and hence that this portion of the Proverbs is of very late origin (Cheyne) —surely a very uncertain foundation for such a conclusion. The love of Orientals for their native soil is a passion which no sordid and miserable surroundings can extinguish, and a man would consider even a change of home an unmixed evil, though such change was not the result of exile. Our view of the fortunes of one who is always shifting his abode is expressed in the adage, "A rolling stone gathers no moss."

Ver. 9.—**Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart.** (For the use of unguents in the honourable treatment of guests, see ch. vii. 16, etc.; xxi. 17.) Similarly, perfumes prepared from spices, roses, and aromatic plants were employed; rooms were fumigated, persons were sprinkled with rose-water, and incense was applied to the face and beard, as we read (Dan. ii. 46) that Nebuchadnezzar ordered that to Daniel, in recognition of his wisdom, should be offered an oblation and sweet odours (see 'Dict. of Bible,' and Kitto, 'Cyclop.,' *voc.* "Perfumes"). The heat of the climate, the insalubrious character of the houses, the profuse perspiration of the assembled guests, rendered this attention peculiarly acceptable (comp. Cant. iii. 6). The LXX., probably with a tacit reference to Ps. civ. 15, renders, "The heart delighteth in ointments, and wines, and perfumes." **So doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel.** This is rather clumsy; the Revised Version improves it by paraphrasing, *that cometh from hearty counsel.* The meaning is that as ointment, etc., gladden the heart, so do the sweet and loving words of one who speaks from the depths of his soul. The idea is primarily of a friend who gives wise counsel, speaking the truth in love, or shows his approval by discreet commendation. The LXX. has pointed differently, and translates, "But the soul is broken by calamities (*καταῤῥήγνυται ὑπὸ συμπτωμάτων*);" Vulgate, "The soul is sweetened by the good counsels of a friend."

Ver. 10.—Another proverb, a tristich, in praise of friendship. It seems to be a combination of two maxims. **Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not.** A father's friend is one who is connected with a family by hereditary and ancestral bonds; *φίλον πατρῷον*, Septuagint. Such a one is to be cherished and regarded with the utmost affection. **Neither go into thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity.** The tried friend is more likely to help and sympathize with you than even your own brother, for a friend is born for adversity, and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother (ch. xvii. 17; xviii. 24, where see notes). The mere blood-relationship, which is the result of circumstances over which one has had no control, is inferior to the affectionate connection which arises from moral considerations and is the effect of deliberate choice. We must remember, too, that the practice of polygamy, with the separate establishments of the various wives, greatly weakened the tie of brotherhood. There was little love between David's sons; and Jonathan was far dearer to David himself than any of his numerous brothers were. **Better is a neighbour that is near than a brother far off.** "Near" and "far off" may be taken as referring to feeling or to local position. In the former case the maxim says that a neighbour who is really attached to one by the bonds of affection is better than the closest relation who has no love or sympathy. In the latter view, the proverb enunciates the truth that a friend on the spot in time of calamity is more useful than a brother living at a distance (*μακρὰν οἰκῶν*, Septuagint); one is sure of help at once from the former, while application to the latter must occasion delay, and may not be successful. Commentators quote Hesiod, *Ἔργ. καὶ Ἡμ.*, 341—

*Τὸν δὲ μάλιστα καλεῖν ὅστις σέθεν ἐγγύθι ναίει.*
*Εἰ γάρ τοι καὶ χρῆμ' ἀγκώμιον ἄλλο γένηται,*
*Γείτονες ἄζωστοι ἥκιον, ζώσαντο δὲ πηοί.*

Ver. 11.—**My son, be wise, and make my heart glad.** The exhortation of a father to his son, or of a teacher to his pupil. Such address is not found elsewhere in this latter portion of the book, though common in previous parts. Delitzsch translates, "become wise." **Σοφὸς γίνου**, Septuagint. Such development of wisdom delights a father's heart, as ch. x. 1; xxiii. 15, 24. **That I may**

**answer him that reproacheth me** (Ps. cxix. 42; comp. Ps. cxxvii. 5; Ecclus. xxx. 2). If the pupil did not show wisdom and morality in his conduct, the teacher would incur blame for the apparent failure of his education; whereas the high tone of the disciple might be appealed to as a proof of the merit and efficacy of the tutor's discipline. On the other hand, the evil doings of Hebrews often made the Name of God to be blasphemed among the Gentiles; just as nowadays the inconsistent lives of Christians are the greatest impediment to the success of missionary efforts in heathen countries. St. Jerome has, *Ut possis exprobranti respondere sermonem.* So Septuagint, "And remove from thyself reproachful words." But the first person is in accordance with the Hebrew.

Ver. 12.—A repetition of ch. xxii. 3. The sentence is asyndeton.

Ver. 13.—A repetition of ch. xx. 16. The LXX., which omits this passage in its proper place, here translates, "Take away his garment, for a scorner passed by, whoever lays waste another's goods."

Ver. 14.—**He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning.** What is meant is ostentatious salutation, which puts itself forward in order to stand well with a patron, and to be beforehand with other servile competitors for favour. Juvenal satirized such parasitical effusion ('Sat.,' v. 19)—

"Habet Trebius, propter quod rumpere somnum
Debeat et ligulas dimittere, sollicitus, ne
Tota salutaris jam turba peregerit orbem,
Sideribus dubiis, aut illo tempore, quo se
Frigida circumagunt pigri sarracæ Bootæ."

The "loud voice" intimates the importunate nature of such public trumpeting of gratitude, as the "rising early" denotes its inopportune and tactless insistency, which cannot wait for a convenient opportunity for its due expression. **It shall be counted a curse to him.** The receiver of this sordid adulation, and indeed all the bystanders, would just as soon be cursed by the parasite as blessed in this offensive manner. This clamorous outpouring of gratitude is not accepted as a return by the benefactor; he sees the mean motives by which it is dictated—self-interest, hope of future benefits—and he holds it as cheap as he would the curses of such a person. The nuisance of such flattery is mentioned by Euripides, 'Orest.,' 1101—

Παύσομαί σ' αἰνῶν, ἀτὰρ
Βάρος τι κἀν τῷδ' ἐστίν, αἰνεῖσθαι λίαν.

"Duo sunt genera prosecutorum," says St. Augustine ('In Psalm.,' lxix.), "sollicet vituperantium et adulantium; sed plus prosequitur lingua adulatoris, quam manus prosecutoris." "Woe unto you," said Christ (Luke vi. 26), "when all men shall speak well of you." "Do I seek to please men?" asked St. Paul (Gal. i. 10); "for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."

Vers. 15 and 16 form a tetrastich on the subject of the tarmagant wife.

Ver. 15.—The single line of the second clause of ch. xix. 13 is here formed into a distich. **A continual dropping in a very rainy day.** "A day of violent rain," סַגְרִיר (*sagrír*), which word occurs nowhere else in the Old Testament. **And a contentious woman are alike.** The word rendered "are alike" (נִשְׁקָה) is usually taken to be the third pers. niphp. from שׁיח; but the best-established reading, according to Hitzig, Delitzsch, and Nowack, is נִשְׁחָה, which is regarded as a niph. with a transposition of consonants for נִשְׁקָה. Septuagint, "Drops of rain drive a man out of his house on a stormy day." The ill-constructed roofs of Eastern houses were very subject to leakage, being flat and formed of porous material.

Ver. 16.—**Whosoever hideth her hideth the wind.** Whoever tries to restrain a shrewish woman, or to conceal her faults, might as well attempt to confine the wind or to check its violence. **And the ointment of his right hand, which bewrayeth itself.** He might as well try to hide the ointment which signifies its presence by its odour. But there is no "which" in the original, which runs literally, "his right hand calls oil," or, "oil meets his right hand." The former is supposed to mean that he is hurt in the struggle to coerce the vixen, and needs ointment to heal his wound; but the latter seems the correct rendering, and the meaning then is that, if he tries to hold or stop his wife, she escapes him like the oil which you try in vain to keep in your hand. An old adage says that there are three things which cannot be hidden, but always betray themselves, viz. a woman, the wind, and ointment. The LXX. has read the Hebrew differently, translating, "The north-wind is harsh, but by name it is called lucky (*εὐσύξιον*);" *i.e.* because it clears the sky and introduces fine weather. The Syriac, Aquila, and Symmachus have adopted the same reading.

Ver. 17.—**Iron sharpeneth iron.** The proverb deals with the influence which men have upon one another. **So a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.** So the Vulgate, *Homo exacuit faciem amici sui.* The action of the file is probably meant (1 Sam. xiii. 21); and the writer names iron as the

sharpener rather than the whetstone, because he wishes to denote that one man is of the same nature as another, and that this identity is that which makes mutual action possible and advantageous. Some have taken the proverb in a bad sense, as if it meant that one angry word leads to another, one man's passion excites another's rage. Thus Aben Ezra. The Septuagint perhaps supports this notion by rendering, Ἀνὴρ δὲ παροξύνει πρόσωπον ἑταίρου. But the best commentators understand the maxim to say that intercourse with other men influences the manner, appearance, deportment, and character of a man, sharpens his wits, controls his conduct, and brightens his very face. Horace uses the same figure of speech, 'Ars Poet.,' 304—

"Fungar vice cotis, acutum
Reddere quæ ferrum valet, exsors ipsa secandi."

On the subject of mutual intercourse Euripides says, 'Androm.,' 683—

Ἡ δ' ὁμιλία
Πάντων βροτοῖσι γίγνεται διδάσκαλος.

"Companionship
Is that which teaches mortals everything."

Ver. 18.—**Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof.** He who watches, tends, and cultivates the fig tree will in due time have the reward of his labour in eating its fruit. The abundance of the produce of this tree makes it a good figure of the reward of faithful service. Septuagint, "He that planteth a fig tree shall eat the fruits thereof" (2 Tim. ii. 6). **So he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured.** He who pays attention, has loving regard to his master, shall meet with honour as his reward at his master's hands, and also from all who become acquainted with his merits. The gnome may well be applied to the case of those who do true and laudable service to their heavenly Master, and who shall one day hear from his lips the gracious word, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. xxv. 21).

Ver. 19.—**As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man;** Vulgate, *Quomodo in aquis resplendent vultus prospicientium, sic corda hominum manifesta sunt prudentibus.* As in clear water the face of the gazer is reflected, so man finds in his fellow-man the same feelings, sentiments, passions, which he has himself. He sees in others the likeness of himself; whatever he knows himself to be, he will see others presenting the same character. Self-knowledge, too, leads to insight into others' minds; "for what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?" (1 Cor. ii. 11). There is a solidarity in human nature which enables us to judge of others by ourselves. The difficulties in the construction and wording of the sentence do not affect the interpretation. They are, however, best met by rendering, with Delitzsch, "As it is with water, face corresponds to face, so also the heart of man to man." Septuagint, "As faces are not like faces, so neither are the thoughts of men;" which is like the saying of Persius, 'Sat.,' v. 52—

"Mille hominum species, et rerum discolor usus;
Velle suum cuique est, nec voto vivitur uno."

Ver. 20.—**Hell and destruction are never full.** "Hell" is *sheol*, the under-world, Hades, the place of the departed; "destruction" is the great depth, the second death, personified (see on ch. xv. 11, where the terms also occur). These "are never satisfied," they are insatiable, all-devouring (comp. ch. xxx. 16; Isa. v. 14; Hab. ii. 5). **So the eyes of man are never satisfied.** The verb is the same in both clauses, and ought to have been so translated. The eye is taken as the representative of concupiscence in general. What is true of "the lust of the eyes" (1 John ii. 16) is true of all the senses; the craving for their gratification grows as it is fed. Therefore the senses should be carefully guarded, lest they lead to excess and transgression. "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity," said the psalmist, "and quicken me in thy way" (Ps. cxix. 37). The LXX. here introduces a paragraph not in the Hebrew or the Latin Versions: "He that fixes (στηρίζων) his eye [*i.e.* staring impudently] is an abomination to the Lord, and the uninstructed restrain not their tongue."

Ver. 21.—**Fining-pot,** etc. (see on ch. xvii. 3; comp. also ch. xxv. 4). **So is a man to his praise.** The Hebrew is literally, *The crucible for silver, and the furnace for gold, and a man according to his praise;* i.e. as the processes of metallurgy test the precious metals, so a man's public reputation shows what he is really worth, as is stated in ch. xii. 8. As the crucible brings all impurities to the surface, so public opinion drags forth all that is bad in a man, and he who stands this test is generally esteemed. Certainly praise is a stimulus to exertion, an incentive to try to make one's self worthy of the estimation in which one is held, especially if he purifies it from the dross and earthliness mixed with it, and takes to himself only what is genuine and just. But public opinion is very commonly false, and is always a very unsafe criterion

of moral excellence. Hence other interpretations have been proposed. Ewald renders, "and a man according to his boasting," that is, according to that which he most praises in himself and others. So virtually Hitzig, Böttcher, Zöckler, and others. In this view the gnome denotes that a man's real character is best examined by the light cast upon it by his usual line of thought, what he most prides himself upon, what he admires most in other men. Plumptre, after Gesenius and Fleischer, has, "So let a man be to his praise," *i.e.* to the mouth which praises him; let him test this commendation, to see what it is worth, before he accepts it as his due. The explanation first given seems on the whole most suitable, when we reflect that the highest morality is not always enunciated, and that secondary motives are widely recognized as factors in action and judgment. There are not wanting men in modern days who uphold the maxim, *Vox populi, vox Dei.* Septuagint, "The action of fire is a test for silver and gold, so a man is tested by the mouth of them that praise him." No surer test of a man's true character can be found than his behaviour under praise; many men are spoiled by it. If a man comes forth from it without injury, not rendered vain, or blind to his defects, or disdainful of others, his disposition is good, and the commendation lavished upon him may be morally and spiritually beneficial. Vulgate, *Sic probatur homo ore laudantis*, "So is a man proved by the mouth of him that praises him." The following passage from St. Gregory, commenting on this, is worth quoting, "Praise of one's self tortures the just, but elates the wicked. But while it tortures, it purifies the just; and while it pleases the wicked, it proves them to be reprobate. For these revel in their own praise, because they seek not the glory of their Maker. But they who seek the glory of their Maker are tortured with their own praise, lest that which is spoken of without should not exist within them; lest, if that which is said really exists, it should be made void in the sight of God by these very honours; lest the praise of men should soften the firmness of their heart, and should lay it low in self-satisfaction; and lest that which ought to aid them to increase their exertions, should be even now the recompense of their labour. But when they see that their own praises tend to the glory of God, they even long for and welcome them. For it is written, "That they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" ('Moral.,' xxvi. 62, Oxford transl.). The LXX. adds a verse which is not found in the Hebrew, but occurs in some manuscripts of the Latin Version, "The heart of the transgressor seeketh out evils, but an upright heart seeketh knowledge."

Ver. 22.—**Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle.** "To bray" is to pound or beat small. "Wheat," רִיפוֹת, *riphoth* (only in 2 Sam. xvii. 19), "bruised corn." Vulgate, *In pila quasi ptisanas* (barley-groats) *feriente;* Aquila and Theodotion, Ἐν μέσῳ ἐμπτισσομένων, "In the midst of grains of corn being pounded." The LXX., reading differently, has, "Though thou scourge a fool, disgracing him (ἐν μεσῳ συνεδρίου) in the midst of the congregation." Of course, the process of separating the husks from the corn by the use of pestle and mortar is much more delicate and careful than threshing in the usual clumsy way; hence is expressed the idea that the most elaborate pains are wasted on the incorrigible fool (see on ch. i. 20). **His foolishness will not depart from him.** An obstinate, self-willed, unprincipled man cannot be reformed by any means; his folly has become a second nature, and is not to be eliminated by any teaching, discipline, or severity. There is, too, a judicial blindness, when, after repeated warnings wilfully rejected and scorned, the sinner is left to himself, given over to a reprobate mind. "Whoso teacheth a fool," Siracides pronounces, "is as one that glueth a potsherd together, and as he that waketh one from a sound sleep" (Ecclus. xxii. 7). Again, "The inner parts of a fool are like a broken vessel, and he will hold no knowledge as long as he liveth" (Ecclus. xxi. 14). In Turkey, we are told, great criminals were beaten to pieces in huge mortars of iron, in which they usually pounded rice. "You cannot straighten a dog's tail, try as you may," says a Telugu maxim (Lane). There is a saying of Schiller's which is quite proverbial, "Heaven and earth fight in vain against a dunce." Horace, 'Epist.,' i. 10. 24—

"Naturam expellas furca, tamen usque recurret."

Juvenal, 'Sat.,' xiii. 239—

"Tamen ad mores natura recurrit
Damnatos, fixa et mutari nescia."

Vers. 23—27.—A mashal ode in praise of a pastoral and agricultural life. The moralist evidently desires to recall his countrymen from the luxury of cities and the temptations of money-making to the simple ways of the patriarchs and the pleasures of country pursuits—which are the best foundation of enduring prosperity.

Ver. 23.—**Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks.** "State;" פָּנִים (*panim*);

*vultum*, Vulgate; the face, look, appearance. The LXX. has ψυχάς, which may perhaps mean "the number"—a necessary precaution when the sheep wandered on the downs and mountains, and had to be collected in the evening and folded. These precepts are naturally applied to all rulers, and especially to Christian pastors who have the oversight of the flock of Christ (1 Pet. v. 2—4). Ecclus. vii. 22, "Hast thou cattle? have an eye to them; and if they be for thy profit, keep them with thee."

Ver. 24.—**For riches are not for ever**; as ch. xxiii. 5. Money and other kinds of wealth may be lost or wasted; it is therefore expedient to have the resources of agriculture, land and herds, to depend upon. *Chosen* (ch. xv. 6), translated "riches," is "strength," "abundance," "treasure laid up." Delitzsch renders, "prosperity;" Septuagint, "A man has not strength and power for ever;" Vulgate, *Non habebis jugiter potestatem*, i.e. "you will not always be able to tend your flocks; infirmity and old age will prevent you." **And doth the crown endure to every generation?** The crown or diadem, נֵזֶר (*nezer*), is the symbol of royal authority, or of the highest dignity of the priesthood (Exod. xxix. 6; xxxix. 30). These positions are not secure from generation to generation; much less stable, in fact, than the possession of farms and cattle. St. Jerome, *Sed corona tributur in generationem et generationem*, where *corona* is the headship of the family. Septuagint, "Neither doth he transmit it (his strength) from generation to generation."

Ver. 25.—As ver. 23 commended the rearing of cattle, and ver. 24 supported the injunction by showing its comparative permanence, so this and the following verses discuss the material advantages of such occupation. **The hay appeareth**; rather, *the grass passeth away*, is cut and carried. This is the first stage in the agricultural operations described. **And the tender grass showeth itself**; the aftermath appears. **And the herbs of the mountain are gathered**; the fodder from off the hills is cut and stored. All these verbs are best taken hypothetically, the following verses forming the apodosis. When all these operations are complete, then come the results in plenty and comfort. Septuagint, "Have a care of the herbage (χλωρῶν) in the plain, and thou shalt cut grass, and gather thou the mountain hay."

Ver. 26.—**The lambs are for thy clothing.** Thy sheep will provide thee with clothing by their skin and wool, and by the money which thou wilt obtain by the sale of them. **The goats are the price of the field**; the sale of thy goats and their produce will pay for thy field if thou wish to buy it (see on ch. xxx. 31). Septuagint, "That thou mayest have sheep for clothing; honour thy land that thou mayest have lambs."

Ver. 27.—**Goats' milk.** Dr. Geikie ('Holy Land and Bible,' i. 311) notes that in most parts of Palestine goats' milk in every form—sour, sweet, thick, thin, warm, or cold—makes, with eggs and bread, the main food of the people. **And maintenance for thy maidens**; who milk the goats, etc., and tend the cattle, and do the household work. There is no mention of the use of animal flesh as food. It was only on great occasions, as high festivals, or the presence of an honoured guest, that kids, lambs, and calves were killed and eaten. This picture of rural peace and plenty points to a time of security and prosperity, free alike from internal commotion and external danger. The famous passage in Cicero, 'De Senect.,' xv., on the pleasures and advantages of the agricultural life, will occur to all classical readers. So also Horace ('Epod.,' 2), "Beatus ille qui procul negotiis," etc. The LXX. makes short work of this verse, "My son, thou hast from me savings mighty for thy life and for the life of thy servants."

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*Boasting of the morrow.* I. ITS FOLLY. No man is a prophet. At the best we can but calculate probabilities. The man who has never had a day's illness may be suddenly laid low, struck down with paralysis, arrested by unsuspected heart-disease, blood-poisoned by a whiff of bad air from a drain, at death's door from pneumonia caught in an unheeded draught. The business which looks fair and prosperous may suddenly collapse. The trusted bank may break. Our life is dependent upon so many unseen sources, and is affected by so many complicated circumstances, that no man can unravel the tendencies or predict the results. Astronomy is a simple science compared with sociology. The movements of the solar system are altogether more intelligible than those of the homeliest soul. We cannot predict our own conduct. Moreover, there are other minds to be considered. Above all, there is the inscrutable providence of God.

II. ITS DANGER. "Boasting of the morrow" leads to carelessness. The man who

is confident without warrant is likely to be off his guard. Believing that all is safe, he does not fortify himself against a possible surprise of mischief. He is just in the condition most favourable for attack. The wily tempter is aware of this. Therefore the danger is all the greater because it is ignored. Thus Peter, weakened through over-confidence, fell into sin, even though he had been warned against it.

III. ITS SIN. This is not merely a question of prudence and personal welfare. It touches our relations with God. He who boasts himself of the morrow acts either *atheistically*, denying the Divine control of life, or *presumptuously*, assuming without reason that God will aid his plans. Such conduct reveals a guilty pride. It is opposed to the humility of one who would bow low before the inscrutable providence of the Almighty.

IV. ITS PUNISHMENT. Such boasting is certain to be punished by failure. It would not be well to let it proceed to success, for such a result would only confirm and aggravate the evil habit. Partial and temporary victory may be attained, but ultimate triumph cannot be won in this way. God casts down and humbles the boaster, and in his shame he has an opportunity of learning wisdom.

V. ITS ANTIDOTE. This is not to be found in a cowardly shrinking from the future, nor is it to be had in a habit of despair, ever painting the days to come in the blackest hues, with the melancholy motto, "Blessed is he that expecteth little; for he shall not be disappointed." The true antidote is to be discovered in a spirit of trust. God has indeed hung an impenetrable curtain between our vision and the land of the future. Even the very morrow dwells as yet in a land of darkness, and we vainly try to discern its features. But it is perfectly familiar to God, before whom all eternity is as a clear picture ever present. And God, who knows the future, controls it. Therefore we are safe when we trust; and, eschewing boastfulness, we can learn not to be anxious about the morrow, because we can trust our Father who holds the secrets of all the morrows in his hand.

Ver. 2.—*Self-praise.* I. SELF-PRAISE IS ILL-FOUNDED. It may be true to fact, but we cannot be sure that it is. 1. *Possibly it is insincere.* So many motives of vanity and self-interest urge a person to pretend to be better than he is, that a certificate of merit given by himself on behalf of himself cannot be taken at a high value. 2. *Probably it is delusive.* Even when it is perfectly sincere it is likely to be perverted by unconscious misconceptions. It is very easy to be honestly mistaken as to one's own worth. We are the worst conceivable judges of our own characters and deserts. Even when we can calmly and fairly estimate our powers we are likely to be very wrong in valuing our use of them.

II. SELF-PRAISE SPRINGS FROM SELFISHNESS. 1. *It reveals a self-regarding habit.* If a man is given to expatiate on his own merits, he must be accustomed to turn his thoughts inwards; he must be familiar with the contemplation of himself. Now, this is not wholesome. The less a man thinks about himself the better for his own soul's health. 2. *It implies a desire of self-aggrandizement.* There is usually a motive behind the habit of self-praise, and, though this may be nothing worse than childish vanity, it carries with it a desire for exciting the admiration of others; it aims at reaping a harvest of laudation. But possibly the end sought is more far-reaching, and the pretentious person indicts his own testimonials with a deliberate intention of securing some tangible advantage thereby. The self-praise is then just an ugly, glaring blossom of selfishness.

III. SELF-PRAISE PROVOKES JEALOUSY. It rarely secures the admiration that it seeks. On the contrary, it is generally received with suspicion; and even when it is honest and true, a large discount is taken off its claims. 1. *Its defective authority is perceived.* This is a point to which vanity is singularly blind. Yet all the weakness of the situation is apparent to every beholder; for it is universally recognized that a man is strongly tempted to make out a good case for himself, and that he is likely to be deceived into an inordinate estimate of his own value. Therefore self-praise is usually wasted. 2. *It irritates the vanity of others.* The tendency is for the hearer to imagine that the vain speaker desires to exalt himself at the expense of others. A comparison of merit seems to be challenged, and this at once rouses the jealousy of the audience. Thus self-praise does not win friends. What it may perhaps succeed in

extracting in the form of admiration is paid for dearly by the dislike that it also creates.

IV. SELF-PRAISE IS CONTRARY TO CHRISTIAN HUMILITY. It represents a wholly alien spirit. Doubtless it is a common weakness of men who are truly Christian and kind-hearted, for no man is perfect; but still it is a weakness, and it is foreign to the genius of the religion under which it finds a shelter. The often-repeated rule of Christ is that "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased;" "The first shall be last." The true disciple is not to choose the upper seat in the synagogue. Humility, self-forgetfulness, the preference of others, are the Christian graces. Self-praise is useless before God.

V. SELF-PRAISE ONLY AIMS AT WHAT CAN BE BETTER ATTAINED WITHOUT IT. "Let another man praise thee." Self-praise silences the lips of admiration from others. The truly humble man will not crave such admiration. But all men of right feeling must desire to stand well with their fellows. It is happy to feel that we have the respect and confidence of those whose opinion we value. Now, these encouragements are better secured by unpretentious merit, and humility in earnest, simple attempts to do right.

Ver. 6.—"*The wounds of a friend.*" The principle implied in this verse is apparent at a glance. It is better that one who loves and truly considers the interests of another should wound him for his good than that a superficial flatterer should refrain from doing so for the sake of pleasing and winning continuous favour. The only difficulties lie in the practical application of the principle.

I. TRUE FRIENDSHIP WILL DARE TO WOUND. It is painful and difficult to do that which we know will grieve one who is greatly loved. Therefore if it is really necessary it will put the love to the test. 1. *True friendship considers the welfare of another.* The chief thought is not on behalf of agreeable companionship, but as to what will really benefit one's friend. 2. *The welfare of another may require a painful treatment.* There are so-called "candid friends," who secretly delight in saying unpleasant things. With such people there is no merit in giving pain, nor is it likely that much advantage will result from their rough conduct. But it may be possible to point out a friend's mistakes, to warn him against temptation, to gravely deprecate his wrongful conduct, to make him feel his deterioration of character. Then, though the process must be keenly painful on both sides, love will attempt it.

II. THE WOUNDS OF TRUE FRIENDSHIP SHOULD BE PATIENTLY RECEIVED. 1. *The cost of them should be considered.* If they do indeed come from a friend they show his genuine regard, his unselfish devotion. They also indicate how thorough is his confidence; for they show that he expects to be rightly understood, and that his painful action will not be resented. He risks a breach of the friendship for the sake of benefiting his friend. This is a generous action, and it should be generously accepted. But it needs magnanimity both to give and to take the wounds of friendship. 2. *The value of them should be appreciated.* The first impulse is to feel aggrieved, to resent the intrusion, to treat the well-meant rebuke as an insult, to justify one's self, perhaps even to overwhelm the friend who wounds with rage and revenge. This is as foolish as it is ungrateful. If we only knew it, we should confess that we have no better friends than those who dare to wound us. It is just from such friends that we can learn wisdom. Flattery kisses and slays; friendship wounds and saves.

III. THE DIVINE FRIENDSHIP WOUNDS TO SAVE. The world flatters and promises only pleasant things to its slaves when it first enthralls them. God treats us in the opposite way, warning us of danger, rebuking our sins, even chastising us with heavy blows. But "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." 1. *God proves himself to be our Friend by wounding us.* He might have left us alone to rot in our own wretched ruin. But in his great love he has interfered to save, though his advances are met with insult and anger. God loves enough to give pain. 2. *It would be wise to receive God's wounding as that of a Friend.* It is for our good; then the best course is to take it accordingly, to endeavour to profit by it. Christ lays a cross on his disciples, and saves them by leading them to follow in his *Via Dolorosa*, and to be crucified with him (Gal. ii. 20).

Ver. 8.—*A bird wandering from her nest.* Let us consider first in what respects a

man may be said to be wandering from his place, and then how the evil of this condition may be illustrated by the metaphor of a bird wandering from its nest.

I. How a man may wander from his place. 1. *He may leave the work he is suited for.* There is no reason why a man should not endeavour to rise in the social scale. Christianity does not consecrate any system of caste. But there are works for which certain men have natural aptitude, or for which they have been trained, and other works for which they are not thus suited. Unhappily, our inclination does not always coincide with our capacity. To follow one's likings outside the range of one's powers is to wander from one's place. 2. *He may forsake his duty.* Every man's rightful place is at the post of duty. No danger, no difficulty, no disagreeableness, can justify any one in forsaking that place. 3. *He may depart from God.* Then indeed will he have wandered from his true place. For the home of the soul is with God. Absence from God is to be out of one's place, (1) though in a very paradise of delights, (2) though among the most congenial companions, (3) though with an eminently attractive occupation. 4. *He may renounce his human status.* (1) In descending to that of an animal. Bestial lust and brutal cruelty are inhuman. He who plunges into such vile things necessarily wanders from himself as a man. He gives up the rank of a human being. (2) In degrading himself to diabolical living. This happens to one who chooses evil for its own sake, loving wickedness and pursuing it.

II. How such a man must suffer as a bird that wanders from her nest. 1. *He loses peace.* The nest is typical of quiet and restfulness. To forsake it is to be at large in the noisy, tumultuous world. So one who is out of his place is cast adrift on a homeless waste. He sacrifices peace in pursuit of novelty. 2. *He is removed from congenial companionship.* The poor young bird leaves her fellows and flies into unknown regions, where she finds herself alone among strange creatures. A man who is out of his element will be equally alone and friendless. The very fact that he is in the wrong place implies that he cannot find true sympathy in his new sphere. Perhaps he has been foolishly aiming at entering some higher circle of life than one that he is fitted for. If so, he will only be supremely uncomfortable, perpetually regarded as an intruder or ridiculed as a blunderer. It is better to cultivate the affections of one's own home circle and true old friends. 3. *He is not able to fulfil his mission.* It may be that a mother-bird is here thought of. In wandering from her nest she forsakes her young. So he who leaves his rightful place neglects his obligations. He fails to do his duty to those naturally dependent on him. Charity begins at home. 4. *He is exposed to danger.* The poor wandering bird may be lost in the forest; she may starve for want of food; birds of prey may pounce upon her in the darkness. There is no safety off the path of duty. Even unsuitable spheres are dangerous, because a man does not know how to behave himself in them. Away from God there is danger of ruin without hope of escape.

Ver. 12.—*Foresight of evil.* I. It is not possible to foresee all future evil. God, in his great mercy, has drawn a thick veil over the face of futurity. We can reason of probabilities; in some cases we can almost predict certainties; but taking the whole round of life, and the full reach of futurity, we have to recognize the fact that the evil to come as well as the good are largely hidden from our view. It would not be possible for us to bear the sight if all dark experiences were crowded into one horrible picture and presented before our imagination at once. We can take one by one the evils that would crush us if we beheld them all together in a mighty, terrible phalanx. When the trouble comes the strength may be given to bear it, but not before.

II. It is foolish to fret ourselves with anxieties about the morrow. This is the distinct teaching of Christ, based on various grounds. 1. *We have enough to bear in the present.* "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." 2. *We cannot command the future.* No man by being anxious can add one cubit to his stature or change the natural colour of his hair. 3. *God is our Father.* He feeds the wild birds and clothes the fields. Much more will he feed and clothe his own children. 4. *We have higher considerations to absorb our attention.* "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness."

III. WE NEED TO MAKE A REASONABLE PROVISION FOR THE FUTURE. It may appear that the prudence of the Book of Proverbs is rebuked by teachings of Christ. No doubt our Lord does lift us into a higher atmosphere. But there is no contradiction between the two positions. Indeed, we are best able to banish needless care when we have made proper provision for the future. Thrift does not create anxiety. The man who has insured his house against fire does not dread the incendiary more than the man who has not provided himself against the contingency of a conflagration. He who is prepared for death need not fear death.

IV. IT IS A MARK OF TRUE WISDOM TO GUARD AGAINST THE EVIL THAT MAY BE AVOIDED. 1. *This obtains in secular pursuits.* Ignorance is no excuse for not providing against a disaster when reasonable thoughtfulness would have foreseen it. The reckless general who burns the bridges behind him is guilty of the blood of his soldiers who are slaughtered after a great defeat. 2. *This is most true in the spiritual world.* (1) Here we may foresee danger. For God has revealed the fatal consequences of sin. No one who reflects can say that he has no reason to expect that his sin will be punished. The very nature of sin foreshadows its own dreadful doom. (2) Here we may provide against it. It is not an inevitable destiny. "God has opened up a way of escape." It is wise to consider the danger of sin, in order to flee from it to safety in Christ (1 John ii. 1).

Ver. 17.—*The advantages of society.* I. OBSERVE IN WHAT THE ADVANTAGES OF SOCIETY CONSIST. We have ancient authority for the idea that it is not good for man to be alone (Gen. ii. 18). Man is naturally a gregarious being. Though some people are more sociable than others, no one can be healthy in perpetual solitude. The isolation of the hermit engendered the wildest hallucinations of fanaticism together with the narrowest conception of the world. Prisoners of the Bastille, in solitary confinement, were reduced to a condition of semi-idiocy. Robinson Crusoe made the best of his situation, yet he could not live without the companionship of animal pets, and he was glad of the humble friendship of a poor savage. 1. *Society quickens a man's intelligence.* Even Wordsworth was thought by some to have deteriorated mentally in his comparative seclusion at Rydal Mount, and yet there were other men of high mental power in his neighbourhood. Men's thoughts are stimulated and sharpened by conversation. 2. *Society rouses a man's energy.* Empty society of mere pleasure-seekers only dissipates a man's powers in frivolity. But the society of earnest men stimulates by sympathy, emulation, and encouragement. 3. *Society broadens a man's views.* He is able to see how other men think and feel. They may not all have greater advantages than he possesses; but at least they are differently constituted and situated from himself. Thus he is lifted out of the narrowness of his own single vision. Such breadth gives strength when it is accompanied by an earnest love of truth and right.

II. CONSIDER HOW THE ADVANTAGES OF SOCIETY MAY BE REALIZED. 1. *They are dependent on a man's residence.* Horace's old dispute between the town and the country mouse has never been settled. Cowper wrote, "God made the country, man made the town;" and no doubt there is to be seen a certain restfulness, a purity, and a quiet power in nature that those men miss who reside in the heart of a wilderness of houses. Nevertheless, there are compensations for the disagreeable pressure of population in great cities. The mind is quickened. Still, as evils also result from this manner of living, it is certainly important that those who are able to select their own residences should consider wholesome society to be as important as a pure water supply. 2. *They can be found in sympathetic friendship.* One good, true friend is more helpful than a score of mere acquaintances. It is in the close intercourse of genuine friendship that the best results of the mutual play of thought and feeling can be obtained. Hence the supreme importance of cultivating friendship with the wise and good. 3. *They should be obtained in the Christian Church.* Christ not only called disciples to himself, one by one; he founded the Church, and his apostles established local Churches wherever they could gather together a few converts. Christian companionship should be a help to Christian life and thought. There was a time when they who feared the Lord spake often one to another (Mal. iii. 16). Above this earthly friendship the Christian finds a mental and spiritual quickening in the friendship of Christ (Luke xxiv. 32).

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—6.—*Boastfulness, jealousy, and hypocrisy.* I. OVER-CONFIDENCE REBUKED. (Ver. 1.) 1. On the ground of our limited knowledge. The homely proverb says, "Do not count your chickens before they are hatched." The future exists for us only in imagination. "Who knows," asks Horace, "whether the gods above will add to-morrow's time to the sum of to-day?" ('Od.,' iv. 7. 17); and Seneca, "None hath gods so favourable as that he may promise himself to-morrow's good." 2. On the ground of the Divine reserve of the secrets of destiny. To boast is to lift ourselves in effect out of that finite sphere of thought and feeling in which we have been placed by the Divine ordination. So says Horace again (and a distinctly Christian turn may be given to his exhortation), "Shun to inquire into the future and the morrow; and whatever day fortune shall afford thee, count it as gain" ('Od.,' i. 9. 13). Common sense and religious humility unite to teach us to "live for the day."

II. SELF-PRAISE CENSURED. (Ver. 2.) "Let another praise thee, and not thine own mouth." "Self-praise stinks," and "Not as thy mother says, but as the neighbours say," are Arabic proverbs. Every individual has a certain value; the sense of this is the foundation of all self-respect and virtue. But to show an over-consciousness of this worth by self-praise is a social offence, because it is an *exaction* of that which ought to be a free tribute, and betrays a desire of self-exaltation above others not easily forgiven.

III. THE PASSION OF THE FOOL INTOLERABLE. (Ver. 3.) Whether it be envy, furious resentment of rebuke, or jealousy, it is a burden intolerable to the person himself and to those with whom he has to do. The pious may readily sin in their anger, how much more the ungodly!

> "Ira furor brevis est; animum rege; qui, nisi paret,
> Imperat; hunc frœnis, hunc tu compesce catena."
> (Horace, 'Ep.,' i. 2. 62.)

It is like a weight of stone or sand, being without cause, measure, or end (Poole).

IV. THE TERRIBLE FORCE OF JEALOUSY AND ENVY. (Ver. 4.) It exceeds all ordinary outbursts of wrath in violence and destructiveness. Envy is the daughter of pride, the author of revenge and murder, the beginner of sedition, and the perpetual tormentor of nature (Socrates). It never loves to honour another but when it may be an honour to itself. "From *envy* . . . good Lord, deliver us!"

V. FALSE LOVE AND FAITHFUL FRIENDSHIP CONTRASTED. (Vers. 5, 6.) False love refuses to tell a friend of his faults, from some egotistic and unworthy motive. "If you know that I have done anything foolishly or wickedly, and do not blame me for it, you yourself ought to be reproved" (Plaut., 'Trinum.,' i. 2. 57). "It is no good office," says Jeremy Taylor, "to make my friend more vicious or more a fool; I will restrain his folly, but not nurse it." "I think that man is my friend through whose advice I am enabled to wipe off the blemishes of my soul before the appearance of the awful Judge" (Gregory I.). Christians should "speak the truth in love" (Eph. iv. 15). If the erring one does not learn it from the lips of love, he will have to learn it from a harsher source and in ruder tones (comp. Job v. 17, 18; Ps. cxli. 5; Rev. iii. 19; ch. xxviii. 23). There cannot be a more worthy improvement of friendship than in a fervent opposition to the sins of those we love (Bishop Hall).—J.

Vers. 7, 8.—*The blessing of contentment.* I. THE CONTENTED MIND. (Ver. 7.) "Enough is as good as a feast;" "Hunger is the best sauce." To know when we are well off is the cure for the canker of envy and discontent. Deprivation for a time teaches us the need of common blessings. The good of affliction is that it brings us nearer to God; and of poverty of spirit, that it is never without food.

II. THE EVIL OF RESTLESSNESS. (Ver. 8.) "The rolling stone gathers no moss." Rarely does the wanderer better his condition. Unstable as water, he doth not excel. Those who seek satisfaction for the soul out of God are like those who wander into a far country, like the prodigal. "O my wandering ways! Woe to the soul which presumed, if it departed from thee, that it should find anything better! I turned on every

side, and all things were hard, and thou alone wast my Rest. Thou hast made us for thyself, O God, and our heart is restless till it finds rest in thee."—J.

Vers. 9, 10.—*The praises of friendship.* I. ITS SWEETNESS. (Ver. 9.) It is compared to fragrant unguent and incense (Ps. civ. 15; cxxxiii. 2). It is more delightful to listen to the counsel of a dear friend than sternly to rely on self. It is in human nature to love to see itself reflected in other objects; and the thoughts we approve, the opinions we form, we recognize gladly on another's lips. Talking with a friend is better than thinking aloud.

II. TIME-HONOURED FRIENDSHIP SHOULD ABOVE ALL BE HELD DEAR. (Ver. 10.) The presumption is that your own and your father's friend is one tried and approved, and may be depended upon.

> "The friends thou hast and their adoption tried,
> Grapple them to thy soul with hooks of steel."

III. FRIENDSHIP IS FOUNDED UPON SPIRITUAL SYMPATHY. And this ranks before the ties of blood. The thought meets us in the proverbs of the ancient world in general. In the touching story of the friendship of Orestes and Pylades, *e.g.*, it has its application. "This is what people say, 'Acquire friends, not relations alone;' since a man, when he is united by disposition, though not of kin, is better than a host of blood-relations for another man to possess as his friend" (cf. Euripides, 'Or.,' 804). And Hesiod says, "If aid is wanted, neighbours come ungirt, but relations stay to tuck up their robes." Divine friendship is the highest illustration of this love. Christ is above all the "Friend that sticketh closer than a brother."—J.

Vers. 11—13.—*The need of prudence.* I. PRUDENT CONDUCT REFLECTS CREDIT UPON ONE'S PARENTS. (Ver. 11.) The graceless children of gracious parents are a special reproach, bringing dishonour even upon the Name of God (Gen. xxxiv. 30; 1 Sam. ii. 17). The world will generally lay the blame at the parents' door. The Mosaic Law severely punished the sins of the priest's daughter for the disgrace brought upon the holy office (Lev. xxi. 9).

II. THE NEED AND ADVANTAGE OF FORETHOUGHT. (Ver. 12.) Prudence has been described as "the virtue of the senses." It is the science of appearances. It is the outward action of the inward life. It is content to seek health of body by complying with physical conditions, and health of mind by complying with the laws of intellect. It is possible to give a base and cowardly interpretation of the duty of prudence; that "which makes the senses final is the divinity of sots and cowards, and is the subject of all comedy. The true prudence admits the knowledge of an outward and real world." Thus true prudence is only that which foresees, detects, and guards against the ills which menace the life of the *soul;* for there is no profit in the prudence which seeks the world and risks the soul. Those are "simple" who, often with the utmost regard for their material interests, go on heedless of the moral perils which their habits incur.

III. THE FOLLY OF THOUGHTLESS SURETYSHIP. (Ver. 13.) This, as we have seen, is often dwelt on in this book. It refers to a different condition of society from our own. We may generalize the warning. Prudence includes a proper self-regard, a virtuous egotism, so to speak. When good-natured people complain that they have been deceived, taken in, and turn sourly against human nature, do they not reproach themselves for having lacked this primary virtue of prudence? The highest virtues can grow only out of the root of independence (see ch. xx. 16).—J.

Ver. 14.—*Insincerity in friendship.* The picture is that of one who indulges in the noisy ostentation of friendship, without having the reality of it at his heart.

I. EXCESS IN PRAISE OR BLAME IS TO BE GUARDED AGAINST. Luther shrewdly observes, "He who loudly scolds, praises; and he who excessively praises, scolds. They are not believed because they exaggerate." Too great praise is half-blame. Language should be used with sobriety and temperance.

II. INSINCERITY IS SUBJECT TO A CURSE. It is odious to God and to man. One of the constant moral trials of life is in the observance of the golden mean of conduct in

social relations—to be agreeable without flattery, and sincere without rudeness. Here, as ever, we must walk in the bright light of our Saviour's example, the All-loving, yet the All-faithful.—J.

Vers. 15, 16.—*The quarrelsome wife.* She is compared to the continual dropping of a shower; and the attempt to restrain her is like seeking to fetter the wind or to grasp at oil.

I. THE MONOTONY OF ILL TEMPER. It persists in one mood, and dyes all it touches with one colour, and that a dismal one.

II. THE CORRODING EFFECT UPON OTHERS' MINDS. Fine tempers cannot resist this perpetual wear and tear; the most buoyant spirits may be in time depressed by this dead weight.

III. THE INFLEXIBILITY OF ILL TEMPER. Alas! it is one of those things we are tempted to say cannot be mended. Nothing indeed but that Divine grace which can turn the winter of the soul into summer is able to remedy this ill. In reliance upon this, the exhortation may be given, "Purge out the old leaven!"—J.

Vers. 17—22.—*Wisdom for self and for others.* I. THE BENEFIT OF INTELLIGENT SOCIETY. (Vers. 17, 19.) 1. *The collision of mind with mind elicits truth, strikes out flashes of new perception.* A man may grow wiser by an hour's discourse than by a day's meditation. "Speech is like embroidered cloth opened and put abroad," said Themistocles to the King of Persia. In the collision of minds the man brings his own thoughts to light, and whets his wits against a stone that cuts not (Bacon). 2. *The reflection of mind in mind.* (Ver. 19.) For we are all "like in difference," and never see so clearly what is in our own spirit as through the manifestation of another's. As we have not eyes in the back of our head, so is introspection difficult—perhaps, strictly speaking, impossible. Self-knowledge is the reflection of the features of other minds in our own.

II. SPIRITUAL LAWS. 1. *Diligent husbandry is rewarded.* (Ver. 18.) Whether we cultivate the tree, the master, the friend, our own soul, this law must ever hold good. Everything in this world of God's goes by law, not by luck; and what we sow we reap. Trust men, and they will be true to you; treat them justly, and they will show themselves just, though they make an exception in your favour to all their rules of conduct. 2. *The quenchless thirst of the spirit.* (Ver. 20.) Who can set a limit to the human desire to know, to do, to be? The real does not satisfy us; we are ever in quest of the ideal or perfect. Evil excesses and extravagances of vicious passion are the reverse of this undying impulse of an infinite nature. God is our true Good; our insatiable curiosities are only to be satisfied by the knowledge of himself. 3. *The criterion of character.* (Ver. 21.) According to the scale of that which a man boasts of, is he judged. If he boasts of praise, worthy things, he is recognized as a virtuous and honest man; if he boasts of vain or evil things, he is abhorred. "Show me what a man likes, and I will show you what he is" (this according to what seems the true rendering of this proverb). 4. *Folly in grain.* (Ver. 22.) In the East the husk is beaten from the corn by braying in a mortar. But from the fool the husk of folly will not depart. It is possible to despise the lessons of affliction, to harden one's back against the rod. Mere punishment cannot of itself correct or convert the soul. The will, the conscious spiritual activity, must co-operate with God. A great man speaks of "that worst of afflictions—an affliction lost."—J.

Vers. 23—27.—*The man diligent in his business.* I. ECONOMY AND FORESIGHT. (Vers. 23—25.) He looks after the outgoings of his farm, well aware that there is in all things constant waste, that even the royal crown is a perishable thing. All knowledge is useful, and prudence applies through the whole scale of our being. Let the man, "if he have hands, handle; if eyes, measure and discriminate; let him accept and hive every fact of chemistry, natural history, and economy; the more he has, the less he is willing to spare any one. Time is always bringing the occasions that disclose their value. Some wisdom comes out of every natural and innocent action." To preserve and hold together are as necessary as to gain in every kind of riches.

II. THE FRUITS OF INDUSTRY. (Vers. 26, 27.) Joyous is the sight when man's toil,

united with the forces of nature, has been blessed with the abundant harvests and the rich flocks. Let a man keep the laws of God, and his way will be strewn with satisfactions. To find out the secret of "working together with God" in all the departments of our life is one of the deepest secrets of satisfaction and blessedness.—J.

Ver. 1.—*Man in presence of the future: our greatness and our littleness.* It is well to glance at—

I. OUR GREATNESS IN REGARD TO THE FUTURE. 1. There need be *no bound at all* to our hope and aspiration in respect of the future. We are warranted in looking forward to an endless life beyond, to an actual and absolute eternity of blessedness and glory. Whosoever believeth in Jesus Christ has everlasting life. 2. We can and we should prepare for a *very long time to come.* The legislator should devise his measures, the religious leader or organizer should lay his plans, the architect should make his designs, and the builder provide his materials with a view to the next century as well as to the next decade. 3. We should have regard to the *coming years* as well as to the passing days; teaching our pupils so that they will not only pass the approaching examination, but be ready for the battle of life; offering and enforcing truths and principles which will not only tide men over to-morrow, but carry them victoriously through all the vicissitudes of their course, and solace and strengthen them in their declining days. But *the* lesson of the text is—

II. OUR LITTLENESS IN REGARD TO THE FUTURE. We do not know what a day may bring forth. 1. How our purposes may be deranged, and all that we are proposing to do may have to be abandoned in favour of some more imperative duty (see Jas. iv. 13—15). 2. How our prospects may be affected; we may possibly rise from indigence to affluence, but we are much more likely to be suddenly and seriously reduced. Financial calamities are many, but "windfalls" are few. 3. How our circle of friendship may be narrowed, or how soon we may be called on to leave home and kindred. 4. How our hope of health or life may be extinguished. "Between the morning and the evening" (see Job iv. 19—21, Revised Version) we may discover that we are afflicted with a disease which will complete its work in a few months at most, or we may be stricken down with a blow which will bring us face to face with death and eternity. With this uncertainty there are three lessons we should learn. (1) All unqualified and unreserved declarations are unbecoming. If there be no verbal qualification, there should be a mental reservation, a feeling below the surface that all our plans and movements are subject to the will of God. (2) We should do to-day's work before its hours are over. Since we may not be able to do a stroke to-morrow, let us see that every day's work is well and thoroughly done. We are not responsible for the future, but we are for the present. And not only is it *of no use* for us to be anxious to do much in the coming years, but it is *foolish and unfaithful* of us to be concerned about it. Our Master sets us our work, and he gives us our time. All that we should be solicitous about is the diligent and devoted discharge of our duty in his appointed time and way. If he takes the weapon out of our hand here, it will be because he has a better one to give us in a brighter and broader sphere. (3) We ought to be prepared for any and every event. We should have within us principles that will sustain or preserve us in any trouble or in any elevation that may be awaiting us. We should have our house in such order that, if death should come suddenly to our door, those whom we leave behind us will suffer the least possible affliction, and we ourselves shall pass to the great inheritance beyond.—C.

Vers. 2, 21.—*The praise of man.* How far we should go in praising others, and in what spirit we should accept their praise, is a matter of no small importance in the conduct of life.

I. THE DUTY OF PRAISING OTHERS. "Let another man praise thee" can hardly be said to be imperative so far as he is concerned. But it suggests the propriety of another man speaking in words of commendation. And the duty of praising those who have done well is a much-forgotten and neglected virtue. 1. It is the correlative of blame, and if we blame freely (as we do), why should we not freely praise the scholar, the servant, the son or daughter, the workman, etc.? 2. With many hearts, perhaps with most, a little praise would prove a far more powerful incentive than a

large quantity of blame. 3. To praise for doing well is to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ and of his apostles; it is to act as the most gracious and the most useful men and women have always acted. 4. It is to do to others as we would they should do to us. We thirst for a measure of approval when we have done our best, and what we crave from others we should give to others.

II. THE WISDOM OF ABSTAINING FROM SELF-PRAISE. The injunction of Solomon appeals to our common sense. Yet is it by no means unrequired. Many men are guilty of the unseemliness and the folly of praising themselves—their ingenuity, their shrewdness, their persuasiveness, their generosity, etc. Probably if they knew how very little they commend themselves by so doing, how very soon they weary their audience, how often their language becomes positively nauseous, they would abstain. Self-vindication under a false charge is a duty and even a virtue; a very minute modicum of self-commendation may be occasionally allowable; anything beyond this is, at least, a mistake.

III. THE NECESSITY OF TESTING PRAISE. "The ordinary interpretation makes *the praise try the man*, but the words . . . in the original make *the man try the praise*" (Wardlaw). What the fining-pot is to silver, that a man should be to his praise—he should carefully and thoroughly test it. For praise is often offered some part of which should be rejected as dross. The simple-minded and the unscrupulous will praise us beyond the bounds of our desert, and to drink too much of this intoxicating cup is dangerous and demoralizing to us.

IV. THE PRACTICAL PROOF OF PRAISE. The duties and the difficulties that are before us will be the best possible proof of the sincerity and of the truthfulness of the praise we receive. We shall either be approved as the wise men we are said to be, or we shall be convicted of being less worthy than we are represented to be. Therefore let us be (1) judicious as well as generous in our praise of others, remembering that they will be thus tested; and let us (2) be contented with a modest measure of honour, realizing that we have to live up to the esteem in which we are held. But we may learn a valuable lesson from the common (if not the correct) interpretation, and consider—

V. THE TEST WHICH PRAISE AFFORDS. We stand blame better than praise; though it is right to recollect that we cannot stand more than a certain measure of blame, and few people are more objectionable or more mischievous than the scold. But much praise is a great peril. It elates and exalts; it "puffs up." It too often undermines that humility of spirit and dependence on God which are the very root of a strong and beautiful Christian character. 1. Discourage all excess in this direction; it is dangerous. 2. Care more for the approval of an instructed and well-trained conscience. 3. Care most for the commendation of Christ.—C.

Vers. 5, 6, 9, 10, 17, 19.—*Four services of friendship.* (And see homily on "Friendship," ch. xiii. 20.) We have suggested in the nineteenth verse two conditions of friendship: (1) likeness of character; and (2) reciprocity in action. There can be no true friendship where one heart does not *answer to another* as the face reflected from a mirror answers to that which is before it. Men must be like-minded in their principles and sympathies; and they must be sensitive enough to feel with one another and to give back the thoughts which are expressed by one or the other, if their intimacy is to be worthy of the sacred name of friendship. There are four services which this most precious gift of God secures for us.

I. CORRECTION. (Vers. 5, 6.) "Open rebuke is better than hidden love"—better than the love which hides from a friend its disappointment or its dissatisfaction with him. The wounds of friendship are faithful. Many are they whose character is seriously defective, and whose usefulness suffers considerable abatement from want of discipline; they are not told of their faults, they are allowed to go on deepening their roots and multiplying their fruits, because no wise and faithful friend is near to say, "Pluck out and prune." What no authority may dare to speak, love can say without fear and with excellent result.

II. REFRESHMENT. (Ver. 9.) We who are weary travellers along the path of life often need that which refreshes our spirit and turns languor into energy, gloom into gladness of heart. For that we look to friendship; it is as "ointment and perfume"

to the senses. We may be jaded and worn, but the look, the grasp, the words, of our friend reanimate and renew us.

III. CONSOLATION. (Ver. 10.) We may do well to avoid the house of our kindred in the day of our calamity, especially if we have passed it by in the time of our prosperity; if our "brother" has been kept or has kept himself at a distance. But the "neighbour that is near," the friend that has been "sticking closer than a brother" will not shut the door of his heart against us. *He* is the "brother who is born for adversity;" he will claim the right of friendship to open his heart, to pour forth his sympathy, to offer his succour, to *befriend us* in every way in which affection can solace and strength can sustain us.

IV. INCITEMENT. (Ver. 17.) It is the opportunity and the high privilege of friendship to urge to honourable achievement, to rekindle the lamp of holy aspiration when the light burns low; to sustain Christian devotedness when it is putting forth its strength, by every possible encouragement; to hold up the hands of that consecrated activity which is fearlessly speaking the truth and diligently building up the kingdom of Jesus Christ.—C.

Ver. 7.—*Superabundance and scarcity.* We have here—

I. A FAMILIAR FACT OF OUR PHYSICAL NATURE. Those who are well fed become very choice and dainty, while those who "lack bread" are thankful for the coarsest food. There are thousands of the sons and daughters of luxury whose appetite can hardly be tempted; for them cookery has to be developed into one of the fine arts, and nothing is palatable to their exquisite taste but delicacies. Living within five minutes' walk of their residence, and sometimes smelling the odours that come from their kitchens, are poor, pinched, struggling men and women, who will devour with great delight the first soiled crust that is offered them. There are thousands in our great cities that weigh long and seriously the question what nice beverage they shall drink at their table; and there *are* to be found those who would gladly quench their thirst in the first foul water they can find. Indulgence makes all things tasteless, while want makes all things sweet to us.

II. A CORRESPONDING TRUTH IN OUR MORAL NATURE. 1. Superabundance tends to selfishness and ingratitude. We are apt to imagine that we have a prescriptive right to that which is continued to us for any time; and as soon as it is withdrawn we murmur and rebel. There are no more thankless, no more querulous hearts to be found anywhere than in the homes of the affluent, than among those who can command all that their hearts desire. They find no pleasure in what they have, and they give God no thanks for it. 2. On the other hand, scarcity is very frequently associated with contentment and piety. When our resources are not so large and full that we do not stop to ask ourselves whence they come, when some solicitude or even anxiety leads us to look prayerfully to the great "Giver of all," then we recognize the truth that everything we are and everything we have, the cup itself and all that it holds, all our powers and all our possessions, are of God, and our hearts fill with gratitude to our heavenly Father. And thus it is not exceptionally but representatively and commonly true that—

"Some murmur when their sky is clear
And wholly bright to view,
If one small speck of dark appear
In their great heaven of blue.
And some with thankful love are filled
If but one streak of light,
One ray of God's good mercy, gild
The darkness of their night.

"In palaces are hearts that ask,
In discontent and pride,
Why life is such a dreary task,
And all good things denied.
And hearts, in poorest huts, admire
How love has, in their aid—
Love that not ever seems to tire—
Such rich provision made."

(Trench.)

III. ITS APPLICATION TO CHRISTIAN PRIVILEGE. Here we have: 1. *The peril of abundance.* We are tempted to become indifferent to that which we can employ and enjoy at any time, and consequently to neglect it. 2. *The compensation of scarcity.* That which is often out of reach, of which we can only occasionally avail ourselves, we appreciate at its true worth. Hence, while persecuted Christians have been willing to walk many miles to take part in the worship of God, or to give large sums of money for a few pages of Scripture, those who live in the full light of privilege are negligent of the sanctuary and the Word of God. This will apply to prayer, to praise, to Christian work, to Christian fellowship.—C.

Ver. 8.—(See homily on vers. 23—27.)—C.

Ver. 14.—(See homily on ch. xxv. 20.)—C.

Ver. 18.—*The reward of faithful service.* This is a question which very intimately and importantly concerns us; for—

I. SERVICE CONSTITUTES THE GREATER PART OF HUMAN LIFE. We have to consider how large a proportion of our race is formally and regularly engaged in service *as the occupation of their life.* When we have counted domestic servants, agricultural labourers, and all orders of "workmen;" and when we have included all those who, in the press, or the pulpit, or the legislature, are the avowed and actual servants of the public, we have referred to a very large portion indeed of the whole population. So that "he that waiteth on his master," though he may (in the literal sense of the phrase) be confined to a small section, yet actually stands for the majority of mankind. Indeed, we must be occupying a very strange position if we are not of those who are engaged in serving in some form or other.

II. MANY THINGS DEMAND THAT SERVICE SHALL BE FAITHFUL. 1. *God is requiring it of us.* It is required by him that we who are stewards be found faithful (1 Cor. iv. 2; Col. iii. 22—25). 2. *The best and noblest men,* whose character and course we admire, were men "faithful in all their house" (see Heb. iii. 5). 3. *We can only retain our self-respect* by faithfulness. To do our work slowly or slovenly, in such wise that we should be ashamed to have it inspected by "the master" (whoever he may be), in such a manner that it will not stand the test of time, is to undermine all respect for ourselves, is to sink sadly and pitifully, if not fatally, in our own esteem. 4. *Faithfulness has a large and a sure reward.* Careful culture of the fig tree is sure to be rewarded with the eating of its fruit in due time. Faithful service is sure to bring its due recompense. (1) It brings *honour.* We respect the true and conscientious labourer in our own hearts, and we do not fail to honour him in the estimation of others. Loyal and valuable service commands no small esteem when it has had time to make an impression on the mind. (2) It brings *personal attachment* and even affection. Often between those who serve and those who are served there arises a true and deep affection which is very honourable to both, very beautiful in its character, and lasting as long as life. (3) Due *material recompense.* This may be delayed, but it comes in time. (4) *Enlargement of capacity.* Perhaps the best reward of faithful service is found here—in the enlargement of the faculty of service. Do, and you will do better; serve to-day, and you will serve more skilfully and efficiently to-morrow; put out your one talent in the lowly sphere, and you will soon have two talents (of faculty and aptitude) to put out in a higher one.

> "I will ask for no reward,
> Except to serve thee still"

—and to serve thee *better.* But if it be said that, after all, human service *is* sometimes unappreciated and unacknowledged, that the labourer's hire is withheld and *not* paid, that the "master" does *not* render the honour that is due to him who has "waited on" him long and served him well—as it may sometimes be truly said—then let us retire to the truth that—

III. THERE IS ONE SERVICE IN WHICH THERE IS NO DISAPPOINTMENT. We are the servants of Christ. We delight to call him Master (John xiii. 13). We owe him everything, and we offer him the subjection of our will, the trust of our hearts, the service

of our lives. He will not disappoint us. He will not forget our work of faith and our labour of love. The slightest service shall "in no wise lose its reward." He will generously regard what we do for his humble disciples as something rendered to himself. Here we shall possess his loving favour, and there his bountiful recompense.—C.

Vers. 23—27 (and ver. 8).—*A commendation of diligence.* It is likely enough that Solomon, oppressed with the burdens and vexations, with the difficulties and dangers, of the throne, looked longingly toward those pastoral scenes which he here describes. But, keen and shrewd man that he was, he must have known that contentment does not always find a home in the homestead, and that there may be as much disquietude of heart in the fields of the beautiful country as there is in the streets of the crowded city. We look for something more than an ordinary "pastoral" in these verses. We recognize in them a royal commendation of diligence.

I. THERE IS NEED OF DILIGENCE IN EVERY SPHERE. "Be diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds." Pastoral prosperity demands the care and the labour of the shepherd or the herdsman, as well as do the transactions of princes and the affairs of state. It will be a poor season and a bad harvest if the farmer is dreaming all day long. It is true that kids and calves and lambs grow up "of themselves," and that "the earth bringeth forth fruit of itself" (Mark iv. 28); but it is also true that without watchful care on the shepherd's part the flock will be sickly and small, and that without toil and skill on the part of the farmer the hay crop and the wheat crop will be quite disappointing. And so in everything. Whatever the sphere may be, diligence is the invariable condition of success. The man who will not take pains, who does not work and strive, who does not throw his strength and energy into his occupation, will soon find how great is his mistake.

II. DILIGENCE MUST BE CONCENTRATED IF IT IS TO BE REMUNERATIVE. (Ver. 8.) A man that is everywhere but at home, who is interested in everyhody's business but his own, who can tell his neighbours how to improve their estate while his own is neglected, who has a hand in a hundred activities, may be exceedingly busy and (in his way) diligent; but he is not a "man of business," and he does not show the diligence which yields a good result. Let a man know "his place" and keep it; and, while selfishness and narrowness of spirit are bad and blameful enough, it is needful for him to give his strength to his own sphere, his forces to his own fields.

III. A WISE DILIGENCE WILL BE WELL REWARDED. 1. It will procure domestic comfort (vers. 25—27). 2. It will lead to honour and reputation (ch. xxii. 29). 3. It will invest with power (ch. xii. 24). 4. It will enrich with various kinds of human wealth (ch. x. 4; xiii. 4; xxi. 5). Patient industry is the source of all the good which beautifies and brightens, which adorns and enlarges, human life.

IV. THERE IS A SERIOUS UNCERTAINTY AGAINST WHICH TO PROVIDE. (Ver. 24.) You may be the son of a king, but the crown sometimes changes hands; dynasties are not immortal. You may have a large treasure at command, but the thief, who wears many guises and comes to us in many forms, may steal it away. Better depend on self-reliance than on such props as these; have the diligent hand at your side, and you will be able to defy the chances and the losses that come in the hour and in the way when we look not for them.

V. THERE IS ONE SPHERE IN WHICH DILIGENCE IS OF INESTIMABLE VALUE—THE KEEPING OF OUR OWN HEART. With the most devout and the most sedulous care should we "keep" our spiritual nature, for from it flow the streams of life or death (see homily on ch. iv. 23).—C.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XXVIII.

This chapter is still part of the Hezekiah collection, and not a new series by another author. It may be regarded as describing the various destinies of the powerful and the weak, the sinner and the righteous.

Ver. 1.—**The wicked flee when no man pursueth.** The unreasoning terror of the sinner arises partly from his uneasy con-

science, which will not permit him to transgress without warning of consequences, and partly from the judgment of God, according to the threats denounced in Lev. xxvi. 36, 37. A terrible picture of this instinctive fear is drawn in Job xv. 20, etc., and Wisd. xvii. 9, etc. There are numerous proverbs about unreasonable timidity, such as being afraid of one's own shadow (see Erasmus, 'Adag.,' *s.v.* "Timiditas"). As the Eastern puts it, "The leaf cracked, and your servant fled;" and "Among ten men nine are women" (Lane). On the cowardice of sinners St. Chrysostom says well, "Such is the nature of sin, that it betrays while no one finds fault; it condemns whilst no one accuses; it makes the sinner a timid being, one that trembles at a sound; even as righteousness has the contrary effect. . . . How doth the wicked flee when no man pursueth? He hath that within which drives him on, an accuser in his own conscience, and this he carries about everywhere; and just as it would be impossible to flee from himself, so neither can he escape the persecutor within, but wherever he goeth he is scourged, and hath an incurable wound" ('Hom. in Stat.,' viii. 3, Oxford transl.). **But the righteous are bold as a lion.** They are undismayed in the presence of danger, because their conscience is at rest, they know that God is on their side, and, whatever happens, they are safe in the everlasting arms (see Ps. xci.). Thus David the shepherd-boy quailed not before the giant (1 Sam. xvii. 32, etc.), remembering the promise in Lev. xxvi. 7, 8. The heathen poet Horace could say of the upright man ('Carm.,' iii. 3. 7)—

> "Si fractus illabatur orbis,
> Impavidum ferient ruinæ."

"Whoso feareth the Lord shall not fear nor be afraid; for he is his Hope" (Ecclus. xxxi. (xxxiv.) 14, etc.). St. Gregory ('Moral.,' xxxi. 55, "The lion is not afraid in the onset of beasts, because he knows well that he is stronger than them all. Whence the fearlessness of a righteous man is rightly compared to a lion, because, when he beholds any rising against him, he returns to the confidence of his mind, and knows that he overcomes all his adversaries because he loves him alone whom he cannot in any way lose against his will. For whoever seeks after outward things, which are taken from him even against his will, subjects himself of his own accord to outward fear. But unbroken virtue is the contempt of earthly desire, because the mind is both placed on high when it is raised above the meanest objects by the judgment of its hopes, and is the less affected by all adversities, the more safely it is fortified by being placed on things above" (Oxford transl.).

Ver. 2.—**For the transgression of a land many are the princes thereof.** This implies that the wickedness of a nation is punished by frequent changes of rulers, who impose new laws, taxes, and other burdens, which greatly oppress the people; but regarding the antithesis in the second hemistich, we take the meaning to be that when iniquity, injustice, apostasy, and other evils abound, a country becomes the prey of pretenders and partisans striving for the supremacy. The history of the northern kingdom of Israel, especially in the disastrous period succeeding the death of Jeroboam II., affords proof of the truth of the statement (comp. Hos. viii. 4). Septuagint, "Owing to the sins of ungodly men, quarrels (*κρίσεις*, law-suits) arise." **But by a man of understanding and knowledge the state thereof shall be prolonged.** "The state" is the stability, the settled condition of the country. The word is כֵּן (*ken*), here a substantive, equivalent to "station," "base." Umbreit, Nowack, and others translate it, "justice," "authority," "order." When a wise and religious man is at the helm of state, justice continues, lives, and works; such a man introduces an element of enduring good into a land (comp. ch. xxi. 22; Eccles. ix. 15). The good kings Asa, Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, and Hezekiah had long and prosperous reigns. Septuagint, "But a clever man (*πανοῦργος*) will quench them (quarrels)."

Ver. 3.—**A poor man that oppresseth the poor.** The words rendered "poor" are different. The former is *rash*, "needy," the latter *dal*, "feeble" (see on ch. x. 15). Delitzsch notes that, in accordance with the accents in the Masoretic text, we should translate, "A poor man and an oppressor of the lowly—a sweeping rain without bringing bread," which would mean that a tyrant who oppresses the lowly bears the same relation to the poor that a devastating rain does to those whom it deprives of their food. But it is pretty certain that "the poor" and "the oppressor" designate the same person (though the vocalization is against it); hence the gnome refers to a usurper who, rising to power from poor estate, makes the very worst and most tyrannical ruler. Such a one has learned nothing from his former condition but callous indifference, and now seeks to exercise on others that power which once galled him. Thus among schoolboys it is found that the greatest bully is one who has himself been bullied; and needy revolutionists make the most rapacious and iniquitous demagogues. Of such tyrants the prophets complain (see Isa. v. 8, etc.; Micah ii. 2). Wordsworth refers, as an illustration, to Catiline and his fellow-conspirators, who were moved by selfish interests to overthrow the commonwealth,

Many modern commentators (*e.g.* Hitzig, Delitzsch, Nowack), in view of the present text, regarding the combination נבר רש, and noting that elsewhere the oppressor and the poor are always introduced in opposition (comp. ch. xxix. 13), read רָאשׁ, or consider רֹאשׁ as equivalent to it—*rosh*, "the head," in the signification of "master," "ruler." The gnome thus becomes conciunous, the ruler who ought to benefit his dependents, but injures them, corresponding to the rain which, instead of fertilizing, devastates the crops. The LXX. had a different reading, as it renders, "A bold man in his impieties (ἀνδρεῖος ἐν ἀσεβείαις) calumniates the poor." Is like a sweeping rain which leaveth no food; literally, *and not bread*. A violent storm coming at seed-time and washing away soil and seed, or happening at harvest-time and destroying the ripe corn. Vulgate, *Similis est imbri vehementi, in quo paratur fames*. Ewald supposes that such proverbs as these and the following belong to the time of Jeroboam II., when the prosperity of the people induced luxury and arrogance, and was accompanied with much moral evil, oppression, and perversion of justice ('Hist. of Israel,' iii. 126, Eng. transl.). The Bengalee compares the relation of the rich oppressor to the poor, not with the rainstorm, but with that of the carving-knife to the pumpkin.

Ver. 4.—**They that forsake the Law praise the wicked.** This they do because they love iniquity, and like to see it extend its influence, and arm itself against the good, who are a standing reproach to them. St. Paul notes it as a mark of extreme wickedness that gross sinners "not only do the same iniquities, but have pleasure in them that do them" (Rom. i. 32). **Such as keep the Law contend with them;** are angry with them. They are filled with righteous indignation; they cannot hold their peace when they see God's Law outraged, and must have the offenders punished (comp. 1 Kings xix. 14; Ps. lxxiv. 11, etc.; cxix. 136, 139; cxxxix. 21). The LXX. connects this verse with the latter part of the preceding, thus: "As an impetuous and profitless rain, thus those who forsake the Law praise ungodliness; but they who love the Law raise a wall around themselves."

Ver. 5.—**Evil men understand not judgment;** or, *what is right*. An evil man's moral conception is perverted, he cannot distinguish between right and wrong; the light that was in him has become darkness (comp. ch. xxix. 7). Many men, by giving themselves over to wickedness, are judicially blinded, according to John xii. 39, 40. **They who seek the Lord understand all things.** Those who do God's will, seeking him in prayer, know what is morally right in every circumstance, have a right judgment in all things (comp. Eccles. viii. 5; 1 Cor. ii. 15). So 1 John ii. 20, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things;" and our Lord has declared, "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine" (John vii. 17).

Ver. 6.—This is almost the same as ch. xix. 1, but varies a little in the second hemistich: **than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich.** The Hebrew literally is, *perverse of two ways;* i.e. who, going one way, pretends to go another; the "two ways" being the evil which he really pursues, and the good which he feigns to follow. Delitzsch calls him "a double-going deceiver." So Siracides imprecates, "Woe to the sinner that goeth two ways" (Ecclus. ii. 12). "A double-minded man," says St. James (i. 8), "is unstable in all his ways." It is not the endeavouring to serve God and mammon at the same time that is meant, but putting on the appearance of religion to mask wicked designs—in the present case in order to gain wealth. Septuagint, "A poor man walking in truth is better than a rich liar."

Ver. 7.—**Whoso keepeth the Law is a wise son.** "Law" is *torah*, as ver. 4; but it seems here to include not only the Decalogue, but also the father's instruction and commands. Such an obedient and prudent son brings honour and joy to a parent's heart (see ch. x. 1; xxix. 3). **He that is a companion of riotous men shameth his father;** literally, *he that feedeth, hath fellowship with, gluttons* (ch. xxiii. 20). The son who herds with debauchers, and wastes his substance in riotous living, brings shame on, wounds, and insults, all connected with him. Such a one transgresses the Law and his father's commands, and brings them into contempt (comp. ch. xxvii. 11). Hence the antithesis of the two clauses. Septuagint, "He that cherishes debauchery (ποιμαίνει ἀσωτίαν) dishonours his father." Ἀσωτία occurs only in 2 Macc. vi. 4, but is common in the New Testament; *e.g.* Eph. v. 18; Titus i. 6.

Ver. 8.—**He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance.** "Usury" (*neshek*) is interest on money lent taken in money; "unjust gain" (*tarbith*) is interest taken in kind, as if a man, having lent a bushel of corn, exacted two bushels in return. All such transactions were forbidden by the Law of Moses, at any rate between Israelites (see Lev. xxv. 36, 37, "Thou shalt not give thy brother thy money upon usury (*neshek*), nor lend him thy victuals for increase [*marbith*, equivalent to *tarbith*, which is used in ver. 36]"). Septuagint, Μετὰ τόκων καὶ πλεονασμῶν, "With interest and usury." (For censure of usury, see Ps. cix. 11; Ezek. xviii. 13; and

contrast Ps. xv. 5; Ezek. xviii. 8.) **He shall gather it for him that will pity the poor.** He shall never enjoy it himself, and it shall fall into the hands of one who will make a better use of it (see on ch. xxii. 16; and comp. ch. xiii. 22; Job xxvii. 16, etc.). In our Lord's parable the pound is taken from one who made no good use of it and is given to a more profitable servant (Luke xix. 24).

Ver. 9.—**He that turneth away his ear from hearing the Law.** He who refuses to hearken to and to practise the dictates of the Divine Law (comp. ch. i. 24). **Even his prayer shall be abomination** (comp. ch. xv. 8, and note there). "God heareth not sinners" (John ix. 31). Such a man's prayer, if he does pray, is not hearty and sincere, and therefore lacks the element which alone can make it acceptable. He will not resolve to forsake his favourite sin, even while paying outward worship to the God whose Law he breaks: what wonder that the prophet so sternly denounces such offenders (Isa. i. 11, etc.), and the psalmist cries with terrible rigour, "When he shall be judged, let him be condemned; and let his prayer become sin" (Ps. cix. 7)? St. Gregory ('Moral.,' x. 27), "Our heart blames us in offering up our prayers, when it calls to mind that it is set in opposition to the precepts of him whom it implores, and the prayer becomes abomination, when there is a 'turning away' from the control of the Law; in that verily it is meet that a man should be a stranger to the favours of him to whose bidding he will not be subject." And again (ibid., xviii. 9, 10), "If that which he bids we do, that which we ask we shall obtain. For with God both these two do of necessity match with one another exactly, that practice should be sustained by prayer, and prayer by practice" (Oxford transl.).

Ver. 10.—A tristich. **Whoso causeth the righteous to go astray in an evil way.** It is doubtful whether physical danger or moral seduction is meant. The gnome is true in either case; he who misleads one who trusted him, and who, being simple and good, ought to have been respected and to have received better treatment, shall fall into the destruction which he prepared for the other (ch. xxvi. 27). Taking the proverb in a moral sense, we find this truth: If the good man does ever yield to the temptations of the sinner, the latter does not reap the enjoyment which he expected from the other's lapse, rather he is made twofold more the child of hell, he himself sinks the deeper and more hopelessly for playing the devil's part, while the just rises from his temporary fall more humble, watchful, and guarded for the future. **But the upright shall have good things in possession**; or, *shall inherit good* (ch. iii. 35). He shall be abundantly rewarded by God's grace and protection, by the comfort of a conscience at rest, and by prosperity in his worldly concerns—an adumbration of the eternal recompense awaiting him in the life to come. St. Jerome has changed the incidence of the gnome by inserting *ejus*, thus: *Et simplices possidebunt bona ejus*, which makes the meaning to be that the righteous shall be the instruments of retribution on the deceiver, whose riches shall pass over into their possession. But the Hebrew gives no countenance to this interpretation Septuagint, "The transgressors shall pass by good things, and shall not enter into them," where the translator has misunderstood the original.

Ver. 11.—**The rich man is wise in his own conceit** (comp. ch. xviii. 11). A rich man thinks so highly of his position, is so flattered by parasites, and deems himself placed so immeasurably above social inferiors, that he learns to consider himself possessed of other qualifications, even mental and intellectual gifts, with which wealth has no concern. This purse-proud arrogance which looks upon financial skill and sharpness in bargaining as true wisdom, is confined to no age or country. **But the poor man that hath understanding searcheth him out** (ch. xviii. 17). Wisdom is not to be bought with money. A poor man may be wise, his poverty probably making him a keener critic; and if he is brought into communication with this self-deluding plutocrat, he soon sees through him and recognizes his real value. Septuagint, "An intelligent poor man will condemn him."

Ver. 12.—**When righteous men do rejoice, there is great glory** (comp. ch. xxix. 2; xi. 10). "Rejoice," rather *triumph*, as conquerors, right prevailing and wickedness being overcome. Then there is great show of joy, and, as the expression implies, men put on their festal garments to do honour to the occasion. See the description of Solomon's time (1 Kings iv. 20, 25). If we take this verse in connection with ver. 2, we may see in it the triumph of order after a period of confusion and anarchy. Septuagint, "Through the help of righteous men great glory arises." **But when the wicked rise, a man is hidden** (comp. ver. 28, where, however, the verb is different). The Authorized Version means that when the wicked rise to power, people have to hide themselves in order to escape danger to life and property. The verb is more literally rendered, "are searched for," *i.e.* they have betaken themselves to hiding-places, and have to be looked for; they fear oppression and injury, and venture no

longer into the streets and open places. Vulgate, *Regnantibus impiis ruinæ hominum*, "When evil men are in power, there is general ruin;" Septuagint, "In the places of the ungodly men are caught." Other interpretations of the proverb have been suggested, though none is so satisfactory as that given above. Thus some take the searching out to mean testing, in the sense that evil times try men's characters, and bring out their true nature (1 Cor. xi. 19). Others explain that, under the reign of the impious, men do not come forward to take part in public affairs, but retire sullenly into private life.

Ver. 13.—**He that covereth his sins shall not prosper.** To cover one's sins is either absolutely to disown them or to make excuses; a man who does this is never free from a burden of guilt, as the psalmist says, "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me" (Ps. xxxii. 3, etc.). **Whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.** Confession alone without amendment, or what is called theologically satisfaction, does not win pardon and mercy. It is when the sinner acknowledges his transgression, and turns from it to newness of life, that God heals his backsliding, and turns away his anger and renews the tokens of his love (Hos. xiv. 4). Confession is made to God, against whom all sin is committed (Josh. vii. 19; Job xxxi. 33; 1 John i. 8, etc.); and to man, if one has transgressed against him, or if he be in a position to give spiritual counsel. Thus the people confessed their sins before John the Baptist (Matt. iii. 6) and the apostles (Acts xix. 18; comp. Jas. v. 16). Among the Jews, the high priest, acting as the mouthpiece of the people on the great Day of Atonement, confessed their iniquities, laying them on the scapegoat; and particular confession was also enjoined, and was part of the ritual accompanying a sacrifice for sin, by which legal purification was obtained (Numb. v. 6, 7, "When a man or woman shall commit any sin . . . then they shall confess their sin which they have done;" so Lev. v. 5). And the very offering of a trespass offering was a public recognition of guilt, which was exhibited by the offerer laying his hand on the head of the victim (Lev. i. 4). Such confession is spoken of strongly by Siracides, "Be not ashamed to confess thy sins, and force not the course of the river" (Ecclus. iv. 26); *i.e.* do not attempt the impossible task of trying to hide them. The LXX. has, "He who sets forth accounts (ἐξηγούμενος ἐλέγχους, *i.e.* blames himself) shall be loved." Lesètre quotes Sedulius, 'Carm. Pasch.,' iv. 76—

"Magna est medicina fateri
Quod nocet abscondi; quoniam sua vulnera nutrit
Qui tegit, et plagam trepidat nudare medenti."

"Mighty relief
T' expose what rankles while 'tis hidden still.
He feeds who hides his wounds and shuns to show
His heart's plague to the good physician."

Ver. 14.—**Happy is the man that feareth alway.** Some have taken the fear mentioned to be the fear with which God is to be regarded. Thus Aben Ezra. But it is rather the fear of sin which is meant—that tender conscience and watchful heart which lead a man to be prepared for temptation and able to resist it when it arises. Such a one distrusts himself, takes heed lest he fall (1 Cor. x. 12), and works out his salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. ii. 12; comp. ch. xiv. 16). "Grow not thoughtless of retribution" ('Pirke Aboth,' i. 8). A horror of sin cannot be instilled too early into the young. Septuagint, "Happy is the man who piously (δι' εὐλάβειαν) fears all things." St. Bernard ('In Cant. Serm.,' liv. 9), "In veritate didici, nil æque efficax esse ad gratiam promerendam, retinendam, recuperandam, quam si omni tempore coram Deo inveniaris non altum sapere, sed timere. Time ergo cum arriserit gratia, time cum abierit, time cum denuo revertetur; et hoc est semper pavidum esse." **He that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief**; or, *calamity* (ch. xvii. 20). A man hardens his heart who attends not to the voice of conscience, the restraints of religion, the counsel of friends, the warnings of experience (comp. ver. 26; ch. xxix. 1; Exod. viii. 15; Ps. xcv. 8). This man scorns the grace of God, loses his protection, and must come to misery.

Ver. 15.—**A wicked ruler over the poor people**; a people weak and resourceless. To such a powerful tyrant is as fatal as a roaring lion or a hungry bear prowling in quest of food. The prophets compare evil rulers to ravenous lions (see Jer. iv. 7; Ezek. xix. 6). They are like lions in strength and cruelty, like bears in craft and ferocity. Septuagint, "A hungry lion and a thirsty wolf is he who, being poor, rules over an indigent nation." The poverty of the subjects embitters the conduct of the ruler.

Ver. 16.—**The prince that wanteth understanding is also a great oppressor**; literally, *and rich in oppression*. Ewald, Delitzsch, Nowack, and others take the verse, not as a statement, but as a warning addressed to the ruler, as we have so many addressed to a son, and as the author of the Book of Wisdom calls upon the judges of the earth

to listen to his admonitions. They therefore render thus: "O prince, void of understanding, but rich in oppression!" The wording and accentuation of the passage confirm this view. Caher renders, "A prince that wants understanding increases his exactions." The want of intelligence makes a prince cruel and tyrannical and callous to suffering; not possessing the wisdom and prudence necessary for right government, he defrauds his subjects, treats them unjustly, and causes great misery. See the prophet's denunciation of Shallum and Jehoiakim for these very crimes (Jer. xxii. 13—19). Septuagint, "A king wanting revenues is a great oppressor (*συκοφάντης*)." **He that hateth covetousness shall prolong** his days (ch. xv. 27). The prince addressed is thus warned that his oppressive acts will be visited upon him judicially; that only a ruler who deals with his subjects liberally and equitably can attain to old age, and that his conduct will shorten his life. An early death is reckoned as a token of God's indignation. The second hemistich Caher translates, "But he who hates lucre shall reign long." Septuagint, "He who hateth iniquity shall live a long time." (For "covetousness" (*betsa*), see on ch. i. 19.)

Ver. 17.—**A man that doeth violence to the blood of any person shall flee to the pit.** This should be, *a man oppressed* (Isa. xxxviii. 14), *burdened, with the blood of any one.* The wilful murderer, with his guilt upon his soul, flies in vain from remorse; his crime pursues him even to the grave. For inadvertent manslaughter the cities of refuge offered an asylum, but for deliberate murder there was no safe refuge, either from the stings of conscience or from the avenger of blood, but death. The homicide, like Cain (Gen. iv. 14), must be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth. "Pit" (*bor*), some take to mean any hiding-place, "a cavo, or well;" but it is very commonly found in the sense of "sepulchre" (Ps. xxviii. 1; Isa. xiv. 19, etc.), and is so explained here by most commentators. **Let no man stay him.** We had in ch. xxiv. 11, etc., an injunction to save human life; but the case was quite different from this of wilful murder. Here it is directed that no one attempt to save him from the punishment which he has incurred, or to comfort him under the remorse which he suffers. Let him be left alone to meet the fate which he has merited. The LXX. gives a different idea to the gnome, "He who becomes bail for a man charged with murder shall be banished and shall not be in safety." They add a verse which we shall meet again, almost in the same words (ch. xxix. 17, 18), "Chasten thy son, and he will love thee, and will give honour to thy soul; he shall not obey a sinful nation."

Ver. 18.—**Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved.** "Uprightly" (*tamim*); innocently, blamelessly (Ps. xv. 2). Vulgate, *simpliciter*; Septuagint, *δικαίως*; Aquila, Symmachus, *τέλειος*. "He is helped (*βεβοήθηται*)," Septuagint. Things shall prosper with him; God will work with him, and save him in dangers temporal and spiritual. **But he that is perverse** in his **ways shall fall at once.** "He that is perverse of two ways," or "in a double way," as ver. 6. The man who is not straightforward, but vacillates between right and wrong, or pretends to be pursuing one path while he is really taking another, shall fall suddenly and without warning. בְּאַחַת means "all at once," or "once for all," and so that nothing else is possible, equivalent to *penitus*. Schultens quotes Virgil, 'Æneid,' xi. 418—

"Procubuit moriens et humum semel ore momordit."

Septuagint, "He that walketh in crooked ways will be entangled."

Ver. 19.—A variation of ch. xii. 11. **Shall have poverty enough.** The new clause marks the antithesis more clearly than that above.

Ver. 20.—**A faithful man shall abound with blessings.** "Faithful," as in ch. xx. 6, one on whom one can depend, honest and upright. Septuagint, *ἀξιόπιστος*. The blessings signified are such as come from God and man. Men will utter his name with praise and benediction (comp. Job xxix. 8, etc.), and God will show his approval by sending material prosperity. **He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent** (comp. ver. 22, and note there; ch. xiii. 11; xx. 21; xxi. 5). One who is only anxious to become quickly rich, and is unscrupulous as to means, cannot be "a faithful man," and therefore cannot be blessed. Instead of "innocent," many expositors render "unpunished" (as ch. xvii. 5), which better contrasts with the blessings mentioned in the first hemistich, though the two ideas are co-ordinate. On this haste of covetousness, Juvenal writes ('Sat.,' xiv. 173)—

"Inde fere scelerum causæ; nec plura venena
Miscuit aut ferro grassatur sæpius ullum
Humanæ mentis vitium, quam sæva cupido
Immodici census; nam dives qui fieri vult,
Et cito vult fieri. Sed quæ roverentia legum,
Quis metus aut pudor est unquam properantis avari?"

The Septuagint waters down the gnome, "But the wicked shall not be unpunished."

Ver. 21.—The first hemistich occurs a little fuller in ch. xxiv. 23, referring there, as here, to the administration of justice.

For **for a piece of bread that man will transgress.** Thus translated, this clause confirms the former, and says that a judge given to favouritism will swerve from right under the smallest temptation. But to bribe a judge with a morsel of bread seems an unlikely idea; and the gnome is of general application, "And for a morsel of bread a man [not 'that man'] will transgress." As some men in responsible positions are often swayed by low and unworthy considerations, so in social life a very insignificant cause is sufficient to warp the judgment of some persons, or draw them aside from the line of rectitude. (For "a piece of bread," as denoting abject poverty or a thing of no value, see on ch. vi. 26.) The commentators cite Aul. Gell., 'Noct. Att.,' i. 15, "Frusto panis conduci potest vel uti taceat vel uti loquatur." Septuagint, "He that regards not the persons of the just is not good; such a one will sell a man for a morsel of bread."

Ver. 22.—**He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye** (see ver. 20); better, *the man of evil eye hasteth after riches.* The man of evil eye (ch. xxiii. 6) is the envious and covetous man; such a one tries to improve his position and raise himself speedily to the height of him whom he envies, and is quite unscrupulous as to the means which he uses to effect his purpose, and keeps all that he gains selfishly to himself. And yet he is really blind to his own best interests (comp ch. xx. 21). **And considereth not that poverty shall come upon him** (comp. ch. xxiii. 4, 5). His grasping greed brings no blessing with it (ch. xi. 25), excites others to defraud him, and in the end consigns him to merited poverty. The LXX. here reads somewhat differently, and translates, "An envious man hasteth to be rich, and knows not that the merciful man (*chasid* instead of *cheser*) will have the mastery over him," *i.e.* will take his wealth, as ver. 8. Proverbs concerning hastily gotten wealth have already been given. Here are a few more: Spanish, "Who would be rich in a year gets hanged in half a year;" Italian, "The river does not become swollen with clear water;" says a Scotch proverb, "Better a wee fire to warm us than a meikle fire to burn us."

Ver. 23.—**He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour.** The word rendered "afterwards" (*postea*, Vulgate), אחרי (*acharai*), creates a difficulty. The suffix cannot be that of the first person singular, which would give no sense; hence most interpreters see in it a peculiar adverb attached to the following verb, "shall afterwards find." Delitzsch, Löwenstein, and Nowack take it for a noun with the termination -*ai*, and translate, "a man that goeth backward," "a backslider" (as Jer. vii. 24). Hence the translation will run, "He who reproveth a backsliding man," *i.e.* one whom he sees to be turning away from God and duty. **He shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue** (comp. ch. xxvii. 6; xxix. 5). A faithful counsellor, who tells a man his faults, brings them home to his conscience, and checks him in his downward course, will be seen to be a true friend, and will be loved and respected both by the one whom he has warned and advised and by all who are well disposed. Jas. v. 19, "If any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." "Laudat adulator, sed non est verus amator." The flatterer says only what is agreeable to the man whom he flatters, and thus makes him conceited and selfish and unable to see himself as he really is; the true friend says harsh things, but they are wholesome and tend to spiritual profit, and show more real affection than all the soft words of the fawning parasite. Septuagint, "He that reproveth a man's ways shall have more thanks than he who flattereth with the tongue."

Ver. 24.—**Whoso robbeth his father or his mother** (comp. ch. xix. 26); taking from them what belongs to them. Septuagint, "He who casts off (ἀποβάλλεται) father or mother." **And saith, It is no transgression.** He salves his conscience by thinking all would be his ere long in the course of nature; or he uses the plea of *Corban* denounced by our Lord (Mark vii. 11, etc.). **The same is the companion of a destroyer** (ch. xviii. 9); is no better than, stands in the position of, one who practises openly against his neighbour's life and property. He is a thief, and fails in the simplest duty. Vulgate, *particeps homicidæ est.* There may be an allusion to the guilt incurred by a witness in concealing his knowledge of a crime, which is denounced in Lev. v. 1 (comp. Judg. xvii. 2).

Ver. 25.—**He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife** (ch. xv. 18; xxix. 22); literally, *he that is of a wide soul.* This may certainly denote pride (*qui se jactat et dilatat*, Vulgate), in which case the gnome says that one who thinks much of himself and despises others is the cause of quarrels and dissensions, occasioned by his struggles for pre-eminence and the ill feeling arising from his overbearing and supercilious conduct. Others, and rightly, take the wide soul to denote covetousness (comp. ch. xxiii. 2; Isa. v. 14; Hab. ii. 5). It is the man of insatiable desire, the grasping avaricious man, who excites quarrels and mars all peace, and in the end destroys himself. "Whence come

wars," asks St. James (iv. 1), "and whence come fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your pleasures that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not; ye kill, and covet, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war." Septuagint, "An unbelieving [ἄπιστος, Alexand. ἄπληστος, insatiate] man judgeth rashly." **But he that putteth his trust in the Lord shall be made fat** (ch. xi. 25; xvi. 20; xxix. 25). The character here opposed to the covetous is that of the patient, God-fearing man, who is contented to do his duty, and leave the result in the Lord's hands. This man shall be made fat, shall be comforted and largely blessed, while he who puts his hope in material things shall fall into calamity. Septuagint, "He who trusts in the Lord will be in his care (ἐν ἐπιμελείᾳ ἔσται)."

Ver. 26.—**He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool** (see Gen. vi. 5; viii. 21). What is here censured is that presumptuous confidence in one's own thoughts, plans, and imaginations which leads a man to neglect both God's inspirations and the counsel of others (comp. ver. 14; ch. xiv. 16). "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. x. 12). Septuagint, "Whoso trusteth to a bold heart, such a one is a fool." **Whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.** This man looks outside himself for direction; he trusts in the wisdom which is from above; he walks in the fear of the Lord, and is saved from the dangers to which self-confidence exposes the fool. The best commentary on the gnome is Jer. ix. 23, 24, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord."

Ver. 27.—**He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack** (see ch. xi. 24, etc.; xix. 17). God in some way compensates what is spent in almsdeeds by shedding his blessing on the benevolent. "Der Geiz," runs the German maxim, "sammlet sich arm, die Milde giebt sich reich," "Charity gives itself rich; covetousness hoards itself poor" (Trench). "Alms," said the rabbis, "are the salt of riches." **But he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse** (ch. xi. 26). The uncharitable man either turns away his eyes that he may not see the misery around him, or pretends not to notice it, lest his compassion should be claimed. The expression, "hiding the eyes," occurs in Isa. i. 15, "When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you." The unmerciful man meets with the curses of those whom he has neglected to relieve when he had the power, and such curses are ratified and fulfilled because they are deserved, and Divine retribution attends them (see the opposite view, ver. 20). "Turn not away thine eye from the needy," says the Son of Sirach, "and give him none occasion to curse thee; for if he curse thee in the bitterness of his soul, his prayer shall be heard of him that made him" (Ecclus. iv. 4, etc.; comp. Tobit iv. 7). So in the 'Didache,' ch. iv., we have, Οὐκ ἀποστραφήσῃ τὸν ἐνδεόμενον, "Thou shalt not turn thyself from one in need." Septuagint, "He that turneth away his eye shall be in great distress;" Vulgate, *Qui despicit deprecantem sustinebit penuriam.*

Ver. 28.—**When the wicked rise, men hide themselves** (see ver. 12); Septuagint, "In the places of the ungodly the righteous groan." **But when they perish, the righteous increase** (ch. xi. 10; xxix. 2, 16). The overthrow of the ungodly adds to the prosperity of the righteous, removes an opposing element, and promotes their advancement in influence and numbers.

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*The cowardice of guilt and the courage of righteousness.* I. THE COWARDICE OF GUILT. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth." 1. *This cowardice springs from a natural feeling of ill desert.* "Conscience doth make cowards of us all." Apart from all authoritative revelation, when no prophet of God is charging a man with his sin, an awful voice within clamours against his guilt and shakes the very foundations of his confidence. Though he has never breathed a word of his misdeed in the ear of a fellow-man, though all the world is deceived into believing him to be innocent, he cannot silence that dread inner voice. In many cases it utterly unnerves a man, though outwardly he dwells in perfect security. 2. *This cowardice is nourished by a perception of Divine justice.* A person who knows the revealed will of God, and his wrath against sin, must be prepared to expect judgments of condemnation on guilt. Though the avenging hand is stayed, it may fall at any moment. The miserable guilty man is like one in the condemned cell under sentence of death, who does not know the day or hour

of execution, but who trembles at every footfall lest it should be that of the messenger who summons him to his doom. 3. *This cowardice gives rise to needless alarms.* The murderer starts at the fall of a leaf—so utterly unstrung is he under the tremendous consciousness of guilt. Can any condition be more dreadful? Rather than endure this agony of apprehension, men, who were in no danger of being arrested, have confessed their crimes and given themselves up to justice. When we consider the relation of sin to God and to his judgments, it is foolish indeed to live in the cowardly shame of guilt. For there are peace and pardon for the penitent.

II. THE COURAGE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. 1. *This courage is based on a clean conscience.* (1) The feeling of innocence. Una can brave the lion and subdue its savage nature to her service because the panoply of her innocence is her perfect protection. The martyr can face the fury of the persecutor, strong in the consciousness of right and truth. It is painful to be wrongly accused, but a sensible man should learn to bear calumny when he knows that he is not guilty in the sight of God. (2) The new experience of regeneration. One who has been redeemed by Christ and renewed by the Holy Spirit need not live in the perpetual fear of guilt and shame. He is forgiven and restored. He is like the prisoner who can walk boldly out of the jail with a royal pardon. Yet his confidence can never be the same as that of original innocence. It must always have a certain humility. 2. *This courage is justified by experience.* The true man does not find his boldness fail him. He is as safe as he feels himself. The first guarantee of success in any cause is a clear consciousness that we are in the right. In the end, right and truth must triumph. But if they meet with temporary defeat, their champion need fear no real evil. He now gives his life, as he has before given his strength, to the good cause. Whether he serves it by life or by death, he does nobly, and he need not fear that he will be deserted by God.

Ver. 9.—*The prayer that is an abomination.* God does not hear all prayer. There are even prayers that he rejects with wrath. The broken words of the penitent, the simple cry of the little child, and the ungrammatical sentences of the ignorant person may be all acceptable to God, while prayers faultless in form and impressive in utterance are flung back as insults to the Divine majesty. The first consideration is not as to the nature of the prayer, but as to the character of the supposed worshipper. The prayer that is an abomination is one which, however perfect it may appear to be in itself, comes from contaminated lips. We need to examine ourselves rather than to weigh our phrases.

I. THE CONDUCT THAT MAKES THE PRAYER AN ABOMINATION. This is the conduct of one "that turneth away his ear from hearing the Law." Such conduct carries with it two evil things. 1. *Wilful error.* The heathen who do not know the Law may well be dealt with leniently when they blunder into superstition, and even confuse their consciences with degraded forms of religion, for their error is involuntary. But when a man has an opportunity of coming to a knowledge of the truth, but rejects it in indolence or aversion, he is to blame for the wrong notions which would have been corrected but for his voluntary acceptance of darkness rather than light. Devotion ought to be enlightened by instruction. The Bible should be read in public worship. Scripture truth is needed as a guide to prayer. 2. *Deliberate disobedience.* The turning aside from hearing the Law is not likely to spring from a mere reluctance to learn its doctrines. Behind this there lies a dislike to obeying its precepts, which reveals a stubborn self-will in opposition to the will of God. Now, such an evil state of the heart precludes all favour from Heaven.

II. THE REASON WHY THE PRAYER IS AN ABOMINATION. This may be looked for in two directions. It may lie in the prayer itself, or it may be found in the man who utters it. 1. *A bad prayer is offered.* If the worshipper is wilfully ignorant, he is to blame for asking for things which he would refrain from seeking when in a more enlightened condition. If he is self-willed and disobedient, he is guilty of asking amiss for what he may spend on his own lusts (Jas. iv. 3), instead of seeking what is in accordance with the will of God. 2. *A prayer proceeds from sinful lips.* There are moments of distress when the most undevout man would be glad of heavenly aid, if only it would come like the help given by Homer's gods and goddesses to his heroes in their times of danger. There is no spiritual religion in the cry for help under such

circumstances. If the soul is alienated from God, and there is no sign of penitence, the prayer for deliverance, though genuine and heartfelt, may well be rejected. But worse than this is the mock-worship of one who would have the honour of being religious together with the profit of being sinful. There can be no true religion without right conduct. God looks to the behaviour of the life more than to the language of the prayer. He cares nothing for reverence in the temple if he sees wickedness in the market-place.

Ver. 10.—*The tempter.* I. THE GREATEST SIN IS TEMPTING ANOTHER TO SIN. This is Satanic wickedness, following the example of the devil. 1. It is most guilty because it *tends to increase wickedness.* It is sowing evil seeds. It is bad enough to cultivate the deadly fruit in one's own life, but to propagate it elsewhere is to be a source of trouble and manifold wickedness. 2. It is particularly guilty because it *ruins souls.* It is an attack upon other men. The tempter is a murderer. At least, he is an enemy who sows tares in his neighbours' fields, and so brings trouble wantonly on others.

II. THIS SIN IS COMMITTED BY MEANS OF EVIL EXAMPLE. The tempter need not whisper enticing words, much less need he approach his victim in the attitude of "a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." It is enough that his conduct sets a pattern of wickedness. We are responsible for the examples we exhibit before the world. Most important in the presence of children, who are naturally imitative, and who take their patterns from the manners of the elder people among whom they live, the example of heads of families is peculiarly impressive. Therefore the guilt of such persons is grave indeed when their reckless wickedness drags poor children down to sin.

III. THIS SIN MAY BE SUCCESSFUL. It is possible to cause the righteous to go astray in an evil way. 1. This may happen with *innocent children.* They are naturally righteous; for "of such is the kingdom of heaven." But they are not unassailable in their simplicity and early purity. The most awful fact in life is the corruption of childhood by the wickedness of older and stronger life. 2. It is possible with *good men and women.* To be good is not to be above temptation. Even Christ was tempted, though he resisted successfully. Therefore (1) when a good man is led astray we have no proof that his goodness was a hypocritical pretence; and (2) no one can be so secure in his consciousness of integrity as to afford to play with temptation and to boast of his own strength. There are joints in the thickest armour, and keen darts that find out the smallest weak places.

IV. THE SIN OF TEMPTING ANOTHER TO SIN WILL BRING RUIN ON THE TEMPTER. Of all sins this one cannot be let go unchecked and unpunished. For the sake of the victims who are threatened by it God will assuredly visit it with wrath. The tempter is a deadly serpent, whose horrible enticements only make its venom the more dangerous; and all the resources of righteousness must be put forth to crush and destroy such a pest. But no miraculous interference is needed to punish the sin of tempting. We have not to summon the Archangel Michael to fight the dangerous reptile. In the end it will turn its sting on itself. The tempter will fall into his own pit. He will alienate his victims, and he will make an enemy of all that is good. Friendless and helpless, he must perish in the hour of his need.

Vers. 13, 14.—*Confession.* I. IT IS DANGEROUS FOR A MAN TO DENY HIS SIN. 1. *It is false.* If a man pretends to be virtuous when he knows that he is guilty, that man's life is a lie. He lives in a continuous falsehood. Such a condition is rotten, turning his whole course into a delusion, and leading to a confused estimate of right and wrong. The very landmarks of righteousness are lost sight of in a fog of bewildering pretences. 2. *It precludes forgiveness.* God will only pardon the penitent, and penitence is impossible without an admission of guilt. Therefore the Divine covering of sin which will utterly bury it and allow of no ugly resurrection in a revival of old accusations, is hindered by the sinner's foolish, cowardly attempt to cover it in his own way by a paltry concealment. The wretched rags that he draws over the foul thing will not really hide it, but they will prevent the massive shield of Divine forgiveness from being cast over it. 3. *It confirms the sin.* Sin is not destroyed by being covered. It is no more killed than the seed of a poison plant is killed when it is sown in the soil,

and so temporarily buried out of sight. Driven back to the secret chambers of the soul, the evil thing grows there and spreads its deadly influence. Confession would clear out the noxious malaria of guilt; concealment only shuts it up to breed in the stifling atmosphere of its own corruption. Such a condition hardens the heart in wickedness.

II. IT IS HAPPY FOR A MAN TO CONFESS HIS SIN. 1. *This confession must mean an earnest desire to be free from it.* The man who conceals his sin keeps it while he covers it, and holds it tight even when he is denying it. But one who confesses his sin aright hates it though he admits it. Three things are here implied. (1) He owns his guilt. Confession includes an admission both of the fact and of its evil character. He who confesses a sin must own that he did the deed, and that it is bad. (2) He forsakes the sin. A right confession is accompanied by repentance. It is the very opposite of the brazen-faced guilt that glories in its shame, because it loathes what still it cannot but own. (3) He first fears to sin again. He has learnt a wholesome lesson. He looks back in owning his guilt, and then forward in fear of repeating it. 2. *Such confession will be followed by God's forgiveness and a new joy to the penitent.* (1) God will forgive the penitent. He "shall have mercy." Pride claims high deserts, but the humility of confession only seeks for mercy. It inspires the publican's prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Now, as God is waiting to be gracious and loves mercy, as soon as the obstruction of impenitence is removed, his grace is free to flow in and heal the humbled soul. (2) The penitent will experience a new joy. He will be happy even in his fear. He will "rejoice with trembling." No longer living in the miserable fear of being "found out," the new fear that makes him trust his soul to God will be associated with the blessedness of forgiveness and the peace of a Divine protection.

Ver. 20.—"*A faithful man.*" I. HIS CHARACTER. Nothing can be more grand than fidelity. When found in a man it is an image of the eternal constancy of God; it is like that Divine righteousness which the psalmist compared to the "everlasting hills"—so firm, so enduring, so changeless. It would be well if this grand Old Testament grace were more prized and cultivated in the Christian Church. Let us consider it in some of its manifold aspects. What is the character of the faithful man? 1. *He is true to himself.* This fidelity must lie at the root of his fidelity to others. The faithful man must act out honestly what he feels to be demanded by his own inner convictions. 2. *He is true to his God.* The man of God is faithful as well as trustful. Thus his faith has the two sides of passive submission and active loyalty. The primary duty to God must be observed before the secondary duty to man can be kept. 3. *He is true to his friend.* This does not merely mean that he keeps his pledges. It also involves his regarding the welfare of his friend and coming to his aid in the hour of need, danger, and helpful service. 4. *He is true to his word*—one who "sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not." It is nothing that we keep our promises when they run along the lines of our own inclinations. The test is that they are equally honoured when they involve self-sacrifice. 5. *He is true when unobserved.* Faithful service is the opposite of eye-service. The faithful man will do well, though he never expects to be called to account. Faithful work is that which never meets the eye, and yet is as well wrought as the most conspicuous work. 6. *He is true in face of danger.* Here is the test of fidelity. The faithful servant of Christ is one who will not forsake his Lord when persecution threatens him. The martyr is "faithful unto death" (Rev. ii. 10).

II. HIS FRUITFULNESS. He "abounds with blessings." He is like Abraham, "the father of the faithful," who was both blessed himself and a blessing to others (Gen. xii. 2). 1. *He is a recipient of abundant blessings.* It is a happy thing to be faithful even though fidelity be met with misunderstanding or persecution. (1) Fidelity is itself a blessing. This grace is its own reward. To have grace to live a strong, true, noble life is to be one of God's blessed sons, though no further reward be anticipated. (2) Fidelity brings many earthly blessings. It may not secure worldly wealth, though generally integrity is a safer road to success in life than the crooked paths of dishonour. But it will secure peace, and in the long run it is likely to be recognized and rewarded with well-merited honour. To be accounted a faithful servant is to be crowned with better than Olympian garlands. (3) Fidelity will be rewarded with

heavenly favour. This is just the chief of Divine approvals singled out by Christ for his servants, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matt. xxv. 21). 2. *He is a source of abundant blessings.* One true, faithful soul—what a tower of strength! what a treasury of help! what a haven of refuge! He is rich indeed who has a faithful friend. The faithful man can be relied on to help in time of need, when the faithless man, who perhaps is much stronger, deserts his trusting friend. Christ is faithful (2 Thess. iii. 3), and as such is a source of abundant blessings to his people. His fidelity is the ground of our faith.

Ver. 26.—*The folly of trusting one's own heart.* I. WHAT IT IS TO TRUST IN ONE'S OWN HEART. 1. *It is to trust in one's own wisdom.* The heart here, as throughout the Bible, stands for the intellectual as well as the emotional nature. Therefore we may be said to trust in it when we lean to our own understanding (ch. iii. 5) rather than seek counsel from God in prayer and the use of the Scriptures. 2. *It is to trust in our own character.* We may think highly of our own goodness and moral strength, and so venture into temptation needlessly or rush into difficult enterprises without counting the cost. 3. *It is to trust in our own affections.* Thus we are led to believe, like Peter, that our love to Christ will not fail (Matt. xxvi. 35). 4. *It is to trust in our own energy.* Thinking we can do more than we are capable of accomplishing, through over-estimating our mental or spiritual powers we unduly rely on our own resources.

II. HOW ONE IS TEMPTED TO TRUST IN ONE'S OWN HEART. 1. *Pride tempts.* It is humiliating to own weakness. A high opinion of one's own merits inevitably leads to a dangerous self-confidence. 2. *Unbelief tempts.* If men had more faith in God they would not be so content to rely on their own poor resources. It is the worldly spirit that leads to the limitation of view to human powers. 3. *Self-will tempts.* Men naturally desire to have their own will fulfilled. The less they look away from themselves, the more does it appear that they can do as they like. A selfish life tends to be a self-contained life.

III. WHY IT IS FOOLISH TO TRUST IN ONE'S OWN HEART. 1. *The heart is deceitful.* "Deceitful above all things" (Jer. xvii. 9). We do not know our own hearts. There are hidden weaknesses, unsuspected snares, unlooked-for limits. Ignorance of our own inner selves makes the self-trust a confidence without foundation. 2. *The heart is sinful.* "Desperately wicked" (Jer. xvii. 9). Too often he who trusts in his own heart trusts in an evil heart. Therefore he is likely to be led astray by his thoughts and desires. Until the heart is cleansed and renewed, the worst possible course is to trust it. On the contrary, it must be distrusted, resisted, restrained. 3. *The heart is frail.* Even when it has been freed from the dominion of sin, the heart of man is liable to fall, open to temptation, and in danger of yielding in the moment of trial.

IV. IN WHAT WAY ONE CAN AVOID TRUSTING IN HIS OWN HEART. It is not enough to see the danger and folly of this trust, for a man must have something to rest upon, and if the best foundation is unstable he will still build upon it rather than abandon himself to despair. Now, the cure for the tendency to trust in a wrong security is to be found in the possession of a better faith, a faith that is wise and safe. One great mischief of a man's trusting in his own heart is that he is thus led to forsake God. The remedy is found in returning to the true ground of the soul's confidence in God. He who thus trusts is wise. 1. *God is true.* Unlike the fickle heart, he is faithful and can always be trusted. 2. *God is good.* Therefore we should turn from the sinful heart to the holy and gracious God. 3. *God is strong.* The frail heart fails; the mighty God is a steadfast Rock.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—5.—*Canons of moral truth.* I. WICKEDNESS IS FEARFUL, GOODNESS IS COURAGEOUS. (Ver. 1.) A good conscience is better than a thousand witnesses; an evil conscience unmans (Job xv. 21). What passes by the name of courage is often the effect of fear of men; and that which is discountenanced as want of spirit may proceed from the profoundest reverence for God. We shall never find anything in the

world more to be feared than the warring presence within our own breast. True courage is the knowledge that we are for the time at one with God. The light of his countenance is life, dispersing the darkest cloud, and calming the most turbulent tempest. An evil conscience is "the worm that dies not."

II. POLITICS AND MORALS. (Ver. 2.) Rebellion arising from the collision of party and personal interests must be very injurious to the well-being of a small state. Rebellion can only be justified when there is not only the greatest wrong existing, but also the clearest possible prospect of success. If peoples in time of distress, instead of cursing and rising against their rulers, would patiently search into the causes of their grievances, a shorter way would often be found to redress. A certain unity of feeling is essential to the well-being of a state. "When any of the four pillars of government are mainly shaken or weakened (which are religion, justice, counsel, and treasure), men had need to pray for fair weather" (Bacon).

III. THE ODIUM OF PETTY TYRANNY. (Ver. 3.) There is nothing more detestable than the oppressive rule of an upstart. A base mind becomes more corrupt from hasty elevation, a narrow heart more cruel, as in the case of Robespierre and other historical examples. As with learning, so with power; the smatterers are the most ostentatious of their knowledge; those "dressed in a little brief authority" love to

> "Play such fantastic tricks before high heaven,
> As make the angels weep."

The Divine rule is strong in gentleness.

IV. THE SECRET OF MORAL SYMPATHY AND ANTIPATHY. (Ver. 4.) Those that secretly love sin have pleasure in them that do it. "The world loveth its own." It is fearful to sin; more fearful to delight in it; yet more to defend it (Bishop Hall). The pure heart has no "fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." We reveal or betray ourselves by our sympathies. The homely proverb says, "Like lips, like lettuce." And the important lesson arises here—that we should dwell on the best and brightest examples, for the sake of their effect on our character; the eye becomes sunny as it gazes at the sun.

V. THE EFFECT OF VICE ON THE INTELLIGENCE. (Ver. 5.) It is a most important principle that insight into intellectual relations of truth is affected by the mood of the heart. The clearest knowledge of the letter is here of no avail. "If any man shall do God's will, he shall know of the doctrine." The pure conscience conditions the bright intelligence. The understanding is darkened "because of the blindness of men's heart;" and these call darkness light, and light darkness. Many things dark to reason are simplified to knowledge. The Divine mysteries are mysteries of love, and through love only may be known.—J.

Vers. 6—12.—*The moral quality of life.* Nothing we can touch, no relation we can enter into or observe, but has its moral bearing. This, indeed, is the great lesson, in hundredfold iteration, of this book.

I. POVERTY WITH INNOCENCE, WEALTH WITH PERVERSITY. (Ver. 6.) Whatever be the compensations of poverty in a lower point of view, most men would vote for riches if they had the opportunity at the price of all its inconveniences, and we need to be reminded that he who would sell his peace of conscience for wealth does but "gain a loss." Better go to heaven in rags than to hell in embroidery. Better God than gold; better be poor and live, than rich and perish.

II. A MAN IS KNOWN BY THE COMPANY HE KEEPS. (Ver. 7.) The first example is that of the man whose delight is in the Law, who is in fellowship with the truth, and who is therefore a companion "of all them that fear God and keep his precepts." The second is that of one who keeps company with the dissipated, stains his name, and brings dishonour on his family. In society lie the greatest perils and the greatest safeguards. The Christian Church is the Divine society which aims at the true and holy ideal of living. As with books, so with men; the rule is—keep company only with the best.

III. ILL-GOTTEN WEALTH DWINDLES. (Ver. 8.) Wealth is not his who gets it, but his who enjoys it. And if gotten by ill means, it cannot be enjoyed; and "Ill got, ill spent," says the proverb. Wealth, diverted by force or fraud from its natural channels,

flows back by a law of economic gravitation. A man labours for himself with selfishness and wickedness, and the harvest falls into better hands; "not intending it of himself; but it is so done through God's secret providence."

IV. PRAYERS ARE VITIATED BY INJUSTICE. (Ver. 9.) They are tainted by a horrible lie. In prayer the goodness, the moral perfection, of God is assumed; and prayer implies that the holy will ought to be done. Yet how great the contradiction between such prayers on the lips and the heart bent upon defeating that will! "Just reason that God shall refuse to hear him who refuses to hear God." Without the "ceasing to do evil, and the learning to do well," sacrifices are vain oblations, and incense is an abomination to God (Isa. i. 11—15).

V. THE SEDUCER IS SELF-SEDUCED. (Ver. 10.) So the snare of Balaam, laid for Israel, became the cause of his own ruin. If the retribution is not visible, it is a fact in the soul. Among the ingredients of remorse, none is more bitter than the recollection of having led youth and innocence astray. It is a sin most difficult of self-forgiveness. But the righteous inherit salvation. There is a real sense in which men should seek to realize the character of "just men that need no repentance." There is no salvation in selfishness—none which does not imply a regeneration of the social consciousness.

VI. POVERTY AND RICHES HAVE THEIR COMPENSATION. (Ver. 11.) Confidence in riches begins in illusory self-confidence; and there is much to abet and foster it in the opinion of the multitude; for, as the old saying runs, "Rich men have no faults." But the poor man, endued with sense and with religion, sees through these false estimates; knows that the rich feel misfortunes which pass over his own head; that they pay a tax of constant care and anxiety; and that it is ever better to fare hard with good men than to feast with bad.

VII. "THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE THE VOICE OF GOD." (Ver. 12.) Whatever be the love of greatness and splendour, of rank and position, in the common mind, the people cannot but rejoice in good rulers, and be depressed under evil. A generous acclamation breaks from the popular heart when good men are raised to honour. "When Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in the king's royal apparel, . . . the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad. The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour; in every province . . . a feast and a good day" (Esth. viii. 15—17).—J.

Vers. 13, 14.—*The inner conditions of peace and of misery.* I. THE CONCEALMENT OF SIN. (Ver. 13.) It is like a worm in the bud, preying upon the cheek and upon the heart. The deepest way of such concealment is when the sinner persuades himself that "he has no sin," apologizing to himself, giving a false colour to his wrong. The sense of a dualism in our being unreconciled will not admit of peace and rest.

II. THE CONFESSION AND RENUNCIATION OF SIN. To admit the truth about ourselves, neither extenuating nor exaggerating our sin and fault; to allow the detecting and discriminating light of God's judgment to fall clear and full on the conscience;—this is what confession requires. But it must be completed by renunciation; otherwise it is a mockery. To say—

> "We're sorry and repent,
> And then go on from day to day,
> Just as we always went"

—in the words of the child's hymn—is mere sentimentality and weakness. But never are these conditions fulfilled without a sense of the Divine pity striking into the heart. God is faithful and just to forgive our sins; and the conscience is assured that he is too just to permit the sinner who has become a sufferer from godly sorrow to be tormented by remorse one moment longer than is necessary for his healing.

III. THE TENDER CONSCIENCE. (Ver. 14.) It is well with him whose heart is in the constant habit of reverential dependence upon God. His law for human conduct envelops all life from the greatest to the minutest matters. It is the atmosphere of the soul that we need to keep pure; it is the fellowship with the Spirit who is holiness that we need most jealously to guard.

IV. THE HARDENING OF THE HEART. (Ver. 14.) Making light of sin leads to its repetition; repetition indurates the conscience. Disregard of the delicacies of the soul leads surely to a benumbed, and presently to a lost, sensibility. It is better to feel too

keenly than not to feel at all; better the weak conscience than no conscience at all. He who presumes upon the mercy of God will have to reckon with his justice.—J.

Vers. 15, 16.—*The wicked ruler.* I. THE SIMILE. (Ver. 15.) He is like a fierce and devouring beast. No pity softens his bosom; no justice regulates his conduct. Complaint provokes further exactions; resistance kindles him into fury. He looks upon his people, not as a flock to be tended, but to be preyed upon. He roars around them like the nightly bear about the fold. Such monsters have often appeared in history.

II. THE SOURCE OF OPPRESSION. It lies in the *ignorance* of the oppressor's heart—ignorance of *policy*, of *humanity*, of Divine and eternal *right*. The great generalization, "They know not what they do," covers, indeed, all kinds of sin, but does not exempt from guilt. Men might know better; but, without the practice of what we know, our light itself becomes darkness.

III. THE GOOD RULER. (Ver. 16.) The trait that "he hates covetousness" may be made general; for false or perverted desire is the real motive of all such wickedness. "Lust and desire to have" gold, territory, power, etc., is selfish and cruel, and turns every man governed by it into a being more or less resembling the non-moral brute. Politics can never be excluded from Christianity; and the immense effect for good or evil of the acts of those in power is a reason why all good Christians should take a close interest in politics, and not permit any rank or station to be exempt from criticism.—J.

Vers. 17—22.—*Judgments on transgressors.* I. THE VIOLENT MAN. (Ver. 17.) His doom, here as elsewhere, is viewed as sudden; he hastes to Hades—lives not out half his days. The truth is general, reflecting the intuition of the moral order. And in accordance with that order it is that pity will be turned away from him that shows no pity. This is no argument for capital punishment, but it is an argument for such a treatment of criminals as will best deter from crime.

II. THE INSECURITY OF EVIL WAYS. (Ver. 18.) Integrity is alone safe; and in one or other of his crooked ways (such may be one meaning of the text) the sinner will ultimately fall. The dangerous feat is tried once too often. Our interest is attracted to "the dangerous edge of things," and we are astonished that men can stand upon it so often without falling. We do not see the result of the last and fatal attempt; or, seeing it, we do not surmise the previous successful attempts to defy the law of things. Scripture is right; but we do not know enough of events absolutely to verify its truths.

III. POVERTY AS A JUDGMENT. (Ver. 19.) Here, again, we have a general truth—an abstract from the great broad field of life's facts. On the whole, there is no secret of abundance but industry; nor of poverty but idleness and indulgence in pleasure and amusement as a pursuit. Repose and pleasure are the illusions from which the stern voice of God, speaking through daily experience, is ever rousing us. Hardly any disease of body or of mind, any social evil, is there which may not be traced to self-indulgence and inertia.

IV. HASTE TO BE RICH. (Ver. 20.) This temper is contrasted with that of the faithful man. There is a different scale of value in the two cases. The good man values things by the moral standard, the covetous man only by the standard of gold. The true way of looking at wealth is as an available means to all *ends* of health, wisdom, benevolence. These alone are rational ends; but they may be lost sight of in the passionate pursuit of the means. It was a thought deeply impressed on the ancient world that over-eagerness for riches must involve dishonesty. "No one quickly grows rich, being at the same time a just man," says Menander. "For he who desires to become rich desires to become rich quickly. But what reverence for the laws? what fear or shame is there ever in the covetous man who hastes to be rich?" says Juvenal. To lessen our desires rather than to increase our means is the true wisdom of life—to study to give account of our little rather than to make our little more.

V. RESPECT OF PERSONS IN JUDGMENT. (Vers. 21, 22.) The vice springs from some mean source—from fear, covetousness, or obsequiousness. Cato used to say of Cælius the tribune, that he might be hired for a piece of bread to speak or hold his peace. To prefer interest to the truth, this is the fiery temptation in one form or other of us all. And the keeping back of a part of the truth may be as injurious to others as the utterance of direct falsehood. Any meanness harboured in the soul exposes to constant

danger. Timidity may fall into worse sins than those it seeks to avoid. And in other ways extremes meet. While the haster to be rich casts an evil, envious eye on the property of others, he is blind to the menace of poverty from behind. In any case, poverty of soul follows from the constant drain of thought and energy towards things that "perish in the using." How much need have all to beware of those passions which are the "thorns" that spring up and choke the good word of God in the heart!—J.

Ver. 23.—*Faithful counsel.* I. TO GIVE IT MAY REQUIRE THE HIGHEST MORAL COURAGE. It may be in the teeth of the interest of the adviser; it may turn a friend into an enemy; it may inflict a keen smart. Nothing but the highest regard to truth on the one hand, to love on the other, may be sufficient to nerve for the task.

II. THE TEMPORARY DISPLEASURE OF A FRIEND IS TO BE FACED RATHER THAN THAT HE SHOULD SUFFER LASTING EVIL. To save a soul from death, this is the great duty imposed by Christian love. And to that principle we must be true, whether we gain or lose a brother to our heart.

III. FLATTERY TURNS OUT TO BE BITTER, GOOD COUNSEL HUMBLY RECEIVED EVER SWEET IN THE END. The former, swelling our self-conceit, blinds us to both our advantage and our duty; lures us to folly and, perhaps, to ruin. The latter opens our eyes to ourselves and to our circumstances, and turns our foot from the precipice. We have reason to be thankful for the warning word that has saved us, and to bless the faithful heart which dictated it; reason ourselves to pray that we may miss no such opportunity of another's salvation.—J.

Vers. 24, 25.—*Sins of greed.* I. THEY MAY LEAD TO UNNATURAL VICES—EVEN THE ROBBERY OF PARENTS. (Ver. 24.) The heart must be profoundly corrupted that can sacrifice filial affection on the shrine of the base lust for gain. Theft is not less but more a crime if committed against one's own blood.

II. THEY LEAD TO STRIFE. (Ver. 25.) They overcome the instinct for justice and social right, and the man becomes an oppressor and a murderer—if not in act, in spirit and purpose—of his kind. Wars and fightings come of the "lusts in our members." It is confidence in the eternal God—his gracious providence and goodness, which calms excessive desire, and fills the heart with peace and content. And the riches the soul thus gains are surer and more permanent than any treasures laid up on earth.—J.

Ver. 26.—*Folly and wisdom in the personal relation.* I. THE PRINCIPLE OF FOLLY IS LIFE IN AND FOR SELF ALONE. The thought that is superior to counsel and comparison with other minds; the feeling which shuts out consideration and sympathy; the will which would act as if it knew no law but its own;—these are manifestations of that folly which is at once immoral and irreligious.

II. PRACTICAL WISDOM WELL COMPARED TO A WALK. This is the rising in thought towards universal truth. It is governed by the pulse of charity in the soul; it moves towards all worthy Divine and human ends. In folly we advance to perdition, in aiming at our weal, in wisdom, renouncing self, we enter blessedness.—J.

Vers. 27, 28.—*The life that "breeds perpetual benediction."* I. THE KINDLY AND GENEROUS HEART. (Ver. 27.) This prompts the generous hand; gathers more than it sows; is not suffered to want any good thing. It stands out in bright colours and winning aspect against the dark background of the selfish, self-concentrated, hard-hearted life. Let us cultivate the open eye which drinks in the knowledge of all that concerns our fellows, and the open hand in harmony with it.

II. ITS WORTH IS HEIGHTENED BY CONTRAST. (Ver. 28.) Men cower, their brows contract, their mien becomes depressed, their soul enslaved, their manhood unmanned, beneath the proud man's oppression and the wicked's scorn. Persecution drives the moral sunshine out of the world, and tends to depopulate its moral life. As the increase of goodness depends largely on sound social and political conditions, it must be an object of prayer and of endeavour with all good men to overthrow tyranny and abolish fraud, that "the fruits of righteousness may abound and increase on every hand."—J.

Vers. 1, 13, 25 (latter part).—*The source of disturbance and the secret of security.* We hardly need the pen of the wise man to assure us that—

I. SIN MEANS DISTURBANCE TO OUR SOUL. 1. *It is bad enough to be unfortunate;* to suffer from privation or loss. 2. *It is far worse to be guilty.* We soon accommodate ourselves to our misfortunes; we readily adjust ourselves to our circumstances, even though these may be very narrow. But sin strikes deep, and its wound lasts long. Among other painful consequences it fills the soul with a tormenting fear. (1) *It dreads the pursuing penalty of God's ordaining.* And it has reason to do so, for "evil pursueth sinners" (see homily on ch. xiii. 21). In accordance with Divine Law, suffering, sorrow, shame, death, are following in the track of iniquity, and, except there be merciful interposition, will lay their hand upon it. (2) *It dreads the pursuing penalty of man.* More often than not sin is pursued by man, either by public law or by private resentment; and he who has wronged his neighbour, either by fraud or force, has reason to expect arrest and punishment. It is well that it should be so. We have come lately to understand that it is our wisdom to abandon the heavy sentence which was seldom inflicted for the lighter one which is far more freely dispensed. The great thing in administering justice is to *connect penalty with sin* as closely as possible in the mind of those who are tempted to violate the law. (3) *It dreads penalty when there is no punishment at all.* "The wicked flee when no man pursueth." The murderer cannot, dare not, stay in the presence of the body he has slain. The thief turns aside from the officer who has no intention of apprehending him. He who has inflicted the greatest wrong that one man can do another shrinks from his neighbour's eye long before his sin has been suspected. Sin fills the soul with a harassing, a tormenting, fear. The guilty heart imagines a hundred dangers before the hand of judgment is outstretched to seize, or even its pursuing feet are on the path of apprehension. We reckon badly indeed if we only count the actual and palpable inflictions of justice which evil pays; in that penalty must be included all the anxieties, the alarms, the quakings and shiverings of the soul, the abject and haunting terrors which agitate the soul before the chains are on the wrist or the prisoner is at the bar. 3. *There are two alternatives open to guilt.* (Ver. 13.) (1) It may try concealment; but this is a mistaken as well as a wrong course. It will "not prosper;" the time of concealment will be one of constant disquietude, and it will end in exposure and humiliation, for again and again it is seen that there is "nothing hidden which is not revealed." (2) It should adopt the course of confession and amendment; whoso does this "shall have mercy" of God, and will very likely indeed have mercy of man also. But even if not, the way of confession and of penalty is less hard and thorny than the path of sin and secrecy, of cowardice and terror. It is often true that while to bear punishment is tolerable, the miserable effort to escape it is absolutely intolerable.

II. RIGHTEOUSNESS MEANS SECURITY AND SERENITY. "The righteous are bold as a lion." To the upright there are two sources of rest and strength. 1. *The consciousness of integrity.* He that knows and feels his purity, his innocency, has a fearless heart, and shows a brave front to the enemy. He does not fear that the shafts of falsehood will pierce his strong armour of truth and equity. 2. *The favour of God.* (Ver. 25.) He "puts his trust in the Lord;" he commits his cause to the Righteous One; he is assured that God is on his side, and he "does not fear what man can do unto him." "The Lord is his salvation; whom should he fear?" (see Ps. xxvii. 1—3; lxxxiv. 11, 12).—C.

Vers. 4, 5.—*The practice and effect of sin and righteousness.* We have a double contrast here between the practice of the sinner and of the righteous man, and between the consequence of sin and of goodness upon the mind of the guilty and of the good.

I. THE PRACTICE OF SINFUL MEN. They "praise the wicked;" they "bless the covetous" (Ps. x. 3). 1. It is *a fact that they do so.* We hear the voice of ungodliness lifted up in favour of what is utterly wrong in the sight of God; it is expressed in the language of the lips and in every form of literature. There is hardly an evil thing perpetrated by men which does not find its advocate in some quarter. 2. It is *comprehensible that they would* do so. And this for two reasons. The wicked, as such, have an interest in lowering the standard of public morals; the more they

can reduce this, the less will be their own condemnation, and the higher they may hope to move in the society they affect. But perhaps the main account of it is found in—

II. THE BLINDING INFLUENCE OF SIN. Those who break God's Law praise those who are wicked and that which is unworthy, because they "understand not judgment" (ver. 5). It is the fearful and fatal effect of sin upon the soul to pervert the moral judgment, to deprave the conscience, to make men regard with a diminishing disapproval the wrongness of evil deeds, until they become absolutely indifferent to it, until they positively approve the actions which they once hated and denounced. Then the light that is in them is darkness, and how great and how sad that darkness is (see Matt. v. 23)! Everything is seen in a false light; truth appears as falsehood, good as evil, wisdom as folly; and, on the other hand, all those miserable delusions which a sinful heart holds, and which are leading it down to death, appear as truth, and wrong and guilty actions appear as right, and lives which are dismal failures seem to be successes.

III. THE FUNCTION OF THE RIGHTEOUS. Their duty, or one of their duties, is to "contend with the wicked." This was the office, the service, of righteous Noah, of Lot, of Elijah, of Daniel, of Nehemiah, of John the Baptist, of Paul; it has been the function of every true and loyal-hearted man placed in the midst of those who are opposing the will of God. Contention is not the highest, as it certainly is not the most inviting, duty we have to take in hand. But it is often very necessary, and is sometimes quite noble service. 1. We may have to contend with the flagrantly bad, to denounce violence, oppression, injustice, vice, profanity, etc.; or with the mere hypocrite, who is right in form but wrong in heart; or with those who are half-hearted, and who are practically opposing the truth and the kingdom of God. 2. We should be very sure of our ground before we take up the attitude and use the weapons of hostility. 3. We should oppose ourselves to those who are wrong in no spirit of animosity against men, but of hatred of all evil.

IV. THE EFFECT AND REWARD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. "They that seek the Lord understand all things." It is the most blessed effect of obedience that it elevates the doer; it purifies his heart, it clarifies his vision, it unlocks the door within which are rare treasures of immortal truth, it makes the soul to see and to rejoice in that to which it had been wholly blind. It unveils the living truth of God. It enables us: 1. To know ourselves as God knows us. 2. To understand our life as God intended us to regard it. 3. To appreciate the words and to recognize the will of the Divine Teacher. 4. To know *him* himself, "whom to know is life eternal."—C.

Ver. 8.—(See homily on vers. 20, 22.)—C.

Ver. 9.—(See homily on ch. xv. 8.)—C.

Vers. 12, 28.—*Hidden manhood.* The two main truths here taught have been anticipated by a foregoing proverb, viz. the advantage to society of promoting the good; and the injury done by the advancement of the wicked (see ch. xi. 10). But there is a truth suggested by the wise man's language which does not elsewhere appear; he says that when the wicked rise "a man is hidden," that "men hide themselves." The fact here alluded to is clear enough; we have often read, or have frequently observed, that the best men retire to seclusion and inactivity when iniquity is on the throne, when unprincipled cleverness holds the reins; they will not serve under a sovereign whom they despise, or in circumstances which make office-holding a disgrace, if not a danger. But beyond and beneath this fact the language is fitted to suggest to us that there is much of hidden manhood amongst us. We find it in—

I. PREMATURE RETIREMENT. Not only under the conditions stated in the text, when the withdrawal of honourable men is necessary to the upright and the high-minded, but also under very different conditions. When men are allured by a desire for quietude and ease, or when they are disheartened by disappointment, or are disgusted by the slowness of their ascent to place and power, or when they underestimate their capacity and their opportunity, and they therefore lay down the weapon and leave the field. This is a serious loss. Then "a man is hidden;" a man is burying

the wisdom of maturity, the large result of manifold experience, the gathered fruit of many years. He is hiding in his own home the cultured capacity he should be expending on the city, on the country of his birth.

II. UNDEVELOPED FACULTY. We do not know how often it happens that men are born with great capacities in their nature, and who live and die without manifesting them to the world. They fail to receive the education which would bring them forth, or they are confined within a range so narrow that they have no chance of showing what they could be and do. They "die with all their music in them;" they pass away, unknown, unproved, unfelt. That is expended upon unimportant trifles which might have directed the affairs of some great company, or guided the activities of some influential Church, or decided the course of some powerful nation. A "man is hidden," and a community is left unenriched.

III. UNDISCIPLINED FORCE. When God gives to a human spirit a strong power of will, there is an imperative necessity that it should be wisely and rightly guided and controlled in youth. Faithfully disciplined, such a one becomes a most useful man, who will contribute largely to the advancement and happiness of the world. But if that discipline be withheld, and the clever, wilful boy be allowed to grow up into untrained and uncultured manhood, there will be a sad waste of power. He will be more likely than not to do harm rather than good to his generation; he may be a blight instead of a blessing. There is "a man hidden;" one who has it in him to be one of the highest and worthiest, but who, as it is, is lost or even worse than lost, to his contemporaries and his country.

IV. UNRESCUED WRONG. Even when we see humanity at its very worst, in its very foulness and baseness, we do well to feel that beneath the humiliating and pitiful exterior is a hidden manhood. It is the noble work of Christian beneficence to get down to this, to lay its kind and holy hand upon it, to raise and to restore it, to bring it into the sunshine of truth and love, to make it visible and even beautiful in the sight of God and in the estimate of man.—C.

Ver. 18.—(See homily on ch. xi. 3.)—C.

Ver. 19.—(See homily on ch. xxvii. 23.)—C.

Vers. 20, 22 (and ver. 8).—*Wealth or faithfulness? a sermon to young men.* What shall the young man set before him as his goal when he stands face to face with active life? Shall he make up his mind to be rich, or shall he resolve that, whatever his circumstances may be, he will be counted among those who are faithful to their trust? Shall he fix his mind upon and find his heritage in a large estate or in an honourable and a useful life? Let such an inquirer consider—

I. THE GRAVE DOUBT ABOUT WEALTH. To have sufficiency of money for a comfortable home, for education, for the furtherance of the cause of God, and for the relief of human want,—this is certainly a very desirable thing. He who is facing the future may honestly desire to attain it, and he who has won it may well give God hearty thanks for the goodness which has placed this blessing in his power. But the mere acquisition of wealth, on which so many set their hearts, to which they devote their lives, and for which they sacrifice the best and highest things of all, *ensures nothing at all* of that which is valuable to a man who uses his reason and cares for his character. For who can be sure: 1. *How it will be gained.* There are temptations on every hand to gain money dishonestly or, if not fraudulently, by questionable means; by taking advantage of the weak and struggling in a way which, if it be not positively unjust, is inconsiderate and unkind. Of those who "make haste to be rich," how very large a proportion fail to "be innocent" (ver. 20)! They either deviate from the straight line of perfect equity, or they wander into ways of rank injustice and shameful wrong. Who shall say whether the next aspirant will not be counted in their number? And what does it profit a man to gain a fortune and to lose his integrity? 2. *How long it will stay.* He "considereth not that poverty shall come upon him." Few things are less certain than the duration of wealth. Who that has reached middle life has not frequently known of those that were supposed to be beyond the reach of misfortune being suddenly reduced or positively beggared (see ch. xxiii. 5)? 3. *How much it*

*will do for its possessor.* "He that hasteth . . . hath an evil eye;" so far is he from being satisfied with his fortune, and from looking graciously and generously upon all his neighbours, rich and poor, that he looks *enviously* upon those that are wealthier than himself, *proudly* upon those that are less successful, and *grudgingly* upon those that are poor, lest they should want his aid and diminish his store. 4. *Whither it will go.* If dishonestly obtained, it is likely enough that wealth will soon meet with the penalty it deserves, and pass to another holder. It may go to him that will "pity the poor," or it may get into the hands of "the fool," who will squander it in some kind of folly (Eccles. ii. 18, 19, 21). There is, then, an utter uncertainty about riches. It may be that God has not intended a man to be rich, but to be happy in a very humble station (ch. xxx. 9); and a pertinacious endeavour to secure what God has not placed within reach *must* end in a wretched failure and a badly bruised spirit. To such as these the strong words of Paul are applicable (1 Tim. vi. 9, 10).

II. THE CERTAINTY ABOUT FAITHFULNESS. "A faithful man shall abound with blessings." And there is no room for questioning it. Let a man be faithful to his convictions; let him be to God, his Father and his Saviour, what he knows in his heart he should be; let him be true and upright in all his relations with his fellow-men, and he will be regulating his life by a sovereign principle which will "abound with blessings." It will: 1. Build up a strong and noble character. 2. Establish an honourable reputation and win the confidence of men. 3. Secure as large a measure of peace and of happiness as is the lot of disciplined humanity. 4. Dispense much good of many kinds to those around, both in public and in domestic life. 5. Lead *down* to a peaceful end, and *on* to a glorious future. What wise man would endanger the loss of these priceless blessings for the uncertain and transient good of worldly wealth?—C.

Ver. 23.—(See homily on ch. xxvii. 5, 6.)—C.

Ver. 24.—*Filial duty.* These words may be taken not only as condemnatory of filial wrong, but as suggestive of filial obligation. We look first at—

I. THREE FORMS OF FILIAL WRONG. 1. *Culpable carelessness.* Doing things or leaving them undone, so that the money of parents (which, perhaps, can ill be spared) is wasted. 2. *Unconscientious appropriation.* Which may ascend from picking out of the pot or taking from the cupboard up to a serious appropriation of property. 3. *Unprincipled involvement.* Either in the form of (1) contracting debts which (it may be well known) will have to be paid out of the father's purse; or, what is still worse, (2) following an evil course of conduct which will discredit the family name and rob it of its honoured and prized reputation.

II. ITS GUILTINESS BEFORE GOD. They who do such things may justify them to their own minds; they may say to themselves, "It is no transgression; what is our parents' is our own;" but this is *not* the light in which it shows to Heaven. It is not only the wise man, but the Son of God, who has affixed his solemn condemnation to filial shortcoming (Matt. xv. 5). Undutiful conduct toward parents is a very heinous sin. 1. It is in most distinct violation of the Divine command (Exod. xx. 12; Deut. xxvii. 16; Matt. xix. 19; Eph. vi. 1, 2; Col. iii. 20). 2. It is a wrong done to those who, in virtue of their relationship, have the strongest claim upon us. 3. It is a sin against those who have spent on us the most patient, sacrificial love. To rob them to whom we owe more than we can owe any other human being is an aggravated offence indeed. It is well to consider—

III. THE TRUE FILIAL FEELING. A true son, who realizes what is due to his parents, will not only shrink from taking the advantage which his father's trustfulness places in his power, but he will consider how he may make some return for all that he has received at his parents' hands. And he will understand that this is to be rendered by: 1. Responsive affection. 2. Prompt and cheerful obedience. 3. Ready acquiescence in those things which are beyond his reach; docility and submissiveness of spirit. 4. Practical willingness to share the burdens of the home. Thus he will lighten the labour and brighten the lives of those who were the first, and will perhaps be the longest, if not the last, to love him.—C.

Vers. 25 (latter part) and 26 (former part).—*In whom to trust.* They who look

*forward* to human life from the sanguine standpoint of youth may see in it little to be afraid about; but they who have reached the latter end of it, and look *back* upon it, know how much there is in it to give ground for serious apprehension. It is they who are concerned for the young, and who are so devoutly solicitous that these should put their trust in that which will sustain them. There are three principles which are applicable.

I. SELF-RELIANCE IS BETTER THAN LEANING UPON OTHERS. To be kept from "the evil which is in the world" by the authority, or the counsel, or the entreaty of others is quite unsatisfactory in any but the very young. These human props will be taken away, and where, then, is our virtue?

II. MORAL PRINCIPLE IS BETTER THAN RIGHT DISPOSITION. It is well enough to inherit or to imbibe right inclinations, pure impulses, honourable feeling. But these may go down before the force of some one very strong temptation, or be (as indeed they often are) worn down and worn out by the droppings of hostile influences. Moral principle, well rooted in the soul, will stand the rough wind and still lift up its head to heaven.

III. TO TRUST IN GOD IS INCOMPARABLY WISER THAN RESTING IN OURSELVES. 1. *To "trust in our own heart" is great folly.* For, on the one hand, we *do not* know what we may have to encounter. Possibly our life may be comparatively free from evil, material and moral; but perhaps it may not be so. There may be before us *trials* of the utmost severity, for which the very greatest endurance will be required; or there may be *temptations* of the severest kind, which will assail us with tremendous and overwhelming force; or there may be demanded of us *high duties*, large services of even heroic order, only to be rendered by a noble self-abnegation; or there may await us *splendid opportunities*, to be unequal to which would be a lifelong regret, to avail ourselves of which would crown us with joy and honour. And, on the other hand, we *do* know that, associated even with moral principle, there is some measure of human weakness. Every man has his vulnerable point; and to every man's strength of mind and character there is a limit which is only too easily reached. Who of us would dare to say that he, of himself, however fortified he may be even by sound convictions as well as excellent inclinations, is strong enough to withstand *any* storm that may beat against him, to swim *any* current into which he may be cast, to rise to *any* height that he may be called upon to climb? 2. *To trust in God is the true wisdom.* For (1) God is *able* to make us stand (Rom. xiv. 4). He can make us to know "the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe." We can "do all things in Christ who strengtheneth us." (2) He has promised to sustain and to enable us, if we do put our trust in him (Ps. xxxii. 10; cxxv. 11; Isa. xxvi. 3; xl. 30, 31; 2 Tim. i. 12). God has given us abundant reason to believe that, if we practically and devoutly trust in him, he will see us safely through every evil we may have to meet and master, and will guide us to his own home and glory.—C.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XXIX.

This chapter reinforces many precept given previously.

Ver. 1.—**He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck**; literally, *a man of reproofs*—one who has had a long experience of rebukes and warnings. Compare "a man of sorrows" (Isa. liii. 3). The hardening of the neck is a metaphor derived from obstinate draught animals who will not submit to the yoke (Deut. x. 16; Jer. ii. 20; xxvii. 8). Christ calls his yoke easy, and bids his followers to bear it bravely (Matt. xi. 29, etc.). The reproofs may arise from the Holy Spirit and the conscience, from the teaching of the past, or from the counsel of friends. The LXX. (as some other Jewish interpreters) takes the expression in the text actively, "A man who reproves (ἐλέγχων) is better than one of stiff neck." **Shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy** (ch. vi. 15; xv. 10). The incorrigible and self-deluding sinners shall come to a fearful and sudden end, though retribution be delayed (comp. Job xxxiv. 20; Ps. ii. 9; Jer. xix. 11). And there is no hope in their end; despising all correction, they can have no possibility of restoration. We may refer, as an illustration, to that terrible passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews (vi. 4, etc.), and to the fate of the Jews unto

the present day. Septuagint, "For when he is burning suddenly, there is no remedy."

Ver. 2.—**When the righteous are in authority**; rather, as in ch. xxviii. 28, *when the righteous are increased*; Vulgate, *in multiplicatione justorum*. When sinners are put away, and the righteous are in the majority. Septuagint, "when the just are commended." When good men give the tone to society and conduct all affairs according to their own high standard, **the people rejoice**; there is general happiness, prosperity abounds, and voices ring cheerfully (ch. xi. 10; xxviii. 12). **When the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn**; they suffer violence and injustice, and have bitter cause for complaint and lamentation. This proverb is not applicable to the age of Solomon.

Ver. 3.—The first hemistich is a variation of ch. x. 1 (where see note). **Keepeth company with**; literally, *feedeth*, as ch. xxviii. 7. Harlots (see on ch. vi. 26). Such vice leads to the wasting of substance (Luke xv. 13), and the great sorrow of the parent. Septuagint, "But he that pastureth (ποιμαίνει) harlots shall waste wealth."

Ver. 4.—Many of the proverbs in this chapter seem to suit the time of Jeroboam II. (see on ch. xxviii. 3). **The king by judgment establisheth the land.** The king, the fountain of justice, by his equitable government brings his country into a healthy and settled condition (1 Kings xv. 4; comp. ver. 14; ch. xvi. 12; xxv. 5). In the security of the throne the land and people participate. **He that receiveth gifts overthroweth it.** The expression, אִישׁ תְּרוּמוֹת (*ish terumoth*), "man of offerings," "man of gifts," is ambiguous: it may mean "the taker of bribes," the unrighteous ruler who sells justice (ch. xv. 27), or it may signify "the imposer of taxes" (Ezek. xlv. 13, etc.) or forced benevolences. Aquila and Theodotion have ἀνὴρ ἀφαιρεμάτων, "man of heave offerings," and Wordsworth regards him as a man who claims and receives gifts, as if he were a deity on earth. Whichever sense we give to the phrase, the contrast lies between the inflexibly upright ruler and the iniquitous or extortionate prince. The Septuagint gives παράνομος, "a transgressor;" Vulgate, *vir avarus*.

Ver. 5.—**A man that flattereth his neighbour**; says only what is agreeable, applauds his words and actions indiscriminately, and makes him think too well of himself, he is no true friend (see ch. xxviii. 23). **Spreadeth a net for his feet**; his steps (ch. xxvi. 28; Job xviii. 8, etc.). If a man listens to such flattering words, and is influenced by them, he works his own ruin; self-deceived, he knows not his real condition, and accordingly makes grievous disaster of his life. The LXX. gives a different turn to the sentence, "He that prepareth a net before his friend entangles his own feet therein" (comp. ch. xxvi. 27; xxviii. 10).

Ver. 6.—**In the transgression of an evil man there is a snare** (ch. xii. 13). The snare is that the sinner is caught and held fast by his sin, and cannot escape, as he knows nothing of repentance, and has no will to cast off evil habits (ch. xxiv. 16). (For "snare," comp. ch. xviii. 7; xx. 25; xxii. 25.) Septuagint, "For a man sinning there lies a great snare." **But the righteous doth sing and rejoice.** The antithesis is not very obvious. It may mean that the good man has a conscience at peace, is free from the snare of sin, and therefore is glad; or that, in spite of a momentary fall, though he has transgressed, he knows that God forgives him on his repentance, and this makes him happy; or, generally that he rejoices in the happy life which his virtue procures for him here and hereafter (Matt. v. 12). In the original "sing" represents the sudden outburst of joy, "rejoice" the continued state of happiness. "The righteous shall be in joy and gladness (ἐν χαρᾷ καὶ ἐν εὐφροσύνῃ)," Septuagint.

Ver. 7.—**Considereth the cause**; recognizes the claims, and, as the word *din* implies, supports them at the seat of judgment (comp. Job xxix. 12, 16; Ps. lxxxii. 3, etc.). Septuagint, "A righteous man knows how to judge for the poor." **The wicked regardeth not to know it.** This is a clumsy translation; it means, pays no attention so as to become fully acquainted with its details and bearings. But the words signify rather, as in the Revised Version margin, "understandeth not knowledge" (ch. xix. 25; xxviii. 5), has no knowledge which would lead him to enter into the poor man's case, and to sympathize with him in his distress; the claims of the feeble to recognition and relief at his hands are utterly unknown and disregarded. He can daily look on Lazarus at his gate, and find no call for his pity and charity; he can see the wounded traveller in the road, and pass by on the other side. The LXX. offers two translations of the latter clause, reading the second time יֵדַע instead of יִתֵּן, and thereby not improving the sense: "But the ungodly understandeth not knowledge, and the poor man hath not an understanding mind."

Ver. 8.—**Scornful men bring a city into a snare.** "Men of derision" (Isa. xxviii. 14) are those who despise and scoff at all things great and high, whether sacred or profane (see on ch. i. 22). These are the persons who raise rebellion in a country and excite opposition to constituted authority. The rendering of יָפִיחוּ, "bring into a snare," as in the Authorized Version, is supported by some of the Jewish versions and com-

mentaries; but the more correct rendering is "blow into a blaze, inflame," as the Revised Version (comp. Job xx. 26; Ezek. xxii. 20, 21). These scorners excite the populace to acts of fury, when all respect for piety and virtue is lost; they fan the passions of the fickle people, and lead them to civil discord and dangerous excesses (comp. ch. xxii. 10). Septuagint, "Lawless men burn up a city." **But wise men turn away wrath**; by their prudent counsels allay the angry passions roused by those evil men (see ver. 11 and ch. xv. 1, 18).

Ver. 9.—**If a wise man contendeth with a foolish man**—if a wise man has a controversy, either legal or social, with a wicked fool—**whether he rage** (*is angry*) **or laugh, there is no rest.** It is a question whether the wise man or the fool is the subject of this clause. St. Jerome makes the former the subject, *Vir sapiens, si cum stulto contenderit, sive irascatur, sive rideat, non inveniet requiem.* It matters not how the wise man treats the fool; he may be stern and angry, he may be gentle and good-tempered, yet the fool will be none the better, will not be reformed, will not cease from his folly, will carry on his cavilling contention. Hitzig, Delitzsch, and others, deeming that the rage and the laughter are not becoming to the character of the wise man, take the fool as the subject; so that the sense is, that after all has been said, the fool only falls into a passion or laughs at the matter, argument is wasted upon him, and the controversy is never settled. This seems to be the best interpretation, and is somewhat supported by the Septuagint, "A wise man shall judge the nations, but a worthless man, being angry, laughs and fears not [καταγελᾶται καὶ οὐ καταπτήσσει, which may also mean, 'is derided and terrifies no one']." Wordsworth notes that the irreligious fool is won neither by the austere preaching of John the Baptist nor by the mild teaching of Christ, but rejects both (Matt. xi. 16—19).

Ver. 10.—**The bloodthirsty hate the upright**; *him that is perfect*, Revised Version; ὅσιον, Septuagint. His life is a tacit reproach to men of blood, robbers, murderers, and such-like sinners, as is finely expressed in the Book of Wisdom ii. 12, etc. (comp. 2 Cor. vi. 14). **But the just seek his soul.** The explanation of this hemistich is doubtful. The following interpretations have been offered: (1) The just seek the soul of the upright to deliver him from death temporal and spiritual (comp. ch. xii. 6; Ps. cxlii. 4). (2) The just seek the murderer's life, take vengeance on him (comp. Ps. lxiii. 9, 10). (3) "As for the just, they (the murderers) attempt his life," where the change of subject, though by no means unparalleled, is awkward (comp. Ps. xxxvii. 14). The second explanation makes the righteous the executioners of vengeance on the delinquents, which does not seem to be the idea intended, and there is no confirmation of it in our book. The interpretation first given has against it the fact that the phrase, "to seek the soul," is used of attempts against the life, not of preserving it. But this is not fatal; and the above seems to be the most likely explanation offered, and gives a good antithesis. Men of blood hate a virtuous man, and try to destroy him; the righteous love him, and do their utmost to defend and keep him safe. If this interpretation is rejected, the third explanation is allowable, the *casus pendens*—"the just, they seek his life"—may be compared with Gen. xxvi. 15; Deut. ii. 23. Septuagint, "But the upright will seek (ἐκζητήσουσι) his life."

Ver. 11.—**A fool uttereth all his mind**; *his spirit*; רוּחוֹ, *i.e.* "his anger;" θυμόν, Septuagint (comp. ch. xvi. 32). The wording of the second hemistich confirms this rendering. A fool pours out his wrath, restrained by no consideration. It is a wise maxim that says, "Command your temper, lest it command you;" and again, "When passion enters in at the foregate, wisdom goes out at the postern." So we have the word attributed to Evenus Parius—

> Πολλάκις ἀνθρώπων ὀργὴ νόον ἐξεκάλυψε
> Κρυπτόμενον, μανίας πουλὺ χερειότερον.
>
> "Wrath often hath revealed man's hidden mind,
> Than madness more pernicious."

**A wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.** This clause is capable of more than one explanation. The Authorized Version says that the wise man restrains his own anger till he can give it proper vent. The term בְּאָחוֹר occurs nowhere else, and is rendered "at last," "finally," and by Delitzsch, "within," *i.e.* in his heart. The verb rendered "keepeth in" (*shabach*) is rather "to calm," "to hush," as in Ps. lxv. 7; lxxxix. 10, "Which stilleth the noise of the seas." So we have the meaning: The wise man calms the anger within him; according to the proverb, *Iræ dilatio, mentis pacatio.* Or the anger calmed may be that of the fool: The wise man appeases it after it has been exhibited; he knows how to apply soothing remedies to the angry man, and in the end renders him calm and amenable to reason. This seems the most suitable explanation. Septuagint, "A wise man husbands it (ταμιεύεται) in part."

Ver. 12.—**All his servants are wicked.** The ruler is willing to be deceived, and does not care to hear the truth, so his

servants flatter and lie to him, and the whole atmosphere is charged with unreality and deceit. *Qualis rex, talis grex.* Ecclus. x. 2, "As the judge of the people is himself, so are his officers; and what manner of man the ruler of the city is, such are all that dwell therein." Claudian, 'IV. Cons. Hon.,' 299—

"Componitur orbis
Regis ad exemplum: nec sic inflectere sensus
Humanos edicta valent, ut vita regentis.
Mobile mutatur semper cum principe vulgus."

"By the king's precedent
The world is ordered; and men's minds are moved
Less by stern edicts than their ruler's life.
The fickle crowd aye by the prince is swayed."

Cicero, 'De Leg.,' iii. 13, "Ut enim cupiditatibus principum et vitiis infici solet tota civitas, sic emendari et corrigi continentia." And ibid., 14, "Quo perniciosius de republica merentur vitiosi principes, quod non solum vitia concipiunt ipsi, sed ea infundunt in civitatem; neque solum obsunt, ipsi quod corrumpuntur, sed etiam quod corrumpunt, plusque exemplo, quam peccato, nocent."

Ver. 13.—**A variation of ch. xxii. 2. The deceitful man.** This makes no contrast with **the poor.** "The man of oppressions" (*tekakim*) is the usurer, from whom the poor suffer most wrong and cruelty. The needy man and the rich lender are thrown together in social life. St. Jerome calls them *pauper et creditor.* Septuagint, "When the creditor and debtor meet together, the Lord maketh inspection (ἐπισκοπὴν) of both." **The Lord lighteneth both their eyes.** Both rich and poor, the oppressor and the oppressed, owe their light and life to God; he makes the sun to rise on the evil and on the good; he sends rain on the just and the unjust; he is the Father, Ruler, and Judge of all. Here is comfort for the poor, that he has a tender Father who watches over him; here is a warning for the rich, that he will have to give an account of his stewardship. The former proverb spoke only generally of God being the Maker of both (comp. Ps. xiii. 3; Eccles. xi. 7).

Ver. 14.—**The king that faithfully judgeth the poor** (comp. ch. xvi. 12; xx. 28; xxv. 5). Inflexible fidelity to duty is intended—that perfect impartiality, which dispenses justice alike to rich and poor, uninfluenced by personal or social considerations. **His throne shall be established for ever.** Being founded on righteousness, it shall pass on to his descendants for many generations (comp. Jer. xxii. 3, etc.). The LXX., pointing differently, have, "His throne shall be established for a testimony" (*lahed*, instead of *lahad*).

Ver. 15.—**The rod and reproof give wisdom** to the young. The former denotes bodily correction, what we call corporal punishment; the latter, discipline in words, rebuke administered when any moral fault is noticed. The idea here enunciated is very common in this book (see ch. x. 1, 13; xiii. 24; xxiii. 13). **But a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.** The verb translated "left" (שָׁלַח, *shalach*) is used in Job xxxix. 5 of the wild ass left to wander free where it wills. A child allowed to do as he likes, undisciplined—spoiled, as we call it—is a shame to his mother, whose weakness has led to this want of restraint, fond love degenerating into over-indulgence (comp. ch. xvii. 21; xxviii. 7). Septuagint, "A son that goeth astray shameth his parents."

Ver. 16.—**When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increaseth.** The verb *rabah* is used in both parts of the sentence, and should have been so translated, *When the wicked increase, transgression increaseth.* Septuagint, "When the godless are many, sins become many." Where the wicked get the upper hand in a community, their evil example is copied, and a lowering of moral tone and a general laxity in conduct prevail (see on ver. 12; comp. also ver. 2; ch. xxviii. 12, 28). **But the righteous shall see their fall.** Retribution shall overtake them, and God's justice shall be vindicated. This the righteous shall witness, and shall rejoice in the vengeance, when his eye shall see its desire upon his enemies (Ps. liv. 7; see also Ps. xxxvii. 34; lxxiii. 17, etc.). Septuagint (punctuating differently), "But when they (the godless) fall, the righteous become fearful (καταφοβοι);" they are awe-struck at the sudden and grievous fall of sinners.

Ver. 17.—**Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest** (ch. xix. 18); Septuagint, ἀναπαύσει σε. He will be no longer a source of care and disquiet to you. **Delight** (*maadanim*); properly, *dainty dishes*, and then any great and special pleasure (comp. Ecclus. xxx. 1—12). Septuagint, "He shall give ornament (κόσμον) to thy soul." This verse and the following are presented by the Greek version in a mutilated form after ch. xxviii. 17 (where see note).

Ver. 18.—**Where there is no vision, the people perish**; rather, *cast off restraint*, become ungovernable, cannot be reined in (Exod. xxxii. 22, 25). "Vision" (*chazon*), prophecy in its widest sense, denotes the revelation of God's will made through agents, which directed the course of events,

and was intended to be co-ordinate with the supreme secular authority. The prophets were the instructors of the people in Divine things, standing witnesses of the truth and power of religion, teaching a higher than mere human morality. The fatal effect of the absence of such revelation of God's will is stated to be confusion, disorder, and rebellion; the people, uncontrolled, fall into grievous excesses, which nothing but high principles can restrain. We note the license of Eli's time, when there was no open vision (1 Sam. iii.); in Asa's days, when Israel had long been without a teaching priest (2 Chron. xv. 3); and when the impious Ahaz "made Judah naked" (2 Chron. xxviii. 19); or when the people were destroyed by reason of lack of knowledge of Divine things (Hos. iv. 6). Thus the importance of prophecy in regulating the life and religion of the people is fully acknowledged by the writer, in whose time, doubtless, the prophetical office was in full exercise: but this seems to be the only passage in the book where such teaching is directly mentioned; the instructors and preceptors elsewhere introduced as disseminating the principles of the *chochmah* being parents, or tutors, or professors, not inspired prophets. **But he that keepeth the Law, happy is he!** "The Law" (*torah*) is not merely the written Mosaic Law, but the announcement of God's will by the mouth of his representatives; and the thought is, not the blessedness of those who in a time of anarchy and irreligion keep to the authorized enactments of the Sinaitic legislation, but a contrast between the lawlessness and ruin of a people uninfluenced by religious guidance, and the happy state of those who obey alike the voice of God, whether conveyed in written statutes or by the teaching of living prophets. (For "happy is he," comp. ch. xiv. 21; xvi. 20.) Septuagint, "There shall be no interpreter (ἐξηγητὴς) to a sinful nation, but he that keepeth the Law is most blessed."

Ver. 19.—**A servant will not be corrected by words.** Mere words will not suffice to teach a slave, any more than a child, true, practical wisdom. He needs severer measures, even the correction of personal discipline. Septuagint, "By words a stubborn (πλήρης) slave will not be instructed." The next clause gives an explanation of this necessity. **For though he understand he will not answer.** The answer is not merely the verbal response to a command, as, "I go, sir;" but it implies obedience in action. The reluctant slave thoroughly understands the order given, but he pays no heed to it, will not trouble himself to execute it, and therefore must meet with stern treatment (comp. ver. 15; ch. xxiii. 13, etc.; xxvi. 3). "That servant which knew his Lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes" (Luke xii. 47). Septuagint, "For even if he understand, he will not obey."

Ver. 20.—**Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words?** (comp. ch. xxvi. 12); Vulgate, *velocem ad loquendum;* Septuagint, ταχὺν ἐν λόγοις. Jas. i. 19, "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak." "A talkative (γλωσσώδης) man is dangerous in his city; and he that is rash (προπετὴς) in his words shall be hated" (Ecclus. ix. 18). We might also translate, "hasty in his matters," "hasty in business," and the gnome would be equally true (see note on ch. xix. 2). **There is more hope of a fool than of him.** The dull, stupid man (*kesil*) may be instructed and guided and made to listen to reason; the hasty and ill-advised speaker consults no one, takes no thought before he speaks, nor reflects on the effect of his words; such a man it is almost impossible to reform (see Jas. iii. 5, etc.). "Every one that speaks," says St. Gregory, "while he waits for his hearer's sentence upon his words, is as it were subjected to the judgment of him by whom he is heard. Accordingly, he that fears to be condemned in respect of his words ought first to put to the test that which he delivers—that there may be a kind of impartial and sober umpire sitting between the hearer and tongue, weighing with exactness whether the heart presents right words, which the tongue taking up with advantage may bring forward for the hearer's judgment" ('Moral.,' viii. 5, Oxford transl.).

Ver. 21.—**He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child.** The verb *panak*, which is not found elsewhere in the Old Testament, is rightly here translated as in the Vulgate, *qui delicate nutrit.* It refers to the spoiling a person by over-refinement, luxury, and pampering—a treatment peculiarly unsuitable in the case of a bond-servant, and one which makes such forgetful of his dependent position. Septuagint, "He that liveth wantonly (καταστρατηλῷ) from childhood shall be a servant." **Shall have him become his son at the length;** *i.e.* at length, like "at the last," equivalent to "at last" (ch. v. 11). The word rendered "son" (בֵּן, *manon*) is of doubtful meaning, and has been variously understood or misunderstood by interpreters. Septuagint, "And in the end shall have pain (ὀδυνηθήσεται) over himself;" Symmachus, "shall have murmuring (ἔστα, γογγυσμός);" Vulgate, *Postea sentiet eum contumacem.* Ewald translates "ungrateful;" Delitzsch, "place of increase," *i.e.* a household of pampered scapegraces; but one does not see how the disaster can be called a place or a house. It seems safest in this uncertainty to adopt

the Jewish interpretation of "progeny:" "he will be as a son." The pampered servant will end by claiming the privileges of a son, and perhaps ousting the legitimate children from their inheritance (comp. ch. xvii. 2; and the case of Ziba and Mephibosheth, 2 Sam. xvi. 4). "Fodder, a stick, and burdens are for the ass; and bread, correction, and work for a servant. If thou set thy servant to labour, thou shalt find rest; but if thou let him go idle, he will seek liberty" (Ecclus. xxxiii. 24, etc.). Spiritual writers have applied this proverb to the pampering of the flesh, which ought to be under the control of its master, the spirit, but which, if gratified and unrestrained, gets the upper hand, and, like a spoiled servant, dictates to its lord.

Ver. 22.—**An angry man stirreth up strife.** This is a variation of ch. xv. 18 and ch. xxviii. 25 (which see). **A furious man aboundeth in transgression.** "A furious man" is a passionate person, who gives way to violent fits of anger (ch. xxii. 24). Such a man both makes enemies by his conduct and falls into manifold excesses of word and action while under the influence of his wrath. "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" (Jas. i. 20). The Greek gnome says—

Ὀργὴ δὲ πολλὰ δρᾷν ἀναγκάζει κακά.

And again—

Πόλλ' ἔστιν ὀργῆς ἐξ ἀπαιδεύτου κακά.

"Unchastened anger leads to many ills."

Septuagint, "A passionate man diggeth up sin"—a forcible expression, which is not unusual in reference to quarrels.

Ver. 23.—**A man's pride shall bring him low.** The same thought is found in ch. xv. 33; xvi. 18; xxv. 6, etc.; Luke xiv. 11. **Honour shall uphold the humble in spirit;** better, as the Revised Version, *he that is of a lowly spirit shall obtain honour* (comp. ch. xi. 16; Isa. lvii. 15). The humble man does not seek honour, but by his life and action unconsciously attains it (comp. Job xxii. 29). Septuagint, "Haughtiness brings a man low, but the lowly-minded the Lord upholdeth with glory."

Ver. 24.—**Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul.** The accomplice of a thief puts his own safety in danger. This is explained by what follows: **He heareth cursing, and bewrayeth it not;** better, *he heareth the adjuration, and telleth not.* This refers to the course of proceeding defined by Lev. v. 1, and intimated in Judg. xvii. 2. When a theft was committed, the person wronged or the judge pronounced an imprecation on the thief and on any one who was privy to the crime, and refrained from giving information; a witness who saw and knew of it, and was silent under this formal adjuration, has to bear his iniquity; he is not only an accomplice of a criminal, he is also a perjurer; one sin leads to another. Some commentators explain the first hemistich as referring only to the crime of receiving or using stolen goods, by which a man commits a crime and exposes himself to punishment; but it is best taken, as above, in connection with the second clause, and as elucidated thereby.

Ver. 25.—**The fear of man bringeth a snare.** He who, through fear of what man may do to him, think or say of him, does what he knows to be wrong, lets his moral cowardice lead him into sin, leaves duty undone,—such a man gets no real good from his weakness, outrages conscience, displeases God. See our Lord's words (Matt. x. 28; Mark viii. 38; and comp. Isa. li. 12, etc.). **Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe** (ch. xviii. 10). Such trust carries a man safe through all dangers; fearing to offend God, living as always under his eye, he feels Divine protection, and knows that whatever happens is for the best. The LXX. joins this to the preceding verse, thus: "He who shareth with a thief hateth his own soul; and if, when an oath is offered, they who hear it give no information, they fearing and reverencing men, are overthrown, but he that trusteth in the Lord shall rejoice." They add another rendering of the last verse, "Ungodliness causeth a man to stumble, but he who trusts in the Lord (ἐπὶ τῷ δεσπότῃ 2 Pet. ii. 1) shall be saved." Δεσπότης is used for *Jehovah* in the New Testament, *e.g.* Luke ii. 29; Acts iv. 24.

Ver. 26.—**Many seek the ruler's favour;** literally, *the countenance of the ruler.* A variation of ch. xix. 6. There are numbers who are always trying, by means fair or surreptitious, to curry favour with a great man who has anything to bestow (comp. 1 Kings x. 24; Ps. xlv. 12). **But every man's judgment cometh from the Lord.** The real and only reliable judgment comes, not from an earthly prince (who may be prejudiced and is certainly fallible), but from the Lord, whose approval or disapproval is final and indisputable. Therefore one should seek to please him rather than any man, however great and powerful (comp. 1 Sam. xvi. 7; Isa. xlix. 4; 1 Cor. iv. 5).

Ver. 27.—**An unjust man is an abomination to the just.** This great moral contrast, marked and universal, is a fitting close of the book. The word "abomination" (*toebah*) occurs more than twenty times in the Proverbs; it is appropriate here because the good man looks upon the sinner as the enemy of God, as the psalmist says, "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate

thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them thine enemies" (Ps. cxxxix. 21, etc.). He that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked; because he is a standing reproach to him, and by every tone and look and action seems to express his condemnation (see on ch. xxi. 15, and the Septuagint Version there; and comp. 1 Kings xxi. 20; Isa. liii. 3; Matt. viii. 34; John xv. 19). Septuagint, "A direct way is an abomination to the lawless." The Vulgate ends the chapter with a paragraph which is found in some manuscripts of the Septuagint after ch. xxiv. 22 (where see note), *Verbum custodiens filius extra perditionem erit.*

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*Hardened under reproof.* I. REPROOF MAY BE REJECTED. It is not violent and compulsory correction. We have free wills, and God does not destroy our wills in order to reform our conduct, for he only delights in voluntary obedience; but he sends warnings and chastises us as his children. This treatment should lead to repentance. Still, it is addressed to our reason, our conscience, our affections. Pharaoh repeatedly rejected Divine reproofs, when he refused to let the Hebrews go after each successive plague was removed. The Israelites in the wilderness murmured and rebelled again and again, in spite of continuous mercies and numerous sharp rebukes. God is often warning his children now. The faithful preaching of his truth is a rebuke to the thoughtless and the sinful. The interior voice of conscience utters its own solemn Divine reproof. If we sin heedlessly, we do not sin unwarned. The rejection of the reproof is no sign of its weakness or insufficiency. Even the warning words of Christ failed to arrest the wilful people of Jerusalem in their headlong race to destruction (Matt. xxiii. 37).

II. REPROOF IS REJECTED BY STUBBORN SELF-WILL. The neck is hardened. The obstinate man is like a horse that will not obey the reins; like one that has taken the bit into its teeth and will rush on in its own wild course. 1. *This implies determination.* One who was unreproved might plead ignorance or forgetfulness. Such an excuse cannot be put forward by the man who has been often reproved. His disregarded warnings will rise up in the judgment to condemn him. Meanwhile his continuous refusal to give heed to them is a sure sign of deliberate sinfulness. 2. *This also implies hardness of heart.* It is the hard heart that makes the neck hard. The stiff-necked generation is a stony-hearted generation. The repeated rejection of reproof tends to harden the heart more and more. The ear grows deaf to the often-neglected alarum.

III. REPROOF, WHEN REJECTED, IS FOLLOWED BY RUIN. The reproof is a warning. Its very sternness is inspired by love, because it is intended to guard the foolish soul against impending danger. But after this has been heard unheeded there can be no escape. 1. *There is no excuse.* The warning has been uttered. Everything possible has been done to arrest the downward career of the stubborn reprobate. 2. *There is double guilt.* The rejection of the reproof is an additional sin—an insult to the Divine righteousness and love. 3. *There can be no hope of escape.* The destruction may be sudden, after its long delay, and "that without remedy."

IV. REPROOF, WHEN HEEDED, LEADS TO RESTORATION. 1. *It contains hope.* For if there were no way of escape open the language of reproof would be wasted. In that case it would come too late, and might as well be spared. The sternest reproof is a call to repentance, and this call points to a restoration. 2. *It prepares for the gospel.* John the Baptist makes straight the way for Christ. After we have humbly submitted to reproof, we shall hear the joyous message of the gospel.

Ver. 2.—*The religion of politics.* I. RELIGION IS CONCERNED WITH POLITICS. Too often the two spheres are kept disastrously distinct. On the one hand, it is pretended that the sacred character of religion would be desecrated by its being dragged into the political arena; and on the other hand, the claim of religion to have a voice in public affairs is set down to the ambition and tyranny of priestcraft. Now, it is not to be supposed that purely religious subjects should be obtruded on the uncongenial platform

of a public meeting. Very possibly they would be resented; we are not to cast pearls before swine. Moreover, there is a time for everything. But religion claims to influence politics, to be a leading factor in public movements, to hold the standard by which all political actions are to be judged. It must do this if it is to carry out its mission of leavening the whole lump. It should leave no region of life untouched; commerce, literature, art, science, recreation, society, and politics must all come under its influence. For religion to withdraw from politics is to hand that important region of life over to the devil. We find that the Bible has much to say on the conduct of public affairs.

II. THE WELFARE OF A PEOPLE IS LARGELY DETERMINED BY THE MORAL CHARACTER OF THE GOVERNMENT. 1. *The principal influence of religion on politics must be moral.* In public life nice distinctions of creed, fine varieties of abstract dogma, and academic discussions of theoretical divinity are brushed aside as mere cobwebs compared to the serious, practical, present-day questions that are at stake. But the moral influence of religion does not belong to any of these categories. That influence is direct, practical, and real. The religion of politics is the morality of public life viewed in the light of God. 2. *The moral character of public affairs is of vital interest to the people.* States are ruined by immoral government. Bad passions stir up needless strife. Wicked greed, jealousy, or revenge are at the root of most wars. A government of a high moral character would have found a means of keeping the peace, where one of lower tone has plunged the nation into all the horrors of war. The right and peaceable relation of class to class within the community can only be preserved when justice and humanity are observed in the conduct of public affairs.

III. IT IS THE DUTY OF CHRISTIAN MEN TO SEE THAT THE RIGHTEOUS ARE IN AUTHORITY. 1. *In a system of popular government all who have a voice should make that voice heard.* It is a distinct dereliction of duty for any Christian man to withdraw from all influence in public life. It may be urged that the tone of that life is worldly. If so there is the more reason why unworldly men should enter it in order to give it a higher character. The Christian is not a recluse. He is called to be the salt of the earth, to season all society with wholesome thought and action. It is unfair to leave the burden of public affairs to others, and then to profit by their labours; and yet this is what is done by those people who are too devout to assist in the making of good laws, but by no means too devout to avail themselves of those laws when they are made. 2. *Religion will best influence politics by good men being at the head of affairs.* Good men will make good measures. It is therefore necessary to select men of high character for parliament and also for municipal offices.

Ver. 8.—*Scornful men.* The evil of a contemptuous treatment of life and duty is to be seen in many relations. Let us consider some of them.

I. SCORN FOR THE PEOPLE. This was the temper of the old monarchical and aristocratic systems. The mischief of it was seen in the explosion of the French Revolution. The "dim multitude" cannot be treated as so much chaff of the threshing-floor. The nation is the people. The first interest of the nation is the welfare of the great bulk of the population, not the luxury of what is regarded as "the cream of society."

II. SCORN FOR THE POOR. This was the attitude of the wealthy Jews in ancient Israel, which called forth stern rebukes from the prophets of God (*e.g.* Amos vi. 3—6); and the same fault was detected in the Christian Church by St. James (Jas. ii. 1—3). The indifference which too many of the prosperous feel for their hard-pressed, suffering brethren is one of the most dangerous symptoms of society. It lies at the root of socialism.

III. SCORN FOR INJUSTICE. In some cases there is worse than poverty; there is positive wrong-doing. The powerful oppress the weak. Strong masters hold down miserable slaves. This evil condition was a perpetual cause of danger to Rome in its most prosperous age. It is seen in the "sweating system" in England to-day.

IV. SCORN FOR DANGER. Misery and injustice are sources of danger. But other and direct dangers may menace a country. The scorn of pride will be no security against those dangers. We shall not be protected by singing, "Rule, Britannia," or by shouting, "Britons never shall be slaves."

V. SCORN FOR WICKEDNESS. The greatest danger of the state is not in poverty at

home; nor is it in war from abroad. It lies in the moral corruption of the people. Wholesale debauchery, widespread drunkenness, a perfect epidemic of gambling, profligacy, dishonesty,—these are the cankers that eat out the vital strength of a nation. Indifference to such evils is contempt for moral law.

VI. SCORN FOR RELIGION. In the race for wealth, in the dance of pleasure, in the mad orgy of worldly engagement, multitudes treat the claims of religion with scorn. Others, in their misery and despair, refuse to believe that any help or hope can come to them from heaven. This scornful attitude towards the first duties and the highest interests of life must be fraught with fatal consequences. Meanwhile the scornful attitude entirely excludes the beginnings of better things. Humility and repentance are impossible so long as this defiant mood is cherished.

Ver. 18.—*No vision!* The revelation of ancient prophecy was not continuous and uninterrupted, but it came in flashes, between which there were intervals of darkness. Sometimes those intervals were long and most distressing to a people that had learnt to draw its chief lessons from Divine oracles. Such a time was experienced in the days of Eli, for "the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no open vision" (1 Sam. iii. 1); and another and longer period was that of the "four centuries of silence" between the closing of the Old Testament and the opening of the New Testament.

I. MEN NEED A HEAVENLY VISION. This requirement was recognized in Israel on especial grounds, because the people felt themselves to be a divinely directed nation, with God for their King and Leader. The fading away of the prophet's vision would be like the vanishing of the pillar of cloud and fire in the wilderness; a necessary guidance would be lost. But heavenly visions are not less needed by all men. 1. *Men need to know heavenly truth.* (1) In order to do the will of God. The servant must know his master's will if he is to do his duty. Earthly knowledge is not enough. Heavenly messages are wanted, or the duty to God will be neglected. (2) For the saving of a man's own soul. We are not merely earthly animals. We are naturally related to heaven. To be starved of heavenly truth is to be left to perish in earthly-mindedness. 2. *Men cannot discover heavenly truth.* It must be revealed. Without a vision from God the world is in spiritual darkness.

II. MEN CAN HAVE A HEAVENLY VISION. God has not left his people to grope in a gross Cimmerian darkness. Light has fallen from heaven on earth. 1. *This is given in the Bible.* That record of old revelation enshrines a perpetual vision of God for all who have eyes to behold it. Therefore it is the duty of Christian people (1) to study the Scriptures, (2) to circulate them throughout the world, and (3) to teach and expound them to children and the ignorant. 2. *This is enjoyed in personal experience.* Every man can have his own vision, nay, must have it if he would really see truth. It is not to be supposed that everybody can be a Daniel or an Ezekiel, can behold Isaiah's wonderful vision of God (Isa. vi.) or St. John's glorious apocalypse of the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. xxi.). Much less is each man to look for his own separate gospel, and to feel called upon to write his own *newer* Testament. But in the understanding and appreciation of truth we must each see it for ourselves by the aid of a Divine inspiration. This was predicted by Joel of the new dispensation (Joel ii. 28), and claimed by St. Peter (Acts ii. 16—21).

III. MEN MAY LOSE THEIR HEAVENLY VISION. God is not capricious. If the Divine voice is silent, this must be because there are no obedient ears to receive it. The vision is only withdrawn when the eyes of men are so blinded by sin and worldliness that they cannot behold it. Then God may send a famine of the Word of truth (Amos viii. 11). It is a fearful thing to be incapable of seeing the truth of God or hearing his voice. But this condition is dependent on our own conduct. We blind our eyes against the light of heaven when we plunge into the mire of sin. We need to pray, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy Law" (Ps. cxix. 18). Christ came to open blind eyes (Luke iv. 18), and to give new visions of God's truth (John xviii. 37).

Ver. 25.—*The fear of man.* I. THE FEAR. 1. *In what it consists.* This fear is a dread of the disfavour of man, and its hurtful results. It may take various forms. (1)

Fear of human authority. Thus, in days of persecution, the weak shrink from martyrdom. Wrongs are often permitted for fear of the consequences of agitating against them. (2) Fear of the great. Some men have an awe of mere rank and station. They bow obsequiously before riches; they dread to oppose important personages. (3) Fear of society. "Mrs. Grundy" is regarded with awe. It is thought to be a dreadful thing to be out of the fashion. Social impropriety, in the eyes of the fastidious, is regarded as worse than moral delinquency. (4) Fear of the multitude. This is the new fear of man peculiarly mischievous in our democratic age. There is a danger lest men should concede to popular clamour what they do not believe to be good or right. (5) Fear of those we love. Perhaps this is the most difficult fear to resist (but see Matt. x. 37). 2. *How it originates.* (1) In cowardice. This is an unworthy fear. It is selfish and immoral. It springs from too much regard for our own feelings, and too little reverence for duty. (2) In godlessness. Man takes the place of God. The mob is deified. Human action is treated as supreme.

II. ITS SNARE. 1. *The deception of it.* (1) In regard to duty. Fear takes the place of conscience. It blinds us to the sense of right and wrong, blurring the great outlines of morality. Instead of asking, "What is right?" a person who is haunted by this shameful fear only inquires, "What is safe?" Now, there is no more self-deluded mortal than the man who is only sure of being "safe." When he folds his arms in smug complacency, he is really "in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity." (2) In regard to danger. Subservience to the opinion of other people can never afford real security. It is but a shallow and tricky device. We can never please all men, and in attempting to escape the wrath of one party we rouse that of another. If, however, the sleek time-server were clever enough to propitiate all human enmity, he would have left himself exposed to the far more terrible wrath of Heaven. 2. *The fatality of it.* This fear brings a snare. It entraps its unwary victim. When once the craven-hearted man is caught in the meshes of worldly fears, he finds it vain to struggle for liberty. This fear creates a miserable bondage. No serf under the old feudal system was more bound to his lord than the poor slave of public opinion is to his hydra-headed master. This wretched fear of man is fatal to all true manliness. It will make shipwreck of the most honourable career. The only needful fear is fear of doing wrong, fear of the devil (Matt. x. 28).

III. ITS ANTIDOTE. We are to find a refuge from the ensnaring fear of man by putting our trust in the Lord. God is mightier than the whole world. A howling mob hounding its victims to death cannot shake the confidence of one who has made the Lord his Refuge. Trust in God saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from cowardice when threatened by cruel Nebuchadnezzar and cast into the burning fiery furnace. Christ was calm and fearless before all his foes, fortified by the prayers of Gethsemane. We need to rise into a higher atmosphere above all the mists of popular opinion. Men may frown and rage, or laugh and ridicule; but he who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty (Ps. xci. 1).

"Earth may be darkness; Heaven will give thee light."

Ver. 26.—*The supreme Arbiter.* I. IT IS A COMMON MISTAKE TO ASCRIBE TO MAN THE INFLUENCE WHICH BELONGS ONLY TO GOD. In the previous verse we have been warned against falling into the snare of the fear of man, and encouraged to find our safety in trust in God. A similar contrast is again presented to us, but from the opposite side. We are tempted to flatter the great in order to win their favour; but we are now reminded that our destiny does not lie in their hands, but in the hands of One who is supreme in judgment, though his rule is too often ignored by us. Helena, in 'All's Well that ends Well,' says—

"It is not so with him that all things knows,
As 'tis with us that square our guess by shows;
But most it is presumption in us when
The help of Heaven we count the act of men."

1. This common mistake arises partly from the fact that the human influence is visible, while that of God is *unseen*. The molehill at our feet thus seems to be more important

than the mountain that bounds our horizon but is wrapped in mist. 2. It is also caused by the further fact that much of God's judgment is *postponed*. We do not yet experience the full effect of the Divine arbitrament.

II. GOD'S JUDGMENT WILL BE EXPERIENCED BY EVERY MAN. He is not only the Arbiter of the fate of those who call in his aid; he is the "Judge of all the earth" (Gen. xviii. 25). Abraham recognized the fact that God was the Judge of Sodom and Gomorrah, though no doubt the wicked cities of the plain utterly repudiated his authority. The godless will be judged by God. Those men who do not choose to put their case in the hands of God will nevertheless receive their sentence from him.

III. IT IS GOOD NEWS FOR THE WORLD THAT GOD IS THE SUPREME ARBITER. This is not set before us as a truth of terror. On the contrary, it is declared as a great consolation among the ills of life. 1. God is *just*. He is perfectly fair, utterly impartial, no Respecter of persons. Rich and poor stand on equal grounds before his judgment-seat. 2. God is *wise*. The most acute human judge may be deceived. But he that searcheth the heart knows all facts about all men. His judgment must be based on truth. 3. God is *strong*. He is able to execute his sentence. When he declares what is right, he will also establish his judgment.

IV. IT IS WELL FOR MEN TO ACKNOWLEDGE GOD AS THEIR ARBITER. We shall all have to submit to his judgment in the end. It would be wise for us to acknowledge his rule throughout life. Surely it is most fatally foolish to labour for the favour even of the most influential men, if this involves disregarding the thoughts and will of God. The verdict of the lower court will be overridden by the judgment of the higher court. Therefore what is most incumbent on all men is to see that they are right and straight in the eyes of the One supreme Judge. By sin, as we must acknowledge, we are all wrong in his eyes. Therefore no human favour can save us till we have been put right and justified through the grace of Christ.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—7.—*Private morality and the public weal.* 1. TRUTHS OF PERSONAL CONDUCT. 1. *The obstinate offender and his doom.* (Ver. 1.) The repeated complaint against Israel was that they were a "stiff-necked people." Self-willed, haughty, persistent, defying rebuke and chastisement, is the habit described. It invites judgment. "When lesser warnings will not serve, God looks into his quiver for deadly arrows." They who will not bend before the gentle persuasions of God's Holy Spirit must feel the rod. Men may make themselves outlaws from the kingdom of God. 2. *Wisdom and virtue inseparable in conduct.* (Ver. 3.) So much so that the same word may occasionally do duty for either notion. Thus the French mean by one who is "sage" one who is chaste and virtuous. The effects are alike. Joy is given to parents by the sage conduct of children; and vice is seen to be folly by the waste and want it brings in its train (comp. ch. vi. 26; x. 1; xxviii. 7). 3. *The dishonesty of flattery.* (Ver. 5.) It may be designed to deceive, and is then coloured with the darkest hue of treachery. Or it may be undesigned in its effects. But in either case, the web of flattering lies becomes a snare in which the neighbour stumbles to his fall (comp. ch. xxvi. 24, 25, 28). The kiss of the flatterer is more deadly than the hate of a foe. "When we are most praised for our discernment, we are apt to act most foolishly; for praise tends to cloud the understanding and pervert the judgment." 4. *Delusive and genuine joy.* (Ver. 6.) The serpent is concealed amidst the roses of illicit pleasures; a canker is at the core of the forbidden fruit. A "shadow darkens the ruby of the cup, and dims the splendour of the scene." But ever there is a song in the ways of God. See the example of Paul and Silas even in prison (Acts xvi. 25). "Always there are evil days in the world; always good days in the Lord" (Augustine, on Ps. xxxiii.).

II. THE INFLUENCE OF PERSONAL GOODNESS ON SOCIAL AND PUBLIC WEAL. 1. *The general happiness is dependent on the conduct of individuals.* (Ver. 2; comp. ch. xxviii. 12, 28.) For society is a collection of individuals. "It is no peculiar conceit, but a matter of sound consequence, that all duties are by so much the better performed, by how much the men are more religious from whose abilities the same proceed.

For if the course of political affairs cannot in any good sort go forward without fit instruments, and that which fitteth them be their virtues, let polity acknowledge itself indebted to religion, godliness being the chiefest, top, and well-spring of all true virtue, even as God is of all good things." "Religion, unfeignedly lived, perfecteth man's abilities unto all kinds of virtuous services in the commonwealth" (Hooker, 'Eccl. Pol.,' v. 1). 2. *The effect of just administration and of bribery.* (Ver. 4.) The best laws are of no avail if badly administered. God's throne is founded on justice (Ps. lxxxix. 14). And this only can be the foundation of national stable polity and of the common weal. "We will sell justice to none," says the Magna Charta. The theocracy was overthrown in the time of Samuel by the corruption of his sons. The just administration of David "bore up the pillars" of the land (2 Sam. viii. 15). The greed of Jehoiakim again shook the kingdom to its foundations (Jer. xxii. 13—19). Righteousness alone exalteth a nation. 3. *Justice to the poor.* (Ver. 7.) The good man enters into the feelings of others, and makes the lot of the oppressed, in sympathy and imagination, his own. The evil and hard-hearted man, looking at life only from the outside, treats the poor as dumb driven cattle, and easily becomes the tyrant and the oppressor. Peculiarly, sympathy, consideration, compassion for the lowly and the poor, have been infused into the conscience of the world, and made "current coin" by the example and spirit of the Redeemer.—J.

Vers. 8—11.—*Dishonourable passions.* Such is the designation given by St. Paul (see Revised Version of the New Testament, Rom. i. 26, etc.) to the various workings of the evil leaven in the soul. Here is a description of some of these "lusts."

I. SCOFFING. (Ver. 8.) Set on fire of hell, it inflames others, disturbs the peace of communities, produces failures and tumults in public life. But wisdom calms, and turns all things to the best. The scoffer, the malevolent critic of existing institutions, is a public pest; the judicious man, a public blessing. The one raises tumults, the other quells them.

II. CONTENTIOUSNESS. (Ver. 9.) It delights in dispute for dispute's sake. The man of this vice does not want to elicit truth, but to find fuel for his passion. Alternating between rage and ridicule, he uses words merely as weapons of offence and defence. Egotism is at the root of all his activity.

III. THE SANGUINARY TEMPER. (Ver. 10.) All hatred to the truth involves hatred to the truth-speaker and the truth-doer. Here lies the secret of all persecution and of all judicial murders. But in ourselves, whenever we detect the rising of resentment against him who exposes our faults or fallacies, we may find something of the dark temper of him "who was of the wicked one, and slew his brother" (1 John iii. 12).

IV. WANT OF SELF-CONTROL. (Ver. 11.) The impetuous, unbridled temper, which explodes with wrath at the smallest provocation, or with ill-considered opinions. He is wise who knows when to hold his peace. We are not always to speak all we feel or think, but when we do speak should ever think what we say. We must remember that "there is a time to speak, and a time to keep silence."—J.

Vers. 12—17.—*Government in truth and equity.* I. THERE MUST BE THE FORCE OF EXAMPLE. (Ver. 12.) Especially in regard to truthfulness. Nothing is more easily caught than an example of untruthfulness, evasion, hypocrisy. Servants' manners reflect their masters' characters. The more conspicuous the station, the further the influence of the example extends.

II. THERE MUST BE RESPECT TO THE RULER AND JUDGE OF ALL. (Ver. 13.) He is no Respecter of persons; but he is the Protector of all, and the Judge between man and man. The distinctions of ruler and subject, of rank and rank, of class and class, are temporary; the common relation of all to God is spiritual and eternal.

III. THERE MUST BE REGARD TO THE LOWLY. (Ver. 14.) Must not the test of every government be at last this—What did it accomplish for the poor, for the burdened, for the slave and the oppressed? "Glorious" wars and additions of territory can never compensate for injustice at home; the renown of arms for a people's misery. The throne that is not propped by bayonets, but built upon a people's gratitude and loyalty, may defy the storms of revolution.

IV. DOMESTIC GOVERNMENT TEACHES THE SAME TRUTHS ON A SMALLER SCALE.

(Vers. 15—17.) 1. There is the same need of firmness and discipline. Absolute liberty is licence. All our freedom is bounded by necessity. The good of the whole demands fixed law; and this must be observed in the household as in the body politic. A weakness in the administration of acknowledged law is fatal to the purity of the home, to the welfare of nations. Evil-doers must be kept down; if their character cannot be changed, their power to work mischief must be taken from them by the unflinching administration of law. And lastly, firmness, so far from alienating, really wins the good will, the respect, and obedience of subjects in the petty commonwealth of home and in the larger sphere of the state.—J.

Vers. 18—23.—*Fatal defects in the social state.* I. THE WANT OF COMMANDING RELIGIOUS TEACHING. The great prophets of Israel were the great instructors of the people. They declared Jehovah's living oracles; they made clear the eternal principles of the moral law; they forecast what *must* be the future under moral conditions. The Christian preacher has succeeded to the office of the Jewish prophet. Woe to the nation if the supply of preachers ceases! if, sunk in material interests, they are allowed to forget that the "Word of the Lord" lives and endures, and obedience to it must be the foundation of all private blessing, all public prosperity!

II. THE WANT OF FIRM POLICY AND CONDUCT. (Ver. 19.) There always will be a class more or less of "slaves," who must be governed, not by mere rhetoric or the appeal to feeling, but by the knowledge that words will be backed by deeds. God means what he says. The laws of nature are no mere abstract statements of truth; they are stern and solemn *facts*, which cannot be defied with impunity. And the lawless must understand that what *ought* to be *shall* be.

III. THE WANT OF CALM DELIBERATION. (Ver. 20.) Whether in private or in public life, this too may be a ruinous defect. Thus rash enterprises are begun, hostilities break out without warning, a lifelong alienation or the misery of a generation may spring from the passion or the pique of the moment.

IV. WANT OF DUE SEVERITY IN DISCIPLINE. (Ver. 21.) The exegesis of the verse certainly points to this meaning. Men are stung by the ingratitude or contumacy of those whom they had weakly petted, and whose faults they had nourished by their smiles. But human nature will only respond to just and true treatment; and injurious kindness will reap a thorny crop of ingratitude.

V. WANT OF SELF-CONTROL AND OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE. (Vers. 22, 23.) (For the first, see ch. xv. 18; xxviii. 25.) Wrath is the very hot-bed of transgression and every "evil work." And self-esteem is a neighbour vice. So near are extremes in life: the moment we are highest in our own imagination we are really lowest in power, in position, in prospect. "He that would build lastingly must lay his foundation low. As man falls by pride, he recovers by humility." And the more God honours men, the more they should humble themselves.—J.

Vers. 24—27.—*Prudence in alliance with religion.* I. PRUDENCE AND RELIGION ARE EVER IN HARMONY. There can be no divorce between them. We are not placed between cross-lights here. What intelligent regard to self prescribes, God's Law commands. Approach the facts of life from these two opposite sides, travel by either of these two paths, they meet at last in duty, in safety, in peace, and salvation.

II. SOME EXAMPLES OF THIS HARMONY. 1. *All dishonesty or complicity with it is self-destructive.* (Ver. 24.) Enlightened experience says so, and stamps itself in the clear dictum, "Honesty is the best policy." God's Word says so, and here and in a thousand similar declarations and warnings pronounces a curse upon the sin. 2. *Fear of man is perilous; confidence in the Eternal is safety.* (Ver. 25.) Experience again ratifies this. The coward dies a thousand deaths; the brave, but once. The feeble-hearted daily miss opportunities; the brave create them. Moral cowardice springs from want of inner conviction of the might of truth; moral strength, from the inner certainty that nothing but truth is victorious. Positive revelation here again fortifies the hints of common knowledge. 3. *The vanity of honour from others; the true honour that comes from God.* (Ver. 26.) What bitter things have been written down in the experience of men of the world concerning the favour of the great, and the folly of courting it and depending upon it! and how does the same lesson echo back from the page of Holy

Writ! Act well your part in Jehovah's sight; seek the honour that cometh from him only;—how common and Divine wisdom effect a juncture once more! 4. *Eternal antipathies.* (Ver. 27.) What experience teaches us in one form, that fellowship must be founded on sympathy, that tastes must be respected, that deep, undefinable feelings attract us to or repel us from others, God's Word again confirms: "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." Acquaintance is mere collocation of persons; friendship and Christian communism are the eternal affinity of souls in God.—J.

Ver. 1.—*The doom of obduracy.* There are four stages which conduct to spiritual ruin.

I. HUMAN DISLOYALTY. Man is found (or finds himself) at enmity with God; he does not reverence, love, honour, serve, him. He owes everything to his Maker and Preserver and generous Benefactor; but he has not paid his great debt, and now he is estranged in spirit, and his life is one of disloyalty and rebellion.

II. DIVINE SUMMONS TO RETURN. God is saying, "Return unto me, and I will return unto you;" "Let the wicked forsake his way . . . and let him return unto the Lord." By many messengers, in many voices, God calls us to repentance and reconciliation.

III. HUMAN RECUSANCY. God calls, but men will not hearken or they will not heed. They either (1) deliberately decline to listen; or they (2) do listen without being seriously impressed; or they (3) are impressed without coming to any right and wise decision; they linger and delay; they continually postpone; and every new procrastination makes indecision easier and delay more dangerous.

IV. DIVINE PATIENCE. God "bears long" with men. We see his merciful and wonderful patience when we look at: 1. *The time* during which he continues to them preservation and privilege. Through childhood and youth, through manhood and the days of decline, up to extreme old age, God continues to men his sustaining and preserving *power*, and all the fulness of Christian *privilege*; though all the while they are abusing his gift of life by retaining it for their own personal enjoyment, and his gift of opportunity by slighting, or despairing, or misusing it. 2. The *various means* he employs in order to reach and restore us. (1) God *invites* men, through his Word, and through the Christian ministry, and by the voices of the home and of human friendship. (2) He *commands*; he requires that all men should repent and believe. (3) He *warns*. (4) He *reproves*; he *often* reproves. "He that is often reproved;" and very commonly a disloyal heart *is* often rebuked of God. Time after time he receives the admonition of his fellows, or he suffers the penalty of his guilt. God makes him to understand that "the way of transgressors is hard;" the merciful hand of the Divine Father interposes many obstacles in the way of his children's ruin, that they may be stopped and may be led to return on their way. But sin does its fatal work of indurating the heart, of paralyzing the conscience, of blinding the eyes of the children of men; and the man who is "often rebuked" only "hardens his neck," and then comes the end—

V. SUDDEN AND IRREMEDIABLE RUIN. 1. Sometimes (perhaps *frequently*, in the case of those who are guilty of flagrant sin) the day of probation ends with startling suddenness: "They are brought into desolation in a moment." Death comes down upon them without any warning. In the full flow of iniquity their soul is that very night required of them, and they pass from guilt to judgment. 2. Commonly, the end comes without expectation, and so without preparation. Men are going on with the engagements and the indulgences of life; and they are *expecting to go on* indefinitely. Then comes the serious illness, the sick-chamber, the medical attendant, the anxious inquiry, the unfavourable response, the solemn communication, and the distressed and agitated soul has to say, "My hour is come, and I am not ready for its coming."—C.

Ver. 2.—(See homily on ch. xi. 10.)—C.

Ver. 5.—(See homily on ch. xxvii. 5, 6.)—C.

Ver. 7.—(See homily on ch. xix. 17.)—C.

Vers. 8—10.—*The senselessness of scorn, etc.* Here is a triplet of truths we may gather from these three texts.

I. THE SENSELESSNESS OF SCORN. (Ver. 8.) To be of a scornful spirit, to bestow scornful looks, to use scornful language,—this is gross folly. 1. *It is utterly unbecoming.* Not one of us is so removed above his fellows as to be entitled to treat with entire disregard what they may have to say or what they propose to do. 2. *The wisest men*, and even the Wise One himself, think well to listen to what the humblest can suggest. 3. It leads to a *blind opposition* to true wisdom; for often wisdom is found with those in whom no one expects to discover it; even as the scornful Greek and the proud Roman found it in the despised teachers from Judæa. 4. *It ends disastrously.* It "brings a city into a snare," "sets a city in a flame." It refuses to consider the serious danger that is threatened, or it provokes to uncontrollable anger by its disdainfulness; and the end is discord, confusion, strife. 5. *It deliberately neglects* the one way of peace. A wise man who does *not* refuse to listen and to learn, who prefers to treat neighbours and even enemies with the respect that is their due, "turns away wrath," and saves the city from the flame. Scorn is thus a senseless thing in every light.

II. THE USELESSNESS OF CONTENTION. (Ver. 9.) We are not to understand that it is a vain or foolish thing to endeavour (1) to enlighten the ignorant, or (2) to convince the mistaken. Where there is an honest and loyal spirit, it may be of great service to do this. What *is* useless is (3) to *debate with the contentious.* Nothing comes of it but the clatter of the tongue and the triumph of the complacent "fool." He may "rage" or he may "laugh;" he may passionately declaim or he may indulge in banter and in badinage, but he does not seek, and he will not find, the truth. He is no nearer to wisdom at the end than he was at the beginning. Time is wasted; the heart of the wise is disappointed; the wayward man is confirmed in his folly;—let him alone.

III. THE AIM OF THE UPRIGHT. This is twofold. 1. *Peace.* The wise man, who is the upright man, "turns away wrath;" and he objects to a contest with the contentious, because "there is no rest." Those in whom is the Spirit of Christ are always setting this before them as a goal to be reached; they speak and act as those that "make for peace." They feel that everything which can be should be avoided that makes for dissension and strife; they are the "peacemakers," and theirs is the blessing of the children of God (Matt. v. 9). 2. *Life.* They (the upright) "seek the soul," or the life, of the man whom the bloodthirsty hate (ver. 10). To "seek the soul" or the life of men is the characteristic of the good. (1) They care, in thought and deed, for the preservation and the protection of human life; they seek the removal of all that threatens it. (2) They care much for all that enlarges and ennobles human life—education, morality, sound discipline. (3) They care most of all for that one thing which crowns human life, and may be said to constitute it—the return of the soul to God and its life in him. In this deepest and truest sense they "seek his soul;" for they are regarding and pursuing its spiritual and eternal welfare.—C.

Ver. 11 (and see ch. xii. 16; xiv. 33).—*The time to be silent.* There is a time to keep silence as well as a time to speak (see Eccles. iii. 7). According to our individual temperament we need the one injunction or the other. There are few, however, of either sex or of any disposition who do not need to be urged to guard the door of the lip. This is one of those things in which we all offend in our time and in our way. *Impatience* most frequently leads to transgression; but there are other provocations—there are other occasions when the warning word is wanted. We should carefully command our tongue when there is in our mind—

I. THE IDEA OF ACHIEVEMENT. It is unwise to talk of what we are going to do as soon as it occurs to us to act. We may think ourselves capable or our circumstances favourable when, on further consideration or inquiry, we find that we are not equal to the task or that our position makes it impossible to us. We should *think* before we *undertake.*

II. THE THOUGHT OF IGNORANCE. Nothing but harm can come of counsel given in ignorance of any case before us. Either we persuade our friends and colleagues to take action which is unwise and will prove to be injurious and possibly disastrous; or we

are at once corrected by those who know better, and we are ashamed. Do not go to the council without learning the facts and understanding the matter, or else wait well and learn patiently before you speak at all.

III. THE FEELING OF RESENTMENT. "A fool uttereth all his anger, but a wise man keepeth it back and stilleth it" (Revised Version; ch. xii. 16). Nothing more distinctly marks the presence of wisdom or folly than the habit of speaking quickly or restraining speech under provocation. It is an unfailing criterion. The reasons for silence at such a time are obvious enough, and they should be strong enough. 1. Hasty speech is (1) very likely indeed to be incorrect, imperfect, if not wholly wrong, for our judgment is sure to be disturbed and unhinged when our spirit is wounded; (2) most likely to provoke our opponent to feel strongly and to strike severely, and thus the flood-gates of strife are opened; (3) unworthy of the wise and strong, lowering in the eyes of our best friends and in our own regard; (4) condemned of God (Jas. i. 19, 20). 2. Conscientious silence under provocation is (1) an admirable victory over our lower nature (ch. xvi. 32); (2) the way of peace in the council, in the home, in the Church; (3) the path in which we follow Christ our Lord, and gain his Divine approval (Matt. xxvii. 12; vi. 9).—C.

Ver. 13.—(See homily on ch. xxii. 2.)—C.

Vers. 15—17.—(See homily on ch. xiii. 24.)—C.

Ver. 18.—*Spiritual ignorance and obedience.* (See also homily on ch. xix. 2.) Two things are clear: 1. That God has provided us with many sources of knowledge. We have, for materials to work *with*, a very complex and richly endowed nature; and we have, for materials to work *upon*, (1) that same nature of ours with all its instincts, impulses, desires, hopes; (2) the great visible system around us into which we can constantly be looking, and of which we might be expected to learn much; (3) human life, and the providence of God as manifested therein. 2. That these sources of wisdom, which are constant and common to our race, prove to be lamentably insufficient. Man, under the dominion and depression of sin, cannot read aright the lessons which his own nature, the visible universe, and the providence of God are fitted and intended to teach him. He shows himself utterly incapable; he is completely false in his ideas, and pitiably wrong in his course of action. Hence we come to the conclusion of the text—

I. THE LAMENTABLE RESULT OF SPIRITUAL IGNORANCE. "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Where there is no special Divine revelation, supplementing the knowledge and correcting the ignorance of the unenlightened, there is a "perishing" or a "nakedness" in the land. The sad and miserable result, as all lands and all ages testify, is: 1. *Literal, physical death.* Without the knowledge of God, and in the absence of the control which the knowledge of his will can supply, (1) there is *strife*, violence, war, and of this death is the continual fruit; (2) there is *vice*, and this, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. 2. *Loss of character.* Not only of that which is sometimes understood by character, viz. *reputation*, but also of character itself. Where God's Word and will are unknown, there is such a deplorable descent into the erroneous and the immoral, that both of these go down and perish. 3. *Absence of spiritual life.* The life of our life is in God, and not only in his kindness to us, but in our knowledge of him. To be in utter ignorance of him, to have lost all belief in him, to be spending our days in spiritual separation from him,—is not this to be so destitute of all that beautifies and brightens, of all that enlarges and ennobles, human life, as to be "dead while we live"? So thought and taught the great Teacher and his great apostle (Luke ix. 60; John v. 24; 1 Tim. v. 6). It is not merely that there is a sad exclusion, at the end, from the heavenly kingdom; it is that spiritual ignorance of God *constitutes death*, and they who are living without God, and becoming more and more alienated from and unlike to him, are perishing "day by day."

II. THE BLESSEDNESS OF OBEDIENCE. "He that keepeth the Law," etc. Happy is the man who walks in the fear of God, in the love and the service of Jesus Christ; for: 1. He is walking in the path where all the worst evils cannot harm him; he is defended from "the evil which is in the world;" he is upheld in his purity and his integrity. 2. He is living a life which will command the esteem and win the love of the wise and

the worthy. 3. He abides under the wing of a heavenly Father's favour; he is enjoying the friendship of a Divine Saviour. 4. He is expending his powers in the conscious, the happy service of him "whose he is," and in whose service is true and lasting freedom. 5. He is exerting a benignant influence in every circle in which he moves. 6. He is travelling homewards.—C.

Vers. 20, 22.—(See homily on ver. 11.)—C.

Ver. 23.—(See homily on ch. xvi. 18.)—C.

Vers. 25, 26.—*Two temptations and two resources.* As responsible human souls, we find ourselves exposed to two dangers, and we have two sources of refuge and strength of a very similar character.

I. TWO TEMPTATIONS. 1. To be unduly affected by the fear of man's displeasure. "The fear of man," etc. Now, the fear of man: (1) May be *dutiful.* It is the duty of children to have a reverential regard for their parents, and to shun most carefully their disapproval. There is a "fear" appropriate to servants (Eph. vi. 5). We should fear to dissatisfy those who have a right to our faithful service. (2) May be *desirable.* We should, as wise co-workers with God, fear to do that which, instead of conciliating, will disaffect those whom we want to win to righteousness and wisdom. But the fear of which Solomon writes (3) *is dishonourable and dangerous.* It is a fear which is born of cowardice, a slavish disinclination to encounter the anger or the opposition of those who are in the wrong. It is an undue concern about the action of those who may claim a right, but who cannot sustain it, to keep us back from duty or to compel us to some unworthiness. By this unmanly and unholy fear we may be (1) prevented from entering the kingdom or the Church of Christ; (2) deterred from speaking his truth with fulness and faithfulness; (3) hindered from bearing the testimony we should otherwise offer against some evil course; (4) led into actual and even active fellowship with wrong. Then, indeed, our fear is "a snare," and it betrays us into sin. 2. To be unduly impelled by a desire for man's favour. "Many seek the ruler's favour." There is, of course, nothing wrong in seeking the interest of the powerful. It is simple wisdom, on the part of those who are struggling and rising, to do that. But it may easily be and often is overdone. Our Lord used very decisive language on this subject (John v. 44). When (1) the desire is excessive; (2) language is used or action is taken which is untruthful or dishonest, or which makes a man fall in his own regard; (3) there is so much solicitude that a man loses self-reliance as well as self-respect, and forgets the help which is to be had from above;—then "seeking the ruler's favour" is a mistake, and even more and worse than that.

II. TWO SOURCES OF STRENGTH. 1. *A sense of Divine approval.* "Every man's judgment cometh from the Lord." Why be troubled about man's condemnation so long as we have his acquittal? Let Judas complain, if Jesus excuses and commends (John xii. 1—8). Let the critics pass their sentence; it is a small thing to a man who is living under an abiding sense that "he that judgeth him is the Lord" (1 Cor. iv. 3, 4; Rom. ii. 29).

> "Men heed thee, love thee, praise thee not;
> The Master praises;—what are men?"

And it is not only the *present* judgment and acceptance of God to which we have recourse, but his *future* judgment also, and the commendation he will pass upon our fidelity (see Rom. xiv. 10—13; 1 Cor. iv. 5). 2. *A hope of Divine succour.* "Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe." Again and again, in the Old and New Testaments, by psalmists and prophets and apostles, as well as by our Lord himself, we are invited and exhorted to "put our trust in the Lord;" and we are assured that, so doing, we shall not be ashamed. If God does not deliver us *from* our enemies, and from the trouble they occasion us, he will certainly deliver us *in* our adversity; he will give us strength to endure, grace to submit, courage to bear and brave the worst, sanctity of spirit as the result; he will turn the well of our affliction into a fountain of spiritual blessing.—C.

Ver. 27.—*How to hate the wicked.* There is a hatred we have to endure, and there is also a hatred which we have to cherish. The question of any difficulty is—What is the feeling we should cultivate in our hearts towards the guilty? We may glance at—

I. THE HATRED OF US BY THE WICKED. "He that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked." 1. This is a well-verified *fact*, attested by Scripture, by history, by observation, probably by experience. 2. Its explanation is at hand. (1) Wicked men are utterly out of sympathy with the righteous. Their tastes, inclinations, habits, are all at variance with those of the good and pure. (2) The upright are obliged to condemn them, either in private or in public. (3) The life of the one is a standing reflection upon the conduct of the other. 3. There is one right way to meet it; viz. (1) to *endure* it as Jesus Christ endured it (Heb. xii. 3; 1 Pet. ii. 23), and as seeing the invisible but present and approving Lord (Heb. xi. 27); (2) to make an honest effort to remove it by winning those who indulge it. But the more difficult question is how we are to bear ourselves toward those whose conduct we reprobate, whose character we detest, whose persons we are not willing to admit into our homes. How shall we order—

II. OUR HATRED OF THE WICKED? That there is a very strong feeling *against* the wrong-doer in the minds of the holy is obvious enough. It is a fact that "an unjust man *is* an abomination to the just." "Do not I hate them that hate thee? . . . I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies," said David (Ps. cxxxix. 21, 22). Jesus Christ "looked round about on them with anger" (Mark iii. 5). God is "angry with the wicked every day" (Ps. vii. 11). He "hateth all the workers of iniquity" (Ps. v. 5). Our feeling, therefore, is the reflection of that which is in the heart of the Holy One himself. Of what elements should it be composed? 1. *One element that should be absent.* There should be no trace of personal ill will, of a desire for the suffering of the man himself; for the soul of the sinful we should wish well, and we fall into a mistake, if not into a sin, when we allow ourselves to find a pleasure in witnessing or in dwelling upon the humiliation or the sorrow of the wicked. We ought only to wish for that as a means of their purification and recovery. 2. *The elements that should be present.* (1) Pure resentment, such as God feels, such as our Lord felt when he lived amongst us (see Matt. xxiii.),—a feeling of strong reprobation, which we are obliged to direct against them *as the doers* of unrighteousness. (2) Faithful but measured condemnation. There is, in this view, a time to speak as well as a time to keep silence; and both publicly and privately it behoves us to blame the blameworthy, and even to denounce the shamefully unjust or cruel. But here we are bound to take care that we are well acquainted with the matter on which we speak, and that our judgment is an impartial one. (3) Fearless and unflinching opposition. We must actively and steadfastly oppose ourselves to the iniquitous, and do our best to bring their purposes to the ground. (4) Sincere and practical compassion. With all this that is adverse, we may and should conjoin such pity as our Divine Saviour has felt for ourselves, and such honest and earnest endeavour to win them to the truth and to the practice of righteousness as he put forth when he came to redeem us from sin and to raise us to the likeness and restore us to the kingdom of God.—C.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XXX.

Vers. 1—33.—Part VII. FIRST APPENDIX TO THE SECOND COLLECTION, containing "the words of Agur." A short introduction, teaching that the Word of God is the source of wisdom (vers. 1—6), is followed by apothegms on different subjects (vers. 7—33). Cornelius à Lapide offers the following opinion concerning this appendix, which no one can hesitate to say is well founded, if he attempts to give it a spiritual interpretation, and to discern mysteries under the literal meaning: "Quarta hæc pars elegantissima est et pulcherrima, æque ac difficillima et obscurissima: priores enim tres partes continent Proverbia et Parœmias claras, ac antithesibus et similitudinibus perspicuas et illustres; hæc vero continet ænigmata et gryphos insignes, sed arcanos

et perdifficiles, tum ex phrasi quæ involuta est et ænigmatica, tum ex sensu et materia, quæ sublimis est et profunda."

Ver. 1.—**The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, even the prophecy.** This seems to be the correct rendering of the passage, though it has been made to bear very different interpretations. It is plainly the title of the treatise which follows. Who Agur and Jakeh were is utterly unknown. The Jewish interpreters considered that "Agur son of Jakeh" was an allegorical designation of Solomon—*Agur* meaning "Gatherer," or "Convener" (see Eccles. i. 1; xii. 11); *Jakeh*, "Obedient," or "Pious," which thus would indicate David. St. Jerome somewhat countenances the allegorical interpretation by translating, *Verba Congregantis, filii Vomentis*, "The words of the Collector, son of the Utterer." But what follows could not apply to Solomon; he could not say, "I have not learned wisdom" (ver. 3), or ask blindly after the Creator (ver. 4). Many have endeavoured to find Agur's nationality in the word that follows, translated "the prophecy" (הַמַּשָּׂא, *hamassa*). *Massa*, "burden," is usually applied to a solemn prophetical speech or oracle, a Divine utterance (Isa. xiii. 1; xv. 1, etc.), and as this designation was deemed inappropriate to the character of this appendix, it has been thought that allusion is here made to a land of Massa, so called after a son of Ishmael (Gen. xxv. 14), who dwelt in the country of Edom or Seir, and whose inhabitants were among those children of the East whose wisdom had become proverbial (1 Kings iv. 30). Others find Massa in the Hauran, or on the north of the Persian Gulf. The Venetian Version gives, Λόγοι Ἀγούρου υἱέως Ἰακέως τοῦ Μασάου. But we have no satisfactory account of a country thus called, and its existence is quite problematical; therefore the ingenious explanations founded on the reality of this *terra ignota* need not be specified (see Introduction, pp. xxi., etc.). Grätz has suggested that in place of *hamassa* should be read *hammoshel*, "the proverb-writer;" but this is a mere conjecture, unsupported by any ancient authority. If, as seems necessary, we are compelled to resign the rendering, "of Massa," or "the Massan," we must fall back on the Authorized Version, and consider the term "oracle" as applied loosely and abnormally to these utterances of wisdom which follow. That they are not of the nature of Divine communications can be seen at once by consideration of their contents, which are mainly of human, and not of the highest type, and, though capable of spiritual interpretation, do not possess that uniqueness of purpose, that religious character and elevation of subject, which one expects in the enunciations of an inspired prophet. This view does not militate against their claim to be regarded as Holy Scripture; their place in the canon is secured by other considerations, and is not affected by our suspicion of the inappropriateness of the term applied to them; and, indeed, it may be that the very human element in these utterances is meant to be unsatisfying, and to lead one to look for the deep spiritual truths which underlie the secular surroundings. Agur is some poet or moralist, well known in Solomon's time, probably one of the wise men referred to in ch. xxiv. 23 (see below). The rest of the paragraph is of greater obscurity than the former portion. **The man spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal.** According to this rendering, the man is Agur, who is introduced as uttering what follows in ver. 2, etc., to Ithiel and Ucal, two of his sons, pupils, or companions. The name Ucal occurs nowhere else in the Old Testament; Ithiel is found once, in Neh. xi. 7, as the name of a Benjamite. Wordsworth regards the names as symbolical of the moral character of those whom the author designs to address, explaining the former as equivalent to "God with me," and the latter as denoting "consumed" with zeal, or "strong," "perfect." It is as if the writer said, "You must have God with you; yea, you must have God with you, if you are to be strong. You must be Ithiels, if you are to be Ucals." He refers to 1 Cor. xv. 10; 2 Cor. iii. 5; Phil. iv. 13. That the Masorites regarded these words as proper names is evident; אֻכָל, indeed, can have no other application. The Syriac takes this view of the words; to the same opinion lean, more or less, the Jewish translators Aquila and Theodotion, Aben Ezra, Vatablus, Pagninus, and others, and it is the simplest and easiest solution of the difficulties which have been seen in the clause. But many modern commentators have declared against it; *e.g.* Hitzig, Zöckler, Delitzsch, Böttcher, Nowack. The repetition of *Ithiel* seems unmeaning; one sees no reason why it should be repeated more than *Ucal*. The second verse begins with כִּי, which, as Hebraists agree, cannot stand abruptly at the commencement of a discourse, but rather establishes something that has preceded. But if we take the words in dispute as proper names, no statement to be confirmed has been made. We are, then, constrained to take them in another sense. St. Jerome translates them, writing, *Visio quam loootus est vir, cum quo est Deus, et qui Deo secum morante confortatus*. The LXX. (which introduces vers. 1—14 of this chapter after ch. xxiv. 23) gives, "These things saith the man

to those who believe God, and I cease;" τοῖς πιστεύουσι Θεῷ being the translation of the doubled *Ithiel*, equivalent to "God with me," and ואכל (*πανόμαι*) being considered to be a formation from the root כלה. Ewald takes the two words to be the name of one man, equivalent to "God with me, so I am strong;" in his own language, *Mitmirgott—sobinich stark;* but his idea of a dialogue between the rich mocker (vers. 2—4) and the humble believer (vers. 5—14) is not well founded, though a late editor, Strack, agreeing, considers that the only possible interpretation of these verses (2—4) is to make the speaker utter them as the outcome of his unbelief and scoffing, to which Agur answers in ver. 5. Under all circumstances, it has seemed to many scholars best to surrender the notion of proper names, and, altering the vocalization, to interpret, "The oracle of the man, 'I have wearied myself, O God, I have wearied myself, O God,'" or, as others say, "about God." The utterance commences here, and not at ver. 2. The repetition forcibly expresses the laborious and painful investigation of the seeker after truth. The final word, vocalized וְאֻכַל, is rendered, "And I have withdrawn;" or, as Bickell, quoted by Cheyne, gives, *v'lo ukal*, "I have not prevailed." We arrive thus at this interpretation: first comes the superscription, "The words of Agur," etc., "the oracle of the man;" then begins the utterance, which opens with the melancholy avowal that, though he had longed and striven to know God, his nature, his attributes, his working, he had failed in this object, and expended his labour in vain. Both Agur, and Lemuel who is named in ch. xxxi. 1, seem to have been persons not of Israelitish nationality, but dwelling in the neighbourhood of Palestine, and acquainted with the religion and sacred literature of the chosen people (see ver. 5). It is by no means unlikely that they were of the race of Ishmael, from which stock many wise men had risen, and where wisdom was so cultivated as to have become proverbial (see Jer. xlix. 7; Obad. 8). In what follows Agur shows himself as a philosopher and a critic, but at the same time a firm believer.

Vers. 2 and 3 confirm what is said in ver. 1 concerning the fruitlessness of the investigation there mentioned; the more he sought and studied, the more conscious he became of his own ignorance and of God's incomprehensibility.

Ver. 2.—**Surely I am more brutish than any man.** "Surely" (*ki*) should be "for" (see note on ver. 1). Cheyne, "I am too stupid for a man;" I am a mere irrational beast (comp. ch. xii. 1; Ps. lxxiii. 22). **And have not the understanding of a man.** I am not worthy to be called a man, as I possess not the intellectual faculty which a man ought to have. This is not ironical, as if he did not desire the statement to be taken in its full sense, and meant to say, "Of course it is my own stupidity that is in fault;" but it is a genuine confession of incompetence to investigate the subject-matter, which is too mysterious for his mental powers to penetrate. Thus Solomon acknowledges that he is but a little child, and prays for an understanding heart (1 Kings iii. 7, 9; comp. Wisd. ix. 5; Matt. xi. 25).

Ver. 3.—**I neither learned wisdom.** With all my eager longing and striving I did not attain to such wisdom, **that I should have the knowledge of the Holy One** (Revised Version margin); *k'doshim*, plural of "excellence," like *elohim* (ch. ix. 10; Hos. xii. 1 (Hebrew); see note on ch. i. 20; and comp. Eccles. v. 8; xii. 1). The knowledge of the all-holy God was beyond his grasp (Job xi. 7, etc.). Theology is a higher science than metaphysics, and cannot be reached by that ladder. The LXX. gives an affirmative sense to this verse, "God hath taught me wisdom, and I know the knowledge of the holy (ἁγίων)."

Ver. 4.—The questions contained in this verse are such as compelled Agur to acknowledge his ignorance and nothingness before the thought of the glory and power of the great Creator. We may compare Job xxxviii., etc. **Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended?** Who is he that hath his seat in heaven, and doeth works on earth? Who is he whose universal providence is felt and experienced? Where is this mysterious Being who hides himself from human ken? Christ has said something like this, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven" (John iii. 13); and St. Paul (Eph. iv. 9). In biblical language God is said to come down from heaven in order to punish, to aid, to reveal his will, etc. (Gen. xi. 7; Ps. xviii. 9, etc.); and he returns to heaven when this intervention is finished (Gen. xvii. 22; xxxv. 13). **Who hath gathered the wind in his fists?** Who hath the control of the viewless wind, so as to restrain it or release it at his pleasure? (Ps. cxxxv. 7; Amos iv. 13). Septuagint, "Who hath gathered the winds in his bosom (κόλπῳ)?" **Who hath bound the waters in a garment?** The waters are the clouds which cover the vault of heaven, and are held, as it were, in a garment, so that, in spite of the weight which they contain, they fall not upon the earth. As Job says (xxvi. 8), "He bindeth

up the waters in his thick clouds; and the cloud is not rent under them." And again (xxxviii. 37), "Who can number the clouds by wisdom? or who can pour out the bottles of heaven?" So the psalmist, "Thou coveredst it [the earth] with the deep as with a vesture" (Ps. civ. 6). (See above, ch. viii. 27, etc.) **Who hath established all the ends of the earth?** Who hath consolidated the foundations, and defined the limits, of the remotest regions of the earth? (comp. Job xxxviii. 4, etc.). The answer to these four questions is "Almighty God." He alone can order and control the forces of nature. **What is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?** or, *if thou knowest*. It is not enough to acknowledge the power and operation and providence of this mysterious Being; Agur longs to know more of his nature, his essence. He must have personality; he is not an abstraction, a force, a quality; he is a Person. What, then, is his name, the name which expresses what he is in himself? Men have different appellations for this Supreme Being, according as they regard one or other of his attributes: is there one name that comprehends all, which gives an adequate account of the incomprehensible Creator? The question cannot be answered affirmatively in this life. "We know that if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is" (1 John iii. 2). The further question, "What is his son's name?" has given some difficulty. The LXX. has, "What is the name of his children (*τοῖς τέκνοις αὐτοῦ*)?" as if there was reference to Israel, the special children of God. But the original does not bear out this interpretation, which is also opposed to the idea of the enigma proposed. The inquiry might mean—Are we to apply to the Supreme Being the same notion of natural relationship with which we are familiar in the human family? But this seems a low and unworthy conception. Or the "son" might be primeval man (Job xv. 7) or the sage; but the answer would not be satisfactory, and would not tend to solve the great question. There are two replies which can be made to Agur's interrogation. Looking to the marvellous description of Wisdom in ch. viii. 22, etc., we may consider Wisdom to be a denotation of the Son of God, and the inquirer desires to know the name and nature of this personage, of whose existence he was certified. Or he may have arrived at a knowledge of the only begotten Son of God, as the idea of the Logos is more or less developed in the Book of Wisdom, in Philo's treatises, and in the Alexandrian school; and longs for more perfect knowledge. This, indeed, is hidden: "He hath a name written, which no one knoweth but he himself" (Rev. xix. 12). It is useless to put such question to a fellow-man; no human mind can fathom the nature of the Godhead, or trace out its operations (Ecclus. xviii. 4, etc.).

Vers. 5, 6.—The following tetrastich is connected with what has preceded in this way: As the light of nature and metaphysical speculation are of no avail in obtaining the perfect knowledge of God which the seeker craves, he must be all the more thankful for the revealed Word of God, which teaches him as much as he is capable of learning.

Ver. 5.—**Every word of God is pure.** "Word" is here *imrah*, which does not occur elsewhere in our book, which is the case also with *Eloah*, the term used for "God." Every declaration of God in the inspired record, the Torah, is pure, as if refined in the fire (Ps. xviii. 30). Vulgate, *Omnis sermo Dei est ignitus;* Septuagint, "All the words of God are tried in the fire (*πεπυρωμένοι*)." God's words are true, sincere, with no mixture of error, certain of accomplishment (comp. Ps. xii. 6; cxix. 140). **He is a shield.** He is perfect protection to all those who, relying on the word of revelation, fly to him for refuge (see on ch. ii. 7). The knowledge of God is obtained in two ways—by his revelation in his Word, and by the experience of those who trust in him.

Ver. 6.—**Add thou not unto his words.** God's will, as announced in revelation, is to be simply accepted and acted upon, not watered down, not overstrained. This injunction had already been given in the old Law (Deut. iv. 2; xii. 32); it is repeated in the New Testament with awful emphasis (Rev. xxii. 18, 19). No human speculations or traditions may be mingled with God's words; the glosses and explanations and definitions, affixed by rabbinical ingenuity to plain enactments, and proved to be false in morality and fatal to vital religion, are a commentary on the succeeding sentence, **Lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.** The reproof is found in the consequences of such additions; the results to which they lead are such as show that he who asserts that these things are contained in the Word of God is a liar.

Vers. 7—9.—A mashal ode, containing two requests, and a *rationale* of the latter. The matter of the two prayers connects it with ver. 6, whether we consider that the limitation of man's desire follows naturally the limitation of his knowledge (Plumptre),

or that the warning against being reproved as a liar is corroborated by the prayer against vanity and lies (but see below, on ver. 9). It is the first of Agur's numerical proverbs.

Ver. 7.—**Two things have I required of thee.** The personal pronoun applies to God, who, according to our interpretation, has been invoked in ver. 1; otherwise it stands without reference to anything preceding. **Deny me not before I die;** *i.e.* grant me these two things for the rest of my life. Septuagint, "Take not grace (*χάριν*) from me before I die."

Ver. 8.—Here is the first request: **Remove far from me vanity and lies.** *Shav*, "vanity," is inward hollowness and worthlessness, and "lies" are the expression of this in words. The prayer might indeed be taken as an entreaty against being polluted with the companionship of the evil, like "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil;" but it is best taken subjectively, as a supplication for personal truthfulness and sincerity in all relations both towards God and man. **Give me neither poverty nor riches.** Both extremes are deprecated: the mean is the safest and the happiest. Horace, 'Carm.,' iii. 16. 42—

"Multa petentibus
Desunt multa; bene est, cui deus obtulit
Parca, quod satis est, manu."

"The 'ever craving' is Want's slave and thrall;
The gods most wisely thus their gifts accord,
Giving 'enough,' they amply give to all."
(Stanley.)

Theognis, 'Parœn.,' 1155—

Οὐκ ἔραμαι πλουτεῖν οὐδ' εὔχομαι, ἀλλά μοι εἴη
Ζῆν ἀπὸ τῶν ὀλίγων, μηδὲν ἔχοντι κακόν.

"I want not wealth; I only ask to live
On frugal means without corroding care."

**Feed me with food convenient for me;** literally, *give me to eat the bread of my portion;* that which by God's providence is determined for me (comp. Gen. xlvii. 22, which speaks of the portion assigned for the support of the priests; Job xxiii. 14; and below, ch. xxxi. 15). It is natural to refer to *τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον* of the Lord's Prayer (Matt. vi. 11); but the idea is not the same. In the latter, bread for the needs of the coming day is meant; in our passage it is more indefinite, a casting one's self on the Divine love, in readiness to take what that love assigns. "Having food and covering," says St. Paul (1 Tim. vi. 8), "we shall be therewith content." Septuagint, "Appoint for me what is necessary and what is sufficient (*τὰ δέοντα καὶ τὰ αὐτάρκη*)."

Ver. 9.—The reason for the latter prayer follows, unless, as some consider, the prayer is one, as if Agur asked, "Take from me riches which lead to vanity, and poverty which leads to lying and deceit." In this case the ground of the request would embrace both parts of the petition. **Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord** (*Jehovah*)? Great wealth and temporal prosperity tempt to forgetfulness of God, to self-confidence and practical unbelief in Divine providence. Like Pharaoh, the haughty rich man asks with scorn, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" (Exod. v. 2; comp. Deut. viii. 12, etc.; Job xxi. 14, etc.; Ps. xiv. 1). Septuagint, "Lest being filled I become false, and say, Who seeth me?" **Or lest I be poor, and steal;** lest my necessities lead to dishonesty. **And take the name of my God in vain.** The verb *taphas* means "to grasp at, seize violently, handle roughly," and the sin intended may be either false swearing in denial of his theft and to escape punishment, or the arraignment of God's providence which has allowed him to fall into such distress. Thus Isa. viii. 21, "They shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry; and it shall come to pass that, when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God." In view of the proverbs that follow, the clause seems to be best taken of the blasphemy attending on impatience and want of resignation to God's will (comp. ch. xix. 3).

Ver. 10.—**Accuse not a servant unto his master.** Calumniate, slander not; *μὴ καταλαλήσῃς*, Theodotion; *μὴ διαβάλῃς*, Symmachus. Do not secretly bring a charge against a man's slave, and make his master suspicious of him; have a kind feeling for those in lowly condition, and do not render their lot more unbearable by insinuating false or frivolous accusations against them. Ewald and others would render, "Entice not a servant to slander his master;" but there is no need so to take the expression, as the hiph. of the verb is used in post-biblical Hebrew in the sense of "to calumniate." The Septuagint has, "Deliver not a servant into the hands of his master," which seems to refer to the treatment of runaway slaves (Deut. xxiii. 15). **Lest he curse thee, and thou be found guilty,** and have to atone for it. The slandered slave imprecates a curse on his slanderer, and, as the latter has incurred vengeance by his word or action, the curse will not fall harmless (ch. xxvi. 2); God's righteous retribution will overtake him, and he shall suffer for it.

Vers. 11—31 contain six groups of four

sentences each, each quaternion having a certain connection in language and concinnity of idea. First (vers. 11—14) come four generations that are evil—four being taken as the symbol of universality. The sins herein specified had become so general that they affected the whole generation.

Ver. 11.—**There is a generation that curseth their father.** The words, "there is," are not found in the Hebrew, and the four subjects are without a predicate. Delitzsch calls the group "a mutilated priamel," which is explained to be a kind of gnomic poetry containing a series of antecedents or subjects followed by an epigrammatic conclusion applicable to all the antecedents. In the present case the conclusion is wanting, so that we are left in doubt whether the author meant merely to describe classes of men in his own time or to affirm that such are abominable. Septuagint, "A wicked generation curseth its father (*ἔκγονον κακόν*)," which expression is repeated at each of the four verses. The first sin is that which offends against the commandment to honour and obey parents. This was judged worthy of death under the old Law (Exod. xxi. 17; see ch. xx. 20, and note there). **And doth not bless their mother.** This is a *litotes*, "not to bless" being equivalent to "to curse."

Ver. 12.—**A generation that are pure in their own eyes** (ch. xx. 9). The second characteristic is hypocrisy and Pharisaical self-righteousness (see Luke xviii. 11). **And yet are not washed from their filthiness**; have not cleansed their heart by complete repentance, either because they have not examined themselves and know nothing of the real state of their conscience, or because they care nothing about it and will not regard it in its true light. There is a similar expression in Isa. iv. 4. Septuagint, "A wicked generation judgeth themselves to be just, but have not washed themselves clean (*τὴν ἔξοδον αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἀπένιψεν*)."

Ver. 13.—**A generation, oh, how lofty are their eyes!** The third sin is pride and arrogance (see on ch. vi. 17; xxi. 4). "Lord," said the psalmist, "my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty" (Ps. cxxxi. 1). The prophet rebukes "the stout heart of the King of Assyria and the glory of his high looks" (Isa. x. 12). **Their eyelids are lifted up**; in supercilious disdain. "Inde Proverbio dicimus," says Erasmus ('Adag.'), "attolli supercilium, fastidium indicantes" (*s.v.* "Arrogantia").

Ver. 14.—**A generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives.** The fourth evil is insatiable cupidity, which leads to oppression and injurious treatment of the helpless and poor, which makes men as cruel and remorseless in destroying others and despoiling them of their substance, as the very steel which they use in their operations. Similarly, the psalmist speaks of his enemies as men "whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword" (Ps. lvii. 4; comp. Isa. ix. 12; Jer. v. 17). **To devour the poor from off the earth**; *i.e.* so as to be no more seen in the world. Amos viii. 4, "Hear this, O ye that would swallow up the needy, and cause the poor of the land to fail" (comp. Ps. xiv. 4).

Vers. 15, 16.—Having spoken of insatiate cupidity, the writer now introduces four things which are insatiable. The form of the apothegm is climacteric, mounting from two to three, and thence to four, like the famous passage in Amos i. 3, etc. (comp. ch. vi. 16, though there is no special stress there laid on the last member of the climax; Job v. 19; xxxiii. 29; Eccles. xi. 2).

Ver. 15.—**The horseleach hath two daughters, crying, Give, give.** The word "crying" is not in the Hebrew, which says, "The *alukah* hath two daughters: Give! Give!" The insatiable appetite of this creature is represented by two words, which are personified as daughters, whom the mother has produced and dearly loves. This word *alukah* is not found again in the Old Testament; but in later Hebrew and in Aramaic it means "leech" or "blood-sucker;" and so it is translated by the Septuagint, *βδέλλα*, and by St. Jerome *sanguisuga*. The word is derived from a root which in Arabic means "to adhere." There are several kinds of leeches common in Palestine, and their bloodthirsty nature is well known; as Horace says, 'Ars Poet.,' 476—

"Non missura cutem, nisi plena cruoris, hirudo."

It seems simple and quite satisfactory to accept the word thus, and to see in the voracity of the leech an example of the greed further developed in the following clauses; but commentators have not been contented with this explanation, and have offered various suggestions which are either unnecessary or inadmissible. Thus the Talmud considers *alukah* to be an appellation of hell, and the two daughters to be the Power of the world, and Heresy. Some of the Fathers regard it as a symbol of the devil and his dominion; others, as a personification of cupidity with its two offshoots, avarice and ambition. Some moderns deem it to mean a vampire or bloodthirsty demon, a ghoul, in accordance with Eastern myth. But, as we have said, such interpretations are unnecessary and unsupported by sufficient authority. The allusion to the

tastes of the leech is found elsewhere. Thus Theocritus, 'Idyll.,' ii. 55—

Αἲ, αἲ, ἔρως ἀνιαρέ, τί μευ μέλαν ἐκ χροὸς αἷμα
Ἐμφὺς ὡς λιμνᾶτις ἅπαν ἐκ βδέλλα πέπωκας;

And Plautus, 'Epidic.,' ii. 2. 5—

"Jam ego me convortam in hirudinem atque
Eorum exsugebo sanguinem,
Senati qui columen cluent."

Ewald and others find traces of mutilation in this proverb, and endeavour to supply what is lost in various ways; but the text as it stands is intelligible, and needs no addition. The rest of the verse is an application of the truth first stated. The type of cupidity there enunciated is instanced and exemplified in four special cases. **There are three things that are never satisfied. And then a corrective climax is addressed. Yea, four things say not, It is enough.** The four in the following verse are divided into two plus two. Septuagint, "The leech had three daughters dearly beloved, and these three did not satisfy her, and the fourth was not contented to say, Enough."

Ver. 16.—The four insatiable things are now named: first, **the grave,** *sheol* (ch. xxvii. 20), which can never be filled with its victims. Horace talks of a man as—

"Victima nil miserantis Orci."
('Carm.,' ii. 3. 24.)

And Hesiod ('Theog.,' 456) of Hades as—

Νηλεὲς ἦτορ ἔχων.

"A heart possessing that no pity knows."

The second thing is **the barren womb**; "the closing of the womb," as Gen. xx. 18; Isa. lxvi. 9. The burning desire for children, characteristic of an Israelitish wife, is here denoted, like the passionate cry of Rachel to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die" (Gen. xxx. 1). The barren woman, says Corn. à Lapide, "concubitus magis est avida quam ceteræ, tum propter desiderium habendæ prolis, tum quod fœcundæ et gravidæ naturaliter non appetant concubitum." The third insatiable thing is **the earth that is not filled** (*satisfied*) **with water**; the parched and thirsty soil which no amount of water can satisfy, which drinks in all that is poured upon it and is not benefited, what Virgil ('Georg.,' i. 114) calls "bibula arena." The fourth is **the fire that saith not, It is enough**; the "devouring element," as the newspapers term it. The more you heap on fire, the more material you supply, the fiercer it rages. Septuagint, "Hades, and the love of woman, and earth not satisfied with water, and water, and fire, will not say, It sufficeth." Cheyne and others quote from the Sanscrit 'Hitopadesa,' "Fire is never satisfied with fuel; nor the ocean with rivers; nor death with all creatures; nor bright-eyed women with men."

Ver. 17.—This is an independent proverb, only connected with the preceding by being founded on an allusion to an animal. **The eye that mocketh at his father.** The eye is named as the mind's instrument for expressing scorn and insubordination; it is the index to the inner feeling; and look may be as sinful as action. **And despiseth to obey his mother**; *i.e.* holds obedience to his mother to be a thing of no importance whatever. The word translated "to obey" (ליקהת) is rendered by St. Jerome *partum*; by others, "weakness," or "wrinkles," or "old age," as Septuagint, γῆρας. But etymology has led most modern commentators to give the sense of "obedience" (see Gen. xlix. 10). **The ravens of the valley shall pick it out.** Such an undutiful son shall die a violent death; his corpse shall lie unburied, and the birds of prey shall feed upon him. It is well known that ravens, vultures, and other birds that live on carrion first attack the eyes of their prey; and in our own islands we are told crows and birds of this sort will fix on the eyes of young or sickly animals. Corn. à Lapide quotes Catullus, 'Carm.,' cviii. 5—

"Effossos oculos voret atro gutture corvus,
Intestina canes, cetera membra lupi."

"His eyes, plucked out, let croaking ravens gorge,
His bowels dogs, his limbs the greedy wolves."

"The valley," or brook, reminds one of Elijah's miraculous support (1 Kings xvii. 4). **Young eagles.** The *nesher* must here mean one of the vulture tribe, as eagles do not feed on carrion (but see Job xxxix. 30). St. Gregory ('Moral.,' xviii. 49) applies the proverb thus: "'The eye that sneereth at his father, and despiseth the travail of his mother, lo! the ravens from the torrents shall pick it out.' For bad men, while they find fault with the judgments of God, do 'sneer at their Father;' and heretics of all sorts, whilst in mocking they contemn the preaching of holy Church and her fruitfulness, what else is this but that they 'despise the travail of their mother'? whom we not unjustly call the mother of them as well, because from the same they come forth, who speak against the same."

Vers. 18—20.—A proverb concerning four inscrutable things, connected with the last by mention of the eagle.

Ver. 18.—**There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not.** The great point is the fourth, to which

the three previous things lead up, all of them being alike in this, that they leave no trace. The facts are marvellous; Agur feels like Job, "I have uttered that which I understood not, things too wonderful for me, which I knew not" (Job xlii. 3).

Ver. 19.—**The way of an eagle in the air.** You cannot by any outward sign know that an eagle has passed this or that way. Wisd. v. 11, "As when a bird hath flown through the air, there is no token of her way to be found," etc. **The way of a serpent upon a rock.** The snake's mode of progression by the lever-like motion of its ribs might well awake surprise, but the point is still the tracklessness of its course. On sand or soft ground its movements might be traced by the impression made, but this could not be done on hard rock; it could push itself along on such a surface without leaving any track. **The way of a ship in the midst** (*heart*) **of the sea**; *i.e.* in the open sea. You can trace a ship's course while she is near land or within sight, but when she reaches the open sea, you can follow her furrow no longer. Wisd. v. 10, "As a ship that passeth over the waves of the water, which when it is gone by, the trace thereof cannot be found, neither the pathway of the keel in the waves." **The way of a man** (*geber*) **with a maid** (בְּעַלְמָה); Septuagint, "The ways of a man in youth (*ἐν νεότητι*)." So Vulgate, *Viam viri in adolescentia*. But this is feeble, and *almah* is without doubt rightly rendered "maid," "virgin." The proverb says that the sinful act to which it alludes leaves no outward sign by which it can generally be recognized; it escapes man's knowledge. This is exemplified and confirmed in the following verse. It is not sufficient to refer the saying to the insidious arts of the seducer, by which he saps the principles and inflames the passions of his victim. The sin of unchastity is signified, which demands secrecy and affords no token of its commission. Two of the above parallels, says Cheyne, are given in a quatrain of a Vedic hymn to Varuna—

> "The path of ships across the sea,
> The soaring eagle's flight he knows."

Some of the Fathers and earlier commentators, and among moderns, Bishop Wordsworth, have not been content with the literal sense of this gnome, but have found in it, as in the others, deep spiritual mysteries. Christ is the great Eagle (Rev. xii. 14), who ascended beyond human ken; the serpent is the devil, who works his wily way in secret, and who tried to pass into the mind of Christ, who is the Rock; the ship is the Church, which preserves its course amid the waves of this troublesome world, though we cannot mark its strength or whither it is guided; and the fourth mystery is the incarnation of Jesus Christ our Lord, when "the virgin (*almah*) conceived and bare a son" (Isa. vii. 14), when "a woman encompassed a man (*geber*)" (Jer. xxxi. 22). We can see the greater or less appropriateness of such accommodation, but the proverb must have been received by contemporaries only in its literal sense, whatever were the inner mysteries which the Holy Spirit wished to communicate thereby.

Ver. 20.—This verse is a kind of gloss or illustration of the last thought of the preceding verse, and seems not to have formed an original part of the numerical proverb. It might well be placed in a parenthesis. Many commentators consider it to be an interpolation. **Such is the way of an adulterous woman.** What Agur had said of a man above, he now applies to the practised adulteress, whose sin cannot be traced. **She eateth.** This is a euphemism for the sin which she commits. "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant" (ch. ix. 17; comp. ch. v. 15). **And wipeth her mouth, as if to leave no trace of her illicit repast. And saith, I have done no wickedness.** As she has sinned in secret, and there is no outward proof of her guilt, she boldly denies it. Septuagint, "Such is the way of an adulterous woman, who, when she has committed the act, having washed herself, says she has done nothing amiss." She forgets him who seeth in secret, and is quite content to escape detection at man's eyes, and to assume the character of a virtuous wife, which popular report assigns to her.

Vers. 21—23.—Then follows a proverb concerning four things which are intolerable, examples of incongruous associations or positions—two in the case of men, two in the case of women.

Ver. 21.—**For three things the earth is disquieted**; better, *under three things the earth doth tremble*, as if oppressed by an overwhelming burden. The form of expression does not allow us to think of an earthquake. "The earth" is equivalent to "the inhabitants thereof." **And for four which it cannot bear**; or, *under four it cannot stand* (comp. Amos vii. 10). These four evils destroy the comfort of social life, uproot the bonds of society, and endanger the safety of a nation.

Ver. 22.—**For a servant when he reigneth**; or, *under a slave when he becometh king*. This startling vicissitude was not uncommon in Eastern states; and even if the slave was not preferred to regal power, he was often advanced by unwise favouritism to high position, for which he was wholly unfitted, and which he used only to aggrandize himself at the expense and to the injury of others.

This incongruity has been already noticed at ch. xix. 10 (where see note). **And a fool when he is filled with meat.** "Fool" is here *nabal*, a low, profligate fellow, who is rich and without care. When such a one rises to high position, or has power over others, he becomes arrogant, selfish, unbearable (comp. ver. 9; ch. xxviii. 12; xxix. 2).

Ver. 23.—**For an odious woman when she is married**; or, *under an unloved woman when she is married.* The sentence does not refer to an unbeloved wife, a Leah, becoming the favourite, a Rachel; the expression, "when she is married," can hardly have this sense; but the gnome speaks of a woman who has passed much of her life without love, having nothing about her attractive either in looks, attainments, or manner, and is consequently soured and ill-tempered. If such a one does at last win a husband, she uses her new position to vex those who formerly depreciated her, and to make them as miserable as she can. **And a handmaid that is heir to her mistress.** The maidservant that obtains her mistress's property, either by supplanting her or by right of inheritance, is supposed to make a bad use of it, to become conceited, arrogant, and odious to all around her. The LXX. transposes the last two members of the comparison, placing the unloved woman in the fourth place as the most intolerable of all: "And if a maidservant should cast out (ἐκβάλῃ, Gen. xxi. 10) her own mistress, and a hateful woman should obtain a good husband."

Vers. 24—28.—Four things small and weak, and yet wise.

Ver. 24.—**There be four things which are little upon the earth,** in contrast with the intolerable pretensions of the last group. The Vulgate has *minima*; but the original is not superlative, which would not be true of some of the creatures named. **But they are exceeding wise**; "quick of wit, wise," the participle חַכְמִים meaning "rendered wise, cunning" (Delitzsch). The Septuagint and Vulgate translate in the comparative, "These are wiser than the wise," the instincts of these animals being more marvellous than human wisdom.

Ver. 25.—**The ants are a people not strong.** The ant is proposed as an example to the sluggard (ch. vi. 6, etc.). He calls the ants a people, *am*, because they live in a community, and have authorities which they obey, and their actions are regulated by certain definite laws. So Joel (i. 6) calls the locusts a nation, and Homer ('Iliad,' ii. 87) speaks of ἔθνεα μελισσάων ἀδινάων, "the tribes of thronging bees." **Yet they prepare their meat in the summer.** In countries where ants hybernate, the object of this commended foresight is mistaken; but the statement, as that in ch. vi. 6—8, is in accordance with the popular belief of the day, and serves well to point the moral intended. We know certainly that in Europe these insects fill their nests with heterogeneous articles—grain, seeds, husks, etc., not as stores to be consumed in the winter, but for warmth and comfort's sake. Scripture is not intended to teach science; it speaks of such matters phenomenally, with no attempt at a precision which would not have been understood or appreciated by contemporaries. But in the present case more careful observation has confirmed the correctness of the assertions in our proverbs. In countries where ants do not hybernate, they do make granaries for themselves in the summer, and use these supplies as food in the winter months (see note on ch. vi. 8).

Ver 26.—**The conies** are but a **feeble folk.** The term "coney" (*cuniculus*) is applied to the rabbit, but this is not the animal here intended; and indeed rabbits are not found in Palestine. The word *shaphan* designates the *Hyrax Syriacus*, called by some the rock-badger (see Hart, 'Animals of the Bible,' pp. 64, etc.). The coney, says Dr. Geikie ('Holy Land and Bible,' ii. 90), "abounds in the gorge of the Kedron, and along the foot of the mountains west of the Dead Sea. It is of the size of the rabbit, but belongs to a very different order of animals, being placed by naturalists between the hippopotamus and rhinoceros. Its soft fur is brownish-grey over the back, with long black hairs rising through this lighter coat, and is almost white on the stomach; the tail is very short. The Jews, who were not scientific, deceived by the motion of its jaws in eating, which is exactly like that of ruminant animals, fancied it chewed the cud, though it did not divide the hoof, and so they put its flesh amidst that which was forbidden. It lives in companies, and chooses a ready-made cleft in the rocks for its home, so that, though the conies are but a 'feeble folk,' their refuge in the rocks gives them a security beyond that of stronger creatures. They are, moreover, 'exceeding wise,' so that it is very hard to capture one. Indeed, they are said, on high authority, to have sentries regularly placed on the look out while the rest are feeding; a squeak from the watchman sufficing to send the flock scudding to their holes like rabbits. The coney is found in many parts of Palestine, from Lebanon to the Dead Sea." **In the rocks.** This fact is noticed in Ps. civ. 18. The Septuagint calls them χοιρογρύλλιοι here and Ps. civ. 18, also in Lev. xi. 6 and Deut. xiv. 7. This notion of the animal as a kind of little pig is not more accurate

than that of St. Jerome, who renders the term by *lepusculus*.

Ver. 27.—**The locusts have no king** (ch. vi. 7), yet they show discipline, guidance, and order. **They go forth all of them by bands**; so that Joel (ii. 7, 8) speaks of them as a well-ordered army, as it were men of war, marching every one on his ways, not entangling their ranks, walking every one in his path. Septuagint, "The locusts are without a king, yet march at one command in good order."

Ver. 28.—**The spider taketh hold with her hands.** *Semamith* or *shemamith* is some sort of lizard, probably the gecko. Καλαβώτης, Septuagint; *stellio*, Vulgate. The Authorized Version alludes either to its fan-like foot, which enables it to run up walls and to cling to ceilings, or to its power of exuding from its feet a certain poisonous humour by which it catches flies and other insects. But the above translation, as well as that of the Septuagint and the Vulgate *manibus nititur*, is incorrect. The first line, in accordance with the method pursued in the three cases previously, ought to give some expression denoting weakness or littleness, whereas by the above rendering it is rather strength and activity that are signified. The translation therefore should run, as in the Revised Version margin, "The lizard thou canst seize with thy hand," and yet **it is in king's palaces.** Small as it is, and easy to catch and crush, it is agile and clever enough to make its way into the very palace of the king, and to dwell there. Septuagint, "And the lizard, supporting itself by its hands, and being easy to catch (εὐάλωτος), dwelleth in kings' strongholds." This combines the two interpretations given above. St. Gregory takes the lizard as the type of the simple, earnest man, who often succeeds better than the clever. "Many that are quick-witted, while they grow slack from carelessness, continue in bad practices, and the simple folk, which have no wing of ability to stand them in stead, the excellency of their practice bears up to attain to the walls of the eternal kingdom. Whereas, then, 'the lizard climbeth with his hands,' he 'is in kings' palaces;' in that the plain man, by earnestness of right practice, reaches that point whereunto the man of ability never mounts" ('Moral.,' vi. 12, Oxford transl.). The ancient expositors see in these verses a presentation of the Church of God, weak on its human side and despised by men, yet exceeding wise (1 Cor. i. 27)—like the ant, laying up treasure in heaven, providing for death and eternity; like the coney, making the Rock her refuge; like the locusts, moving forward a mighty army in battle array; like the lizard, active in movement, holding the truth tenaciously, and dwelling in the palace of the great King.

Vers. 29—31.—Four things of stately presence.

Ver. 29.—**There be three things which go well** (*tob*); are of stately and majestic carriage. **Comely in going**; "stately in going."

Ver. 30.—**A lion which is strongest among beasts.** The word here used for "lion," *laish*, occurs elsewhere only in Job iv. 11 and Isa. xxx. 6. The LXX. renders it, "a lion's whelp." "Strongest" is *gibbor*, a mighty one, a hero. **Turneth not away for any**; Septuagint, "turneth not away, nor feareth any beast." So Job describes the war-horse, "He mocketh at fear, and is not dismayed, neither turneth he back from the sword" (Job xxxix. 22).

Ver. 31.—**A greyhound**; זָרְזִיר מָתְנַיִם (*zarzir mothnayim*), "girt in the loins" (περιεσφιγμένος τὴν ὀσφύν, Symmachus), an expression very vague, and, as the name of an animal, occurring nowhere else in the Old Testament. In post-biblical Hebrew *zarzir* is found as the name of some pugnacious bird, and the Septuagint, Vulgate, and Syriac call it here the cock. So also Aquila and Theodotion. But if the word is onomatopoetic, it would seem to apply with more propriety to one of the raven tribe; and then what is to be made of the allusion to the loins? And how comes it that amid the quadrupeds in the gnome a bird should suddenly be introduced, as one stately in going? It seems certain that some quadruped is here meant, but what? What animal has as characteristic tight-girded loins or slender or active loins? There are, indeed, many that might be so designated, but none that, as far as we know, appropriated this unique appellation. Hence various opinions are held by commentators concerning the identification. The zebra, say some, with its stripes, which may be thus denoted; the war-horse, say others, comparing Job xxxix. 19, 25, and considering the trappings with which, as we see in ancient sculptures, he was adorned; others, again, fix upon the leopard as the beast intended. But that of the Authorized Version seems, on the whole, to be the most likely rendering, the slender, agile make of the greyhound having given cause for the appropriation of the term used in the text. Delitzsch compares the German word *windspiel*, which designates the greyhound without the necessity of using the full term, *windspielhund*. The only points which may be considered adverse to this view are these two, viz. the ill repute in which dogs were held by the Hebrews, Scripture consistently disparaging and despising them; and the fact that, as far as we have information, the Jews did not use

dogs for hunting purposes, though nowadays the Arabs keep a kind of Persian greyhound for sporting, and Assyrian monuments have familiarized us with the appearance of hounds employed in the chase of the lion and the wild ox. Agur may be referring to what he has seen elsewhere, but what was well known to those for whom he wrote. Gesenius suggests (253), "a warrior girt in the loins," which is adopted by Wordsworth, and gives a suitable idea. This would correspond with the king in the last line; but the interpretation is quite arbitrary, and supported by no ancient authority, resting on the fact that girding the loins is always spoken of human beings. The cook strutting among his hens is, as we have hinted, the idea which approves itself to many ancient translators. Thus the Septuagint, ἀλέκτωρ ἐμπεριπατῶν θηλείαις εὔψυχος. We are not disposed to adopt this identification, more especially as common poultry were unknown in Palestine till long after Solomon's time. Certainly what we call cocks and hens, or barn-door fowls, are never mentioned in the Old Testament, and seem to have been introduced from Persia after the rise of the Persian empire. The latest editors decide for the war-horse; but the conflicting claims cannot be reconciled, and the matter must be left undetermined. **An he-goat** also. This is a very natural comparison, as the stately manner in which the he-goat (*tayish*, "the butter") heads the flock has been always observed. The LXX. expresses this, paraphrasing, "and the he-goat leading the herd." "Flocks of goats are very numerous in Palestine at this day, as they were in former ages. We see them everywhere on the mountains, in smaller or larger numbers; at times also along with sheep, as one flock, in which case it is usually a he-goat that is the special leader of the whole, walking before it as gravely as a sexton before the white flock of a church choir" (Geikie, 'Holy Land,' i. 232). **A king, against whom** there is **no rising up**; Vulgate, *nec est rex qui resistat ei*, which ought to mean "and a king whom nothing resists," but can scarcely be compelled to produce this meaning without violence. The difficulty in the sentence arises from the word אַלְקוֹם, which in the above rendering is regarded as composed of the negative *al*, and *kum*, the infinitive, "to rise against, oppose." But this is contrary to grammatical usage, and would be a solecism. To some it has seemed that a proper name was intended, and they have invented a King Alkum or Alkimos, whom they suppose to have been celebrated in or after Solomon's time. Many modern commentators take the word to be an Arabic expression, consisting of *al*, the definite article, and *kum*, "people," and consider the meaning to be "a king with whom is the people," *i.e.* surrounded by his people or army. This is certainly a stately sight, and may well stand parallel to the hero-lion among beasts, and the bold he-goat at the head of the flock. Other Arabic expressions may probably be found elsewhere in this chapter; *e.g.* vers. 15, 16, 17, *aluka*, etc. Septuagint, "a king haranguing before a nation (δημηγορῶν ἐν ἔθνει)." This passage, again, has been taken in a spiritual sense as referring to Christ, the Lion of the tribo of Judah, the Warrior girt with the sword, the Leader of the flock, the King of kings.

Vers. 32, 33.—Agur's last proverb, exhorting to discreet demeanour.

Ver. 32.—**If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself** (Numb. xvi. 3). If thou hast had the folly to be arrogant, proud, and overbearing in conduct. **Or if thou hast thought evil, lay thine hand upon thy mouth.** The verb *zamam*, though possibly used in a bad sense, "to devise evil," is more suitably rendered "to meditate," "purpose;" so here it is the thought of lifting up one's self that is censured, the act and the thought being contrasted. Hast thou acted arrogantly, or even only meditated doing so, restrain yourself, keep silence (Job xxi. 5; xl. 4). St. Jerome gives a different rendering, enforcing another lesson, "There is one who shows himself a fool after he is raised to high position; if he had had understanding, he would have laid his hand on his mouth." Septuagint, "If thou give thyself up to mirth, and stretch forth thy hand in a quarrel, thou wilt be dishonoured." Insensate mirth and a quarrelsome disposition alike lead to disgrace. St. Gregory ('Moral.,' xxx. 10) applies the Vulgate rendering to antichrist, "For he in truth will be lifted up on high, when he will feign that he is God. But he will appear a fool when lifted up on high, because he will fail in his very loftiness through the coming of the true Judge. But if he had understood this, he would have laid his hand on his mouth; that is, if he had foreseen his punishment, when he began to be proud, having been once fashioned aright, he would not have been raised up to the boastfulness of such great pride" (Oxford transl.).

Ver. 33.—**Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter.** The same word, *mits*, is used for "churning," "wringing," and "forcing;" it means "pressure" in all the cases, though with a different application. At the present day milk is churned in the East by enclosing it in a leathern bottle, which is then suspended in the air and jerked to and fro till the butter is pro-

duced. This process could scarcely be called "pressure," though, possibly, the squeezing of the udder is meant, as the Septuagint and Vulgate take it. But most probably the reference is to cheese, the term used, *chemah*, being applied indifferently to curdled milk and cheese. To produce this substance, the curdled milk is put into little baskets of rush or palm leaves, tied closely, and then pressed under heavy stones. What the proverb says is that, as the pressure applied to milk produces cheese, and as pressure applied to the nose brings blood, **so the pressure of wrath bringeth forth strife**; the irritation and provocation of anger occasion quarrels and contentions. They say in Malabar, remarks Lane, "Anger is a stone cast into a wasp's nest." Septuagint, "Press out milk, and there shall be butter; and if thou violently squeeze the nostrils, blood will come forth; and if thou draw forth words, there will come forth quarrels and strifes." It is the third clause which is important, and to which the others lead up; and the verse must be taken in connection with the preceding, as enforcing the duty of self-restraint and silence under certain circumstances. Some of the Fathers, commenting on the Vulgate rendering (*Qui fortiter premit ubera ad eliciendum lac, exprimit butyrum; et qui vehementer emungit, elicit sanguinem*), apply the passage to the handling of the Word of God. Thus St. Gregory ('Moral.,' xxi. 3), "Divine sentences require sometimes to be viewed externally, sometimes to be explored internally. For we 'press the udder strongly' when we weigh with minute understanding the word of sacred revelation, by which way of pressing whilst we seek milk, we find butter, because, whilst we seek to be fed with but a little insight, we are anointed with the abundance of interior richness. Which, nevertheless, we ought neither to do too much, nor at all times, lest, while milk is sought for from the udder, there should follow blood. For very often, persons, whilst they sift the words of sacred revelation more than they ought, fall into a carnal apprehension. For 'he draws forth blood who wringeth violently.' Since that is rendered carnal which is perceived by an overgreat sifting of the spirit" (Oxford transl.).

## HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—4.—*The weary search for God.* If we read ver. 1 thus: "Words of Agur the son of the Princess of Massa. The man's saying, I have wearied myself about God, wearied myself about God—then did I withdraw!" we are led to the contemplation of one who has grown tired and despairing in a hopeless search for God.

I. IT IS NATURAL FOR MAN TO SEEK GOD. Agur appears to have lived far away from the borders of the favoured land of Israel. If he was a Jew, he was one in exile, separated from the home of his people. If he was an Ishmaelite, he was even outside the covenant of Israel, and in that case we have the striking picture of an Arab of antiquity anticipating Mahomet in breaking from the idolatry of his fathers. Like Balaam, like Job, this resident in a heathen land looks up to the true God. St. Paul spoke to the Athenians of those who could "seek God, if haply they might feel after him, and find him" (Acts xvii. 27); and St. Peter could acknowledge God's acceptance of all who look to him truly, no matter what race they might belong to (Acts x. 35). The natural search of the soul for God springs from certain great fundamental facts, viz.: 1. God is the Father of all men. 2. All men need God. 3. All men are separated from God by sin, and therefore must feel naturally at a distance. The world needs God. But the world has lost God. Hence the natural search for God.

II. THE NATURAL SEARCH FOR GOD RESULTS IN WEARINESS. This is not the weariness of protracted thinking, the reaction from high mental tension. It is worse than that; it is the weariness of a long and apparently fruitless search. Man cannot by searching find out God. God does not appear to respond to the inquiry of the seeking mind. Even to the wisest of the Greeks he was "an Unknown God" (Acts xvii. 23). For God is not visible to the natural reason, nor is he ever seen excepting when he reveals himself. Now, there is no weariness like that of a long and hopeless search. The sickness of despair then begins to tire the soul. Such weariness drives men at last to abandon the vain pursuit. Agur said, "Then did I withdraw!" He gave up the inquiry. This is the refuge of agnosticism.

III. THE GREATNESS OF GOD'S WORKS MAKES THE SEARCH FOR HIM A WEARINESS. How vast is his created universe! No man can reach up to the starry altitudes of heaven, or dive into the deep mysteries of antiquity, to find the scope and range of

the Divine activity. The tremendous energy of nature overwhelms us. Science can investigate its laws, and in a measure make use of its forces; but they come out of a terrible darkness, and they transcend the control of so feeble a creature as man. Agur did not simply distress himself with his own fruitless thinking. He knew something of the history of philosophy, and yet he had not been able to find one inquirer who had solved the terrible enigma over which his own heart was breaking.

IV. THE SEARCH FOR GOD IS SATISFIED IN THE REVELATION OF CHRIST. St. Paul said to the Athenians, "Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you" (Acts xvii. 23). This is not an authoritative declaration of a dogma of Divinity. 1. The revelation of Christ is such that we can see it and understand it for ourselves. We can see that God is in Christ by observing the stamp of the Divine on his countenance—the signs of God in his life and work. Then in knowing Christ we know God (John xiv. 9). 2. Moreover, this revelation of God in Christ flashes a light on the huge mystery of the universe, and helps us to find God in nature. 3. The reconciliation between man and God, effected by the cross of Christ, removes the dark barrier of sin, which is the greatest hindrance to the soul in its search for God, and brings us into the presence of God, where we can behold "the beatific vision."

Vers. 5, 6.—*The purity of God's words.* I. THE REFUGE FROM VAIN SPECULATION IS PRACTICAL REVELATION. The search for God in thought and nature has ended in weariness. But Agur does not subside into agnosticism, much less does he renounce all higher thinking as "vanity of vanities," and plunge into Sadducean worldliness and Epicurean materialism. On the contrary, though he gives up his ambitious quest with a sigh of disappointment, he learns to take a humbler path, on which he finds that God has shed light. The mysteries of pure theology are wrapped in clouds, but the path of man's duty and the way of practical religion are illumined by the light of God's revealed truth. This truth consists in more than those "regulative ideas," which are all that Mansel would have us expect to know, for it corresponds to the actual; it is fact and law of God's real spiritual world. The Word of God is with us in the Bible and in Christ. In this Word the weary seeker after light may not find a star-spangled heaven, but he will see "a lamp to his feet" (Ps. cxix. 105).

II. THE REVELATION OF GOD IS PURE. 1. *It is free from error.* This is not a matter of the language of the Bible, which is but the case that enshrines the holy revelation. The frame is not the picture. When we crack the nut we find that the kernel is sound and flawless. The spiritual contents of revelation are infallible. 2. *It is free from moral corruption.* Prurient minds have affected to be shocked at immoral stories in the Bible. But what is most wonderful about the Scripture writers in respect to such matters is that, though they are bold enough to touch the most repulsive subjects, they never soil their fingers, nor do *they* ever soil the minds of their readers. Only impure minds draw impure suggestions from the Bible, and such minds may find them anywhere. The Bible reveals man to himself, and declares God's estimate of sin. It cannot cover over the foulest evil with a cloak of social propriety. The horrible things must be exposed in the interest of purity, that they may be denounced, and the doers of them put to shame.

III. THE PURITY OF GOD'S WORD SHOULD INSPIRE TRUST AND REVERENCE. 1. It should inspire *trust.* For "he is a Shield to them that put their trust in him." We cannot understand all mysteries; the deep counsels of God must ever lie beneath our most searching inquiry; but we have light in God's words for our help and guidance. The purity of this light is a security against danger. It will not allure us into error, and it will not permit us to live in sin unrebuked and unwarned. Therefore the light is guiding, healing, saving. With such a revelation we can afford to endure the insoluble character of great mysteries of theology. When vexed, perplexed, and wearied out, we can turn to the God who has thus made himself known to us, and quietly rest in his sheltering care. 2. It should also inspire *reverence.* "Add not thou unto his words." The truth of God is too sacred for man to be permitted to tamper with it. This is a great warning that men have rarely heeded. We may think and utter our thoughts. But the fatal mistake is when we put forth our speculations as though they were a part of God's revelation. This is a common sin of authoritative theology. Men's opinions—harmless enough in themselves, perhaps—

have been added to the Scripture truths, and set before the world as unquestionable and Divine. The interpretation of Scripture has been made as sacred as the text. Church dogma has claimed Divine authority. This is adding to God's words, and the danger of it is (1) Divine disapproval—"lest he reprove thee;" and (2) human disloyalty to truth—"and thou be found a liar."

Vers. 8, 9.—"*Neither poverty nor riches.*" A wise man here points out the danger of the two extremes of poverty and riches, and seeks for himself the happier middle position. In the present day the enormous wealth of one class and the hard penury of another suggest serious social questions, and raise alarms as to great possible dangers unless the terrible anomaly of this artificial condition is not remedied.

I. THE EVIL OF POVERTY. The thought is of extreme poverty, of absolute destitution, or, at least, of that precarious livelihood that is always on the verge of want, and is therefore oppressed with an ever-haunting fear of the distress which can never be quite out of sight. Now, what is to be remarked here is that the great evil of excessive poverty pointed out in the passage before us is *moral* in character. The sufferings of penury are sad to contemplate. Those of us who have never known what it is to be really hungry cannot understand the pangs of the starving. More fearful must be the trouble of parents who see their children crying for bread and cannot satisfy them. Yet the worst evil is not this suffering; it is the moral degradation that follows it. Wolf-like hunger assimilates its victims to the nature of the wolf. It is hard to be honest when in want of food. The temptations of the poor are frightful to contemplate. It is wonderful that there is so little crime, seeing that there is so much poverty. The grinding cares of poverty tend to wear the soul out, and blind its vision to spiritual truth. The patience and good behaviour of the dumb, suffering multitudes of the distressed is indeed a sight to move our sympathy and excite our admiration.

II. THE EVIL OF WEALTH. The temptation of riches is not very unlike that of poverty in its character, but more deadly. Both extremes tempt to worldliness—poverty to worldly care, riches to worldly satisfaction. The "care of this world" and "the deceitfulness of riches" stand together as the thorns that choke the good seed (Matt. xiii. 22). But riches goes further. It tempts a man to dispense with God. Poverty tempts to theft, often, indeed, with extenuating circumstances. But riches tempts to scornful atheism. Christ saw this danger when he said, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" (Mark x. 23). On the other hand, when we see rich men who have conquered the exceptional temptations of their position, and who live a humble and useful Christian life, devoting their talents to the service of Christ, we should acknowledge that such victors over the world are deserving of especial honour.

III. THE CHOICE OF A MIDDLE COURSE. We are here reminded of Aristotle's doctrine of "the mean." There are circumstances in which the true mean is not just the middle way between two diverse policies. The lowering of the standard of right and wrong that comes from the peace-loving tendency to accept a compromise is disastrous to all conscientious conduct. But now we have to do with a middle course between two external states, both of which are dangerous. If Christian people understood their mission in the world aright, in its breadth and humanity, they would know that the call to preach the gospel of the kingdom includes the inculcation of those social principles which tend to blot out the present ugly picture of extreme poverty set off by extreme wealth. A life that is neither crushed by care nor intoxicated by riches is the life in which it is least difficult to serve God and do right. Therefore we should labour to help on a state of society in which more of such lives will be possible.

Vers. 12, 13.—*Self-deception.* Self-deception in regard to the guilt of sin is the most common delusion of minds that have not been spiritually enlightened. However much men may know and acknowledge about themselves in other respects, on this vital point they are most tempted to go astray.

I. LET US CONSIDER THE TEMPTATION TO SELF-DECEPTION. People have strong motives to think well of themselves. 1. *Conscience* is so powerful and urgent that few men are able to brave a confession of sin before its awful bar, and yet continue in the

practice of sin with equanimity. For the sake of the peace of his mind, everybody naturally desires to stand well with his own conscience. Therefore there is a strong motive to lie to it, hoodwink it, cajole it; or, if these measures fail, to gag it, drown it, brand, or crush, or stamp it out—if possible to murder it. 2. *Pride* also makes a man desire his own self-approval. The "lofty eyes" are disinclined to see any evil within. It is inwardly humbling to hear, amidst the plaudits of a bamboozled world, a keen inner voice exclaiming, "Thou art a hypocrite, a liar, a knave!" 3. *Fear of coming judgment* drives a man into a refuge of lies rather than to remain out in the open, exposed to the pitiless storm. It is absurd, ostrich-like to hide one's head in the sand; but men are not always logical in their conduct. The feeling of danger disappears when a man persuades himself that he is innocent.

II. LET US INQUIRE INTO THE CAUSES OF THIS SELF-DECEPTION. 1. It springs from *inclination.* The temptation to flatter one's self helps to produce the delusion. Thus "the wish is father to the thought." 2. It is aided by *a low standard of morals.* Only when such a standard is prevalent and accepted will any sinful generation be capable of appearing pure in its own eyes. The higher the standard, the greater the feeling of guilt. Therefore the most holy men, being also the most spiritually enlightened, have the deepest consciousness of sin. 3. It is further encouraged by *the example of others.* There is a whole "generation" of these self-deluded people. Each man finds his neighbour as bad as himself. A single black sheep in the fold is marked by contrast with its fellows, and cannot but acknowledge its abnormal colour, but a whole flock of black sheep may readily forget that it is not white.

III. LET US OBSERVE THE EVIL OF THIS SELF-DECEPTION. The generation is pure in its own eyes, but it is not washed from its filthiness. 1. Self-deception *does not cleanse.* It only asserts what is false; it goes no way to make its assertion true. It rather tends the other way, because there can be no effectual cleansing of the soul without confession and repentance. 2. It does *not hide sin.* It is not even a cloak thrown over what remains as foul as ever, though no longer visible. The generation may walk with lofty eyes, but its pride only deludes itself. Others can see the shame in spite of all the guilty people's loud protestations. Self-deception does not lead to a deluding of God. 3. Self-deception must be *exposed and punished.* It is itself sinful. For the sinner to walk with a lofty gait is for him to court his doom. The safer course is to follow the example of the publican, who would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven while he smote his breast and cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" (Luke xviii. 13).

Vers. 18, 19.—*The mystery of love.* Agur sees four things that cannot be traced out. 1. "The way of an eagle in the air." No track is followed by the king of birds as it cleaves the invisible fluid and takes its own wild course from crag to crag. 2. "The way of a serpent upon a rock." Creeping out of a dark cranny, the reptile lies and basks on the hot stone, and then at the approach of an intruder darts into another cranny—its course unknown. 3. "The way of a ship in the midst of the sea." We talk of the ocean highway, but there is no beaten track, no worn course. The ship cuts the surface for a moment, and then the waves roll over its path, and in a short time every trace of its passage is lost in the wash of the waters. So it is with the fourth mystery. The course of human love cannot be predicted or explained. It cannot be made to follow rule and precedent or to correspond to fond parental wishes. Love will go its own way free as the eagle in the air, unsuspected as the serpent on the rock, untracked as the ship in the sea. The three earlier wonders lead on to the fourth, and help to give colour and weight to it. The whole sentence thus gathers up its force into a climax. Nothing is so wonderful in the natural world as the great mystery of love. This may take three forms—

I. THE WILD FREEDOM OF THE EAGLE'S FLIGHT. Love can never be coerced. A forced marriage cannot be a love-match. It is natural that man and maid should learn to love one another of their own accord, by the drawing of mutual sympathy. Friends may guide, warn, encourage, or hinder. But a matter which concerns the lifelong happiness of two souls cannot be well arranged by worldly contrivances. Nevertheless, love that is untamed and utterly uncontrolled may lead to frightful mistakes, to folly and sin and shame. The eagle is a wild and dangerous bird—a terror to the helpless

lamb. Love becomes a cursed thing, near to hatred, when it is no better than a wild, unfettered passion.

II. THE SUBTLE SECRET OF THE SERPENT'S TRAIL. This is a very ugly picture, from which we start back shuddering and in horror. There is a snake-like cunning in selfish lust that wickedly usurps the sacred name of love, when it is really the very incarnation of hellish venom, seeking to allure its prey to destruction. All low, carnal lust is of the type of the serpent. The wild passion that follows the eagle's flight may be dangerous, but the cold, loveless course of deliberate vice is deadly as that of a viper.

III. THE UNCERTAIN VOYAGE OF THE SHIP. The ship is a home on the waters. She carries freight and passengers—wealth and life. She sails from one port and she seeks another in a far-off land. But she cannot see her distant haven; she knows not what fierce tempests she may have to encounter; her way is uncertain and dangerous. Married life is a voyage over unknown waters. But where there is true love the vessel is well ballasted; she carries a cargo richer than untold ingots of gold; her crew work peacefully without fear of mutiny. Under such circumstances, though there is mystery, hearts that trust in God need fear no shipwreck of love and happiness.

Vers. 24—28.—*Four weak things, and the greatness of them.* The four little creatures that are here mentioned all illustrate the wonderful way in which the disadvantages of weakness may be overcome by some countervailing quality. In the spiritual world Christianity teaches us to look for the triumph of weakness—the weak things of the world confounding the things which are mighty (1 Cor. i. 27). Now, we have illustrations from nature for the same principle. Each of the four creatures teaches us its own special lesson, as each conquers its weakness by some separate and distinctive quality. The ant succeeds by foresight, the coney by finding shelter, the locust by organization, and the lizard by quiet persistency.

I. THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF FORESIGHT. 1. This is a triumph of *mind*. The ant is in some respects the most wonderful creature in the world; for it seems to be about equal in intelligence to the elephant, which is not only the greatest, but also the most intelligent of the larger animals. A bull, so immensely greater than an ant in body, is far smaller in mind. Similarly, man's lordship over the animal world is a triumph of mental power. The driver is weaker in body than the horse he drives, but he has a stronger mind. We shall triumph in the world just in proportion as we develop our inner life. 2. This is a triumph of *industry*. The ant rebukes the sluggard (ch. vi. 6). 3. It is a triumph of *patience*. The ant toils for the future. Herein is its true strength. Men who care only for the passing moment are shallow and weak. We are strong in proportion as we live in the future.

II. THE SAFETY OF A SOUND SHELTER. "The conies are but a feeble folk," and they have not the compensating intelligence of the ants. But their instinct leads them to live among the rocks, and hide themselves in dark caves and inaccessible crevices. Thus the strength of the hills is theirs. When there is no hope of holding our ground in the open field, we may find shelter in the Rock of Ages. If souls have their instincts in a healthy condition, these will drive them to the true shelter, and there weakness will be safe.

III. THE TRIUMPH OF ORGANIZATION. Though the locusts have no king, they are able to make successful marches over miles of country, and to completely devastate the lands they visit. They do not waste their time by flying hither and thither, and by opposing one another. They all move on in solid phalanx. This instinctive order secures success. It teaches us that the welfare of the individual must be subordinate to that of the community. If a small stream has to be crossed, the myriads of locusts who are so unfortunate as to be in the van of the mighty army fall in and fill up the bed till they make a causeway that can be used by their fellows. The victory of man is got through the suffering and death of many self-sacrificing heroes. In the Church the cause of Christ will best triumph when all Christians move together in harmony, all seeking to win the world for the kingdom of heaven.

IV. THE SUCCESS OF PERSISTENCY. The little lizard is found in king's palaces because he can stick to the walls, and so run into unlooked-for places out of the way of men. It is a great thing to be able to hold on. Quiet perseverance wins many a victory. Patient endurance is crowned in the end with glorious success. In the

highest things, "he that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Mark xiii. 13).

Vers. 29—31.—*Fourfold triumph.* Each of the four here brought before us excites admiration for a successful course. As in former illustrations, the images rise up to a climax, and what is exhibited separately in the earlier ones is united and completed in the final image.

I. A TRIUMPHANT COURSE EXCITES EMULATION. 1. *True success is good.* There are various forms of success. Some are more disgraceful than failure. A low end easily won, or a desirable goal reached by foul means, gives a worthless and even a detestable victory. But when both means and end are good, there is something admirable in success. 2. *This success is continuous.* The most worthy triumph is not that of a sudden victory snatched at the end of a long, doubtful contest, but the carrying out of a course that is good throughout—a constant series of small daily victories over danger. Thus the lion is admired, not merely because he can bring down his prey by means of a long chase, or after patiently waiting for it in ambush, but because "he turneth not away for any," and of all four the excellence is that they "go well." With every man the true note of triumph is that he "goes well" day by day along the path of duty. 3. *This success is measured by the difficulties overcome.* We gauge strength by what it can do, and the best standard may not give visible results in acquisition. The proof may be seen more in triumph over obstacles. He who persists through all hardship and danger enduring to the end, and faithful unto death, is the true soldier of Christ.

II. A TRIUMPHANT COURSE MAY BE VARIOUSLY RUN. The good and admirable may be of different forms. Success of the highest kind will be got by each using his own talents, not by any vainly imitating those of another. The lion cannot copy the goat's agility, nor the greyhound the lion's strength. Four methods of success are here suggested. 1. Success may be won by *indomitable energy.* This is the characteristic of the lion. He is strong, and he "turneth not away for any." 2. It may be got by *swiftness.* The greyhound is a feeble creature compared to the lion. Its glory is in its speed. There is a victory for nimbleness of mind as well as of body. 3. It may be reached by *agility.* The hound can fly like the wind over the plain; and the he-goat can pick its way among the crags of the precipice and climb to dizzy heights. They are not like the eagle that soars on its wings, for the quadruped must always have some foothold, but with this it can stand without fear in the most precarious positions. Skilful agility will enable one to triumph over difficulties, escape snares and pitfalls, and rise to daring heights. 4. It may be attained by *human qualities.* Man is feeble as a coney compared to the lion, slow as a tortoise in the presence of the greyhound, lame and timorous beside that audacious mountaineer the goat. But he can master and outdo all these creatures by the use of mental and spiritual powers.

III. A TRIUMPHANT COURSE WILL DEVELOP UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS. Each of the four is known by its success, as none would be known if the animals were caged in a menagerie, and the king left to enjoy empty pageantry. The kingly faculty is not only recognized on a throne. As the power to govern, it is witnessed in business, in society, and in intellectual regions. There are born kings. We see how stirring times bring such men to the front as the Civil Wars revealed Cromwell. The noblest earthly career is to be a true leader of men. He who stands at the head of the great human family was and is a Divine King, and his triumph is in his ruling even through shame and death.

Ver. 32.—*Self-suppression.* I. WHEN SELF-SUPPRESSION IS NEEDED. It is not always equally demanded of us. There are times for expression, times when we should break reserve and give forth freely the thoughts and purposes of our souls. But other times demand peculiar self-suppression. 1. *In rebuke of foolish vanity.* "If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself." A magnified image of self needs to be reduced. Too much pretension must be humbled. Selfish ambition must be cast down. 2. *In restraint of evil thinking.* "Or if thou hast thought evil." Jesus Christ has taught us that evil thinking is sin (Matt. v. 28). But the sooner the sin is checked the better, and it can be best checked before it has emerged in word or deed. Expression empha-

sizes an evil thought. A publication of it makes it hurtful to others. The viper-brood should be scotched in the nest.

II. WHAT SELF-SUPPRESSION WILL EFFECT. 1. It will prevent *future evil.* We cannot undo the past; we cannot deny our inner self. But at least we may seek for grace that the sin may proceed no further. 2. It will *prepare for better conduct.* In itself it is but negative. It has the merit of silence. It is a "masterly inactivity." We must stop before we can turn back. There is therefore a moment of silence, cessation, even death, in the act of conversion. We cannot proceed at once from evil living to good service. St. Paul had his period of silence in Arabia. It would be an immense gain in this noisy age if we could practise more of the golden virtue.

III. HOW SELF-SUPPRESSION MAY BE ATTAINED. "Lay thine hand upon thy mouth." To the noisy and expressive this is no more easy than it is for the glutton to "put a knife to" his "throat" when he is eating "with a ruler" (ch. xxiii. 1, 2). Frank and open natures are not able readily to recognize the merits of reticence, while, on the other hand, reserved and secretive natures shrink from a requisite confession. 1. There must be a *perception of the evil of giving unrestrained vent to one's thoughts and desires.* Many people do not perceive the dangers of speech. They blurt out the most unseemly things where the sensitive shrink into silence. But a horror of the harm that may be done by heedless words will assist in the cultivation of a habit of self-restraint. 2. There must be *energy of will.* The unrestrained nature that is a victim to every rousing impression is no better than an unwalled city open to the invasion of the first chance foe (ch. xxv. 28). Now, it is a work of Divine grace to strengthen the will so that the weak may acquire more control over themselves. At the first blush of it there seems to be more energy in noisy, bustling restlessness, while quiet self-restraint appears inert. But this results from a very superficial view of life. Nothing less than Heaven-sent grace can make us strong enough to keep silent under great provocation or to be still when the heart is boiling over with passion.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—6.—*Agur's sayings: God's Word the fountain of all wisdom.* These are the words, probably, of a believer in Jehovah who was a stranger in a foreign land. Among the sworn foes of Israel and her faith, we have in him an example of Puritan rectitude, of unflinching fidelity to conscience, that is highly instructive. The purity of God's eternal truth, and the safety of all believers in him (ver. 5),—this is his simple and sublime leading theme.

I. THE BEING OF GOD AN UNUTTERABLE MYSTERY. (Ver. 1.) In vain had he sought to explore the unfathomable secret of his essence, by searching to find out the Almighty unto perfection. It was higher than heaven—what could he do? deeper than Hades—what could he know? This was substantially the confession, expressed in different forms, of all the great prophets. Compare the accounts of Isaiah's consecration, Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's. True religion is rooted in this sense of the Divine mystery. All piety is shallow without it. In every conscious feeling, thought, aspiration, we are but travelling on the edge of a great abyss, moving towards an horizon which still recedes. In our deeper moments we are all mystics, and there are times when all talk about God seems babble, and we would fain take refuge in the "sacred silence of the mind."

II. THE INTELLIGENCE OF MAN DULL AND INADEQUATE IN RELATION TO DIVINE THINGS. (Vers. 2, 3.) No words are too self-contemptuous to express the sense of the immense gulf which separates our thought from God. Applied to definable objects, our intelligence seems bright and piercing; applied to the Infinite Might and Wisdom and Purity, no better than the vacant gaze of the ox in the pasture. Look into those beautiful brown eyes; there is a depth of pathos in them, but no "speculation," no power to grasp the unity and law of things that print themselves in pictures on the retina. And what are we, though raised above the "creatures that lead a blind life within the brain," but helpless gazers into infinity? Well did Sir Isaac Newton and all the great seers of science realize this feeling. Their consummate knowledge was, viewed on another side, consummate ignorance. They had not thereby attained abso-

lute wisdom, nor "won the knowledge of the Holy." There have been, indeed, modern philosophers who have proposed an "absolute philosophy;" but time has discovered the idleness of their "o'er-vaulting ambition," and made a fable of their folly.

III. THE INACCESSIBLE IN NATURE RECOGNIZED. (Ver. 4.) One of the first principles laid down by the great Goethe was—Learn to distinguish between the accessible and the inaccessible in nature to your thought. For want of this, theologians on the one hand, scientists on the other, have rushed into presumption in seeking to wrest the inscrutable secrets of nature from the hand of God. The unknowableness of the first beginnings of things was recognized by the ancient thinker. The height of heaven, the movements of winds and waves, the changes of the earth's surface,—all may be brought under law; but the word "law" conceals the greater mystery—the nature of the Lawgiver himself. God is not identical with law, any more than we are identical with speech. Law is but the partially understood speech of God to our intelligence. Examine all the sublime names which have been given to God in the course of revelation, in the process of religious thought; behind them all lies the unutterable and unthinkable Somewhat.

IV. THE SELF-REVELATION OF GOD RECOGNIZED. (Ver. 5.) 1. To say that God is *utterly unknowable* is as great an error as to say that he is perfectly knowable by the human understanding. Such an admission must cut at the root of religion. On the contrary, religion implies revelation. Because God has spoken to us, we may speak to him; because he has stooped to us, we may rise towards him. In manifold ways—through nature, through inspired men, through the Son, through the conscience—God "has spoken to the world." If this be denied, religion is an entire illusion. 2. *The quality of his oral revelation.* The writer is thinking of the oral and written Law. Because definite, articulate, it may be spoken of as *the* Word of God *par excellence;* but by no means are the indefinable and inarticulate revelations through nature to our spirit excluded. From every sight of beauty and every sound of music in the world we may derive unspoken messages of him "whose nature and whose name is Love." And God's Word is pure. The refined silver of the furnace is a favourite image of this, its quality. From the alloy of duplicity, flattery, hypocrisy, it is free. God deals sincerely with us. And, therefore, it is purifying. We behold the true life of the soul in its mirror. 3. *The practical blessing of trust in him.* He who speaks to us is to be trusted. And in this trust in One who is eternal and infallible, pure and true, we have security. The Law or Word which declares his will is like a broad hand stretched above us to command, and, in commanding, to protect, reward, and bless. 4. *The duty of strict reverence and loyalty towards his words.* (Ver. 6.) Much they leave unsaid, which it is not for us to supply. The general lesson seems to be respect for that element of reserve and mystery which lies behind all that is or may be known. We may "lie" against God by saying more than he has actually said to us by any channel of knowledge. To exceed or exaggerate seems ever a readier temptation than to keep within the modest bounds of positive declaration. And certain penalties await all distortions of the truth of every kind; they work themselves out in the conscience and the course of history.—J.

Vers. 7—9.—*The golden mean.* I. THE WAY OF LIFE: TRUTH IS THE MEAN BETWEEN TWO EXTREMES. (Ver. 8.) Extremes exist in logic; life shows that extremes meet, and that the path of sense in opinion and of safety in conduct lies intermediate between them.

II. GREAT RICHES ARE NOT IN THEMSELVES DESIRABLE. Not by the wise and religious man. They bring perils to the soul. Full of his gifts, it is tempted to deny the Giver. The deepest atheism springs from self-sufficiency. Prospering in the flesh, men are often impoverished in the spirit. "How deep a knowledge of the heart is implied in the petition of the Litany, 'In all *time of our wealth*, good Lord deliver us'!" (Bridges).

III. EXTREME POVERTY MAY BE EQUALLY INJURIOUS TO THE SPIRITUAL LIFE. It tempts to dishonesty, even to perjury. "Too poor to be honest" is a cynical saying which points out a real danger. The old proverb, "It is hard for an empty sack to stand on end," points the same way. More stinging still is the word, "Poor men have no souls."

IV. THE GOLDEN MEAN IS THEREFORE TO BE DESIRED AND SOUGHT. (Comp. Phil. iv. 11, 12; 1 Tim. vi. 6—10.) Horace says, "Whoever loves the golden mediocrity is safe, free from the sordid misery of the tumble-down dwelling, free from the envied hall in his sobriety" ('Carm.,' ii. 10). But let us be careful to note that the true state is to be found in the spirit itself—the inward, not the outward sufficiency. "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Rich in estate, yet poor in spirit; poor in estate, yet rich in grace;—this is the true solution of the problem, the true object of pious prayers.—J.

Ver. 10.—*Caution in the use of the tongue.* I. THE THOUGHTS ONE FEARS TO EXPRESS HIMSELF ONE MAY BE TEMPTED TO ELICIT FROM ANOTHER.

II. IT IS BASE TO TEMPT AN HONEST HEART TO THOUGHTS AND WORDS OF DISCONTENT. One of the most active forms of evil consists in the "putting into the head" of others feelings towards their employers or superiors which would not otherwise have arisen.

III. THE BITER MAY THUS BE BIT; THE TEMPTER THUS BRING A RECOIL UPON HIMSELF. (Comp. ch. xxvi. 2.)—J.

Vers. 11—14.—*Detestable phases of human character.* I. THOSE UNGRATEFUL TO PARENTS. (Ver. 11.) "Without natural affection." Solon, asked why he had made no law against parricides, said that he could not conceive of any one so impious and cruel. In the Law of Moses the cursing of a parent was visited with the same punishment as the blaspheming of God (Lev. xx. 9; xxiv. 11—16; comp. Isa. xlv. 9, 10; 2 Tim. iii. 2).

II. CRASS SELF-CONCEIT AND PRIDE. (Vers. 12, 13.) The Pharisees in the gospel (Matt. xxiii. 25—27), the Laodicean Church (Rev. iii. 17, 18), are examples. But the character is a constant one, and reappears in every age as a foil to genuine Christianity. Compare Mozley's powerful sermon on the Pharisees. But it was a noble Pharisee who learned, in the humility of Christ, to "have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. iii. 3).

III. PITILESS CRUELTY AND OPPRESSION. (Ver. 14.) Wolves in human guise or in sheep's clothing. Similar pictures are to be found in Ps. lvii. 5; lviii. 7; Isa. ix. 12; Jer. v. 17; xxx. 16, 17. These pictures of the heart, its exceeding deceitfulness and desperate wickedness, should lead us to examine our own. The germs of all the world's evil are to be found in these *microcosmi*—these "little worlds." When we know ourselves truly, the prayer will the more sincerely arise to him to whom all hearts are open, that he will cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit.—J.

Vers. 15, 16.—*Reflections on the insatiable.* I. THE EXTERNAL LIFE IS THE MIRROR OF THE INTERNAL. Our spirit finds analogies to itself in the objects of nature, of history, and in the general course of human life. And all that we observe *there*, in the great world, may serve as a light to reveal to us what passes *here*, in the world of each man's heart.

II. IMAGES OF INSATIABLE APPETITE. Hades; the barren womb; the thirsty earth; the all-devouring fire. The vampire, or bloodsucker, seems to be intended in the first example; it is supposed to suck the blood of the sleeping by night.

III. THE SPIRIT OF MAN IS INSATIABLE. And whether this appetite is rightly or wrongly directed, upon this depends his weal or woe. It may be directed to what is perishable or pernicious—to gold, power, pleasure, etc. Drunkenness is the commonest illustration of the insatiety of man's nature. Or it may be directed to righteousness, to the knowledge of the truth, to the enjoyment of the good; and then it carries the power and promise of the "endless life."—J.

Ver. 17.—*The punishment of unfilial conduct.* I. THE DENUNCIATION IS IN FIGURATIVE FORM.

II. ITS FULFILMENT LITERALLY HAD BEEN A MATTER OF ACTUAL OBSERVATION.

III. THE GENERAL TRUTH MUST BE CARRIED INTO THE LIGHT OF CONSCIENCE. On the whole, as Bishop Butler soundly taught, the constitution of things tends to punish evil and reward good conduct.—J.

Vers. 18—20.—*The mystery of actions.* I. THERE ARE ACTIONS WHICH, LIKE THE FLIGHT OF THE EAGLE, OR THE PASSAGE OF THE SHIP, LEAVE NO VISIBLE TRACE BEHIND. What seems to strike the mind of the simple-hearted Agur is the fact that criminal deeds may be committed and, seemingly, leave as little trace behind.

II. BUT THE MYSTERY AND SECRECY OF ALL ACTIONS ARE KNOWN TO GOD. We are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. And God shall bring every secret work into judgment. Every act leaves its trace in the world of spirit.—J.

Vers. 21—23.—*Intolerable things.* I. THE EXAMPLES. 1. *The slave in authority.* (Ver. 22.) The inversion of objects is intolerable to the trained eye; things standing upside down, etc. So in social relations and in political. Government belongs to the wise and the strong; the feeble in mind and the narrow in heart are emphatically the wrong men in the wrong place, in seats of power. 2. *The self-satisfied fool.* His fatuous smile is a satire upon himself and upon the condition of things which permits him to bask in so fantastic a paradise. Those are sights to make the "angels weep." 3. *The ill-tempered wife.* (Ver. 23.) She, again, is emphatically "out of place." For *home*, in any sweet sense, is the place which woman's presence makes a delight. 4. *The ambitious maidservant.* The effort to supplant, to grasp a place beyond one's rights and deserts, hurts our intuitive perceptions of what is right. An Oriental proverb says, "Sit in your place, and none shall make you rise," on which we have a pointed commentary from Christ in Luke xiv. 11, "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

II. THE GENERAL LESSONS. Order and rank are Divine institutions. To overturn this is no work of the true reformer or friend of the social weal. Rule rests ultimately upon ability to rule; government, upon power; authority, upon wisdom. When these relations are *actually* reversed, society is disturbed, matters are unhappy. When they only *seem* to be reversed, there will be distress and discomfort in right minds, until the just order and the nominal state of things shall be restored.—J.

Vers. 24—28.—*The significance of little things.* I. EXAMPLES. 1. *The ant* (ver. 25); tiny in frame, yet full of providence, making wise provision against the rainy day. 2. *The hedgehog* ("coney," ver. 26); though feeble, finds compensation in the strength of the dwelling it selects. 3. *The locust* (ver. 27); a creature, as an individual, easily crushed, yet gaining immense force by union with others. Joel (ii.) gives a splendid description of the raid of locusts under the figure of an invading army, with which the accounts of travellers in tropical lands may be closely compared. 4. *The lizard* (ver. 28); another tender and feeble creature, nevertheless penetrates human dwellings, and makes itself at home in the palaces of kings.

II. LESSONS. The lower creatures show unconscious mind. What they do, apparently with blind mechanical impulse, is exemplary in many respects to us who have reason and will. The profoundest lessons may be derived from the lowliest things. Mr. Darwin's work on 'Worms' shows how the most despised of creatures, by the very law of its being, labours for others and blesses a world. It is folly to seek to explore the heights of wisdom until we are familiar with what it teaches us in the little and the low. The "little flower in the crannied wall" contains in its life the secret and mystery of all existence.—J.

Vers. 29—31.—*Grandeur in natural objects.* Our æsthetic as well as our teleological perceptions are appealed to in the objects of nature. Certain creatures express grandeur, sublimity, or beauty in their form and carriage.

I. EXAMPLES. 1. The *lion.* (Ver. 30.) He is in nature and for art the very symbol of strength and prowess. Literally, he is the "hero among beasts," and turns his magnificent front from the face of no foe. 2. The *greyhound* (ver. 31), with its slender form, is the very type of swiftness, which is another idea lying close to the sublime. His name (in German, *Windspiel*, or *Windhund*) compares him with the wind. 3. The *goat*; in its active capability, its nimble movement, and secure footing in dangerous places, gives another variety of the same idea.

II. A PARALLEL IN HUMAN LIFE. The king in his majesty should combine in his person and bearing the fearless brow of the lion, the swiftness of decision and action of

the other animals. The ideal majesty of man includes in itself all lower perfections in the thought of the Creator. And every man should be taught to realize the royal dignity of his being in Christ. He is made a "little lower than the angels;" and God's purpose cannot be fulfilled until we men rise to claim the glorious heritage of the ideal manhood.—J.

Vers. 32, 33.—*Moral prudence.* I. IT TEACHES THE CONTROL OF THE TONGUE. The folly and pride of the heart may be choked, if expression is denied them on the tongue. No evil or foolish thought is full-born till it is clothed in words. Give no formula to the momentary impulse of wrath or other passion, and the soul of evil will perish if it find no body to inhabit.

II. IT POINTS TO CONSEQUENCES. The quaint illustrations of Agur exhibit the certainty of evil consequences to evil thoughts and desires. As certain as any of the *physical* sequences mentioned, is the *metaphysical* sequence, the moral or immoral consequences of passion. Therefore, *obsta principiis*, resist the beginnings, "seal up the avenues of ill."—J.

Vers. 1—6.—*Reverence and docility.* Whoever Agur may have been, it is certain that he was a sage who could express his thoughts in strong and trenchant language. If, as seems probable, these opening words had reference to the compliments or the questions of his disciples, we may glean, before we proceed further, three lessons by the way. 1. That rightful acknowledgment too easily passes into adulation. 2. That it is a very easy thing for the uninstructed to ask questions which the most enlightened cannot answer. 3. That true genius is modest, and knows well the bounds of its capacity. The main lessons are—

I. OUR DUTY TO DISCLAIM WHAT IS NOT TRUE CONCERNING US. Agur, using the language of hyperbole, energetically disclaims any such elevation as he was imagined to have attained (vers. 2, 3). Men will sometimes deny us the virtue or the wisdom which we may claim; but they will often offer us an honour which is not our due. We may be taken to be wealthier, or wiser, or stronger, or more generous, or more devout than we know ourselves to be. We should then distinctly and determinately decline to receive what does not belong to us. To accept it (1) is dishonest, and any kind of dishonesty is sinful; (2) is likely to inflate our minds with fond and vain conceptions, hurtful if not fatal to our humility; (3) will sooner or later end in exposure and humiliation.

II. THE GREAT OBLIGATION TO REVERENCE. (Ver. 4.) We may know many things, but, when it is all told, what an infinitesimal fraction is this when compared with all that is unknown! What vast, what inexhaustible treasures of truth and wisdom are hidden, and must remain hidden, in the air, in the earth, in the sea! How little, then, can we understand of him, the Eternal and Infinite One, who reigns in the heavens! How unfathomable the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God" (Rom. xi. 33)! 1. How foolish to expect to understand his purpose, whilst he is outworking it, either concerning our individual life or the destiny of our race! 2. How prepared we should be to accept what God has taught us respecting our nature, or our duty, or our prospects, or respecting his own nature and his will! 3. How unwise to attempt to add to his teaching by any inventions of our own! Not, indeed, that we are not to make new applications, and find out truer interpretations of his Word; but that we are not to think and speak as if we had sources of wisdom apart from his Divine communication.

III. THE REWARD OF DOCILITY. (Ver. 5.) To learn of God is: 1. *To repair to the fountain of purity.* Everything God has said to us tends to purity, to freedom from a degrading selfishness, from a corrupting worldliness, and from an enslaving and a shameful sensuality. To fill our minds and hearts with his holy truth lifts us up into an atmosphere where our whole nature is elevated and refined, where we are capacitated for the vision and fitted for the presence and the home of God (Matt. v. 8; Heb. xii. 14). 2. To learn of God and to connect ourselves with him by faith in Jesus Christ is to be well shielded in the battle of our life. For it is to have (1) strong, sustaining principles within us, and (2) the active and efficient guardianship of God around us as we pass through the *sorrows* of our life, and mingle in its many *conflicts*, and discharge its varied and weighty *duties*.—C.

Vers. 7—9.—*A new year's prayer.* We have in these most instructive words a wise and good man—

I. CALMLY CONFRONTING THE FUTURE. Whether we read "before I die" or "until I die" (Wardlaw), we have a good man deliberately facing the future of his life. He realizes that before him stretches out a tract of time which he has to cross; he knows that he must keep steadily, incessantly, moving forward; that he will meet with difficulties and dangers on his way; that he will want all and more than all the power and the wisdom he has at his command; and he is sobered and solemnized by the thought. In view of this serious aspect of things, we find him—

II. EARNESTLY ADDRESSING HIMSELF TO GOD. "Two things have I required *of thee*." To whom, thus situated, should we go? Surely unto him who is: 1. The Lord of the future, who holds all time in his sovereign hand, who alone "can set new time upon our score." 2. The Father of our spirits, who is deeply interested in our highest welfare, and cares more about our well-being than does any human relative or friend. 3. The Lord of our life, who traces the path our feet will tread, who can and will hedge that path with his protecting care, who can and will lead us along the road we travel. And what better "requirement" or request could he prefer than that of—

III. ASKING FOR DELIVERANCE FROM DELUSION? From "vanity and lies." Whatever may have been the form which this evil took in the land and time of Agur, we know what withering and wasting delusions we need to be preserved from now. 1. *From under-estimating the value of our life.* There are many—are there not many more than there once were?—that say, "Who will show us any good?" Their name is legion who are discussing and even denying the worth of human life. Indifference, *ennui*, weariness and dreariness of spirit, disgust—leading down to a pessimistic philosophy in theory, and to suicide in action—this is the strain and spirit, and this is the current of our time. It is a delusion, both sorrowful and sinful. For it is a virtual abandonment of a noble heritage, and it is a rejection of a good and a great gift from the hand of God. A life of holy service, of unselfish devotion, of spiritual growth, of filial gratitude and joy, of Christian hopefulness, is a blessing of simply inestimable value. 2. *From over-estimating the value of the sensuous and the material.* Always and everywhere men have been in the gravest danger of supposing that "a man's life *does* consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses," or the number and sweetness of his bodily gratifications. This also is vanity; it is a falsehood which sin sows freely and which quickly takes root in the minds of men. What we need to know, what we may well ask God to teach us so that we shall not only accept but realize it, is that all the rivers of earthly good and of sensuous satisfaction may run into the sea of an immortal spirit, made for God and for goodness, and they will not fill it.

IV. PRAYING TO BE EXEMPT FROM THE EXTREMES OF CIRCUMSTANTIAL TRIAL. "Give me neither poverty nor riches." 1. *The trial of poverty.* This we can all understand, and it takes but little wisdom or sanctity to pray for exemption from its evil. 2. *The trial of wealth.* We think we could endure this without suffering. Nearly all those who have not experienced it are inclined to slight the danger of being rich. Those who have never walked on the ice imagine that *they* could do so without slipping; those who have never gambled indulge the idea that *they* could stop at the moment of prudential retirement. We do not know ourselves. He who "knew what was in man" knew how great is the peril of worldly wealth (see Mark x. 23). We do well to strive and to toil for an honourable maintenance; but we do *not* well to sacrifice health or usefulness—how much less our self-respect and the love of Christ!—in order to be rich. We do wisely to ask God to save us from the temptation—the real, the strong, the frequently whelming temptation—of great worldly success.

V. ASKING FOR THE GOOD WHICH WILL PROVE TO BE A BLESSING. "Feed me with food convenient for me;" *i.e.* which thou knowest to be suited to my need. God only knows what we want—what *we* want; what will be really and abidingly food for us, *considered in all our relations.* God knows what will nourish our spiritual nature, what will supply us as citizens of this life, what is our bodily need for those few years which he is about to give us here before he translates us to a heavenly sphere. Let us ask him to grant us what he knows is best, surely believing that what he gives in answer to our prayer *is* the best for us to receive—*that*, whatever the measure

be, and not something sweeter, or finer, or more enduring. But let us, understanding what it is we ask—as they who first used the words did not—say continually, "Lord, evermore give us this bread."—C.

Ver. 14.—*From cruelty to kindness.* To those who are even ordinarily humane, the accounts which are sometimes given of horrible cruelty seem to be barely credible; it is difficult to understand how a heart that is anywise human *can* hold such fearful feelings as are thus expressed. On the other hand, to those who have been brutalized by the long practice of cruelty, it is often found almost incredible that men and women can be capable of great generosity either of heart or hand. From the lowest depth of cruelty to the noblest height of kindness there is a very large ascent.

I. THE MORAL SCALE. At the very bottom of this scale is: 1. An absolute and even a keen delight in inflicting and in witnessing pain: this is nothing short of fiendish. Then comes, perhaps: 2. A hard indifference; an utter unconcern when suffering is beheld; a perfect readiness that it should be inflicted and endured. Less iniquitous, perhaps, than this is: 3. The steeling of the heart against the appeal which is made by suffering, and which is not altogether unfelt; the presence of some sensibility, but the endeavour, for some reason, to suppress the emotion that is excited. 4. The inward acknowledgment that interposition is due and should be rendered, but the careful and ingenious avoidance of the duty; the passing by *on the other side.* 5. The compounding of a felt obligation to help by tendering some almost worthless contribution. Then, moving upward, we arrive at: 6. The act of practical kindness to the sorrowful or the needy. 7. The act of *generous* succour, wherein that which is given is really felt. 8. The summit of self-sacrificing love, on which we "lay down our lives for the brethren," even as our Lord laid down his life for us all.

II. OUR PLACE IN THIS SCALE. The question for us to answer is—Where do we stand? How far from the height? how near to the depth? Must we stand condemned? or may we hope that it is well with us in this most serious feature of human character?

III. THE WAY UPWARD. We shall probably conclude that, although our spirit is far from that of the "generation whose teeth are as swords," etc., it is not as truly and as thoroughly the spirit of Christ, the pitiful, the merciful, the magnanimous One, as we would that it were. And we want to know what we can do to leave all cruelty, all unkindness, and even all inconsiderateness, far below us, and to rise to the exalted altitude of pure and noble beneficence. Our best plan will be to make an earnest endeavour: 1. To realize the essential brotherhood of man as being based upon that great fact of the Fatherhood of God. 2. To dwell upon the great and almost boundless capacities of mankind, on the extent to which we can suffer both in body and in spirit, and the degree of joy and excellency to which we may be raised. 3. To study with devout diligence the life and the language, the spirit and the will, of Jesus Christ. 4. To move freely and frequently, both in actual life and in the paths of literature, amongst the gracious and the generous, the kind-hearted and the noble-minded. 5. To address ourselves seriously to the work of showing kindness in every open way to those whom we can reach. Whom we help we pity, whom we serve we love.—C.

Vers. 15, 16.—*The unsatisfied human heart.* There are many things in nature which are not satisfied; but there is one thing in that which is above nature which is much less easily satisfied—an intelligent, responsible, immortal spirit.

I. THE INSATIABLE IN NATURE. Agur specifies four things; in these we find three features which supply a contrast to the craving of the human soul. The insatiable: 1. *Limited by consciousness.* The grave never says, "It is enough;" though millions have descended into its dark void, and though many ages have witnessed its consumption, it is as recipient as ever; it is, and it will remain, unfilled. But it is unconscious of its reception; it is only in imagination that it can be said to crave or to cry, "Give! give!" 2. *Limited by time.* Childless womanhood is *not* unconscious; its craving is real and keen enough; but it is not lasting; it only extends over a few years of life; there is a large proportion of life, before and after, when no such longing is cherished. 3. *Limited by quantity.* The parched earth drinks in the rain hour after hour, and even day after day, as if it would not be satisfied with any quantity; but there is a measure of

moisture which saturates and suffices; beyond that, anything that falls or flows is redundant.

II. THE UNSATISFIED HUMAN HEART. Here there are practically no limitations. The human heart: 1. *Is painfully conscious of its deep craving.* Unlike the grave, unlike the fire, which seems animated indeed, but is actually unconscious, the human soul is profoundly moved as it yearns for something more and better than anything it holds; down to its depths it is disturbed, troubled, agitated. Its voice, crying, "Give! give!" is not merely poetical, it is pathetic and even passionate. 2. *Is unlimited by time.* Unlike childless womanhood, its yearning for what it has not is not confined to a few years of its existence; it extends through life; it reaches on to old age, to the very hour of departure. It does not grow, thrive, fade, and die; *it lasts;* it is often found to be as keen and vigorous at the end as at the beginning, in the near neighbourhood of death as in the prime of life. 3. *Is unlimited by quantity.* Nothing that is human or earthly does satisfy the human heart. All affection, all honour, all power, all occupation, all pleasures, run into it, but they do not fill it (see Eccles. i. 7; ii. 1—11). The heart of man, created for that which is highest and best, is not satisfied with anything that falls short of that. It is profoundly conscious that something is wanting of which it is not possessed. It says, blindly perhaps, but earnestly and sometimes passionately, "*Give! give!* I have not enough. I eat, but am still an hungered; I drink, but am still athirst."

III. THE SATISFIED HUMAN SOUL. There is one source of satisfaction; it is found in God himself. "O Lord, thou hast made us for thyself, and our heart findeth no rest until it resteth in thee;" but in him, "who is our home," we do find rest and peace. To us to whom the Son of God and Saviour of mankind has spoken, the voice of cheer and hope is ever calling, "Come unto me . . . I will give you rest." In (1) the friendship, (2) the service, (3) the likeness, of Jesus Christ, and in (4) the good hope through his grace of eternal life, we find the supreme and the lasting satisfaction of the soul. He is the Bread of life, and eating of him we do not hunger more.—C.

Vers. 24—28.—*Success within success.* Many things go to make a man successful, in a true and large sense of that word. A man may have many elements of success, and yet, for want of one more, he may fail. The best part of our succeeding is this—that if we are labouring for some present and visible reward, we are, whilst so doing and in the very act, securing a deeper and a larger good, as the schoolboy seeking the prize is really storing up knowledge and power. We may learn from some of the least and humblest of God's creatures what are the elements of success in the ordering of our life and, at the same time, in the construction of our character.

I. THE ORDERING OF OUR LIFE. If we would live such a life before men as is most honourable and gratifying, we must show the qualities which are manifested by those little creatures of our text. 1. *Forethought.* (Ver. 25.) The man who does not look forward and prepare for the day and the hour when some special demand will be made upon him, must go down. A wise provision made in the time of leisure or abundance is essential to outward and visible success. We must "buy up the opportunity ['redeem the time']" (Col. iv. 5); otherwise, "when the occasion comes, we shall not be equal to the occasion;" *e.g.* the apprentice, the student, etc. 2. *Securing a retreat,* or having a reserve (ver. 26). To be able to run to the rocks or fastnesses is necessary for the feeble. And in the ordering of our life it is necessary to count on our being sometimes defeated. He is but a poor captain who conducts his campaign without "securing his base;" and he does not know the practical wisdom of life who does not provide for himself a retreat, a reserve, when fortune goes against him, as it sometimes will, in "the battle of life." 3. *Co-operation.* (Ver. 27.) It is an essential part of personal equipment that a man be able to co-operate with others. And in the great majority of cases this means readiness to take an inferior place, to obey instructions, to fall in with the suggestions of other people, to forego our own preference and adopt another man's method. It means listening and learning, conciliation and concession, punctuality and politeness. 4. *Aspiration and patience.* (Ver. 28.) For the little and unwelcome spider (or lizard) to establish itself in king's palaces there is demanded this twofold virtue. And for our success we need this also—ambition to attempt and assiduity to win our way, in spite of all the obstacles that may intervene. He that has

no heart for enterprise will certainly achieve nothing; and he who lacks patience to wait his time, perseverance to renew his efforts as often as he is foiled, or as often as one success opens the way to another, will reach no king's palace, no place of honour or of influence.

II. THE CONSTRUCTION OF OUR CHARACTER. God has so ordered all things with us and for us that, as we are striving for one thing, we do gain another. As we seek an honourable position in life, we are building up our character. All these elements of success are features of human character, so that while we are "making our way," we are making *ourselves* also. Much that is most valuable in our moral and spiritual constitution is constructed by us in ways and at times when we think not of it; it is like the seed that grows secretly, night and day, the farmer "knoweth not how" (Mark iv. 27). Hence the very great importance that we should be always and everywhere acting on sound, Christian principles; for it is not so much by the direct endeavours we put forth for the purpose, as it is by the constantly and silently operating influence of our daily and hourly actions, that we become what we do become in the sight of God. Beyond and within the success of which men take notice, and on which they congratulate us, is a success which is deeper and truer, for which we may well give to God our heartier thanksgiving.—C.

Vers. 29—31.—*Spiritual comeliness.* Agur mentions four things which are "comely" (Authorized Version) or are "stately" (Revised Version) in their going; their movement is regarded with pleasure, with admiration, by those who observe it. Such demeanour on their part is suggestive of moral and spiritual attractiveness on ours.

I. WE MUST SECURE THAT WHICH IS NECESSARY. We cannot truly live without the favour of God, without entering his service, without possessing something of his likeness, without cherishing a hope of future blessedness. To miss all this is to forfeit *the* heritage of our manhood. We can by no means do without it. This we *must* gain or be undone. But we should go beyond that.

II. WE SHOULD AIM AT THE ADMIRABLE. We ought not to be at all satisfied with ourselves unless our "walk" (1 Thess. iv. 1; 1 John ii. 6), the manner of "our going," is such as to please God, and is such also as to *win men.* Our daily lives should not only be consistent enough to save us from self-reproach and from condemnation; they should be excellent enough, admirable enough, to attract, to call favourable attention to the Divine source of all that we are and have. We should not only worship, but live and work in "the beauty of holiness;" we should aim to add the things that are "lovely" to those which are true, honest, just, and pure; we should endeavour to "*adorn* the doctrine of Christ our Saviour *in all things*" (see Phil. iv. 8; Titus ii. 10).

III. THREE ELEMENTS OF THE SPIRITUALLY ADMIRABLE. Beginning with that illustration with which Agur ends, which may come first as the most honourable, we have: 1. *The power of command.* "A king against whom is no rising up" (Authorized Version); "a king when his army is with him" (Revised Version, marginal reading); or, a king "at the head of his army." Either way, the idea is that of a man in command. There is something very attractive and even fascinating in this exercise of authority; it elicits not only notice, but admiration. There is one sphere in which it is open to all of us to exercise and to exhibit command—*over our own spirit.* There is nothing more worth our admiring regard than the sight of a man maintaining a perfect control of his spirit under circumstances of great trial or provocation (ch. xvi. 32). To exercise a sovereign control over our fear, or our anger, or our affection, or our curiosity, or our sorrow; of our impulses, or our emotions;—this is excellent and admirable indeed: then are we "comely [or, 'stately'] in our going." 2. *The possession of strength.* "A lion which is strongest among beasts." It is the conscious possession of power which gives such dignity to the "king of beasts." To this also we should attain: (1) intrinsic power, by the devout and diligent cultivation of all our God-given faculties; (2) communicated power, by the indwelling of the Spirit of God, being of those who are "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Self-sufficiency and conceit are indeed ugly enough; but conscious power, associated, as it may be and should be, with humility and kindness, is admirable and attractive. It is well to walk on our way as those who know that they have no need to fear, because God is for us and with us and in us. 3. *Moral symmetry.* The greyhound and the he-goat are

pleasing because they are well proportioned throughout their frame. To be spiritually beautiful, our character must be symmetrical. Each quality must be balanced by its opposite virtue—firmness by gentleness, thoughtfulness by readiness for action, courage by caution, generosity by conscientiousness, etc. Thus will our character and (consequently) our demeanour be comely in the view of man as well as acceptable in the sight of God.—C.

## EXPOSITION.

### CHAPTER XXXI.

Vers. 1—9.—Part VIII. SECOND APPENDIX TO THE SECOND COLLECTION, containing "the words of Lemuel" on the subjects of impurity and intemperance.

Ver. 1.—*The superscription.* **The words of King Lemuel, the prophecy which his mother taught him.** Who is intended by "Lemuel king" is much disputed. Those who connect the following word *massa* ("oracle") with the preceding *melek* ("king"), translate "King of Massa," as ch. XXX. 1 (where see note). Of the country, or the king, or his mother, we have absolutely no information. The name Lemuel, or Lemoel (ver. 4), means "unto God," *i.e.* dedicated to God, like Lael (Numb. iii. 24); hence it is regarded by many authorities, ancient and modern, as an appellation of Solomon, one from infancy dedicated to God and called by him Jedidiah, "beloved of the Lord" (2 Sam. xii. 25). But there is nothing in the contents of this section to confirm this idea; indeed, there are expressions which militate against it. Possibly Hezekiah may be meant, and his remarkable piety somewhat confirms the opinion; yet we see no reason why he should be here addressed under a pseudonym, especially if we consider that he himself was concerned in making this collection. On the whole, it seems best to take Lemuel as a symbolical name, designating an ideal king, to whom an ideal mother addressed the exhortation which follows. Solomon's own proverbs contain many warnings against the very sins of which this mother speaks, so that the section is conceived in the spirit of the earlier portion of the book, though it is assigned to a different author and another age. *The prophecy* (*massa*); the inspired utterance (see on ch. XXX. 1). This maternal counsel forms one compact exhortation, which might with more propriety be so termed than the words of Agur. *His mother.* The mother of a reigning king was always regarded with the utmost respect, taking precedence of the king's wife. Hence we so often find the names of kings' mothers in the sacred record; *e.g.* 1 Kings ii. 19; xiv. 21; xv. 2; 2 Kings xii. 1. It is difficult to say what reading was seen by the LXX., who render, "My words have been spoken by God, the oracle of a king whom his mother instructed." There are many wise women mentioned in Scripture; *e.g.* Miriam, Deborah, the Queen of Sheba, Huldah, etc., so there is nothing incongruous in Lemuel being instructed by his mother in wisdom.

Vers. 2—9.—Here follows *the exhortation*, which seems to come from the same source as the "burden" of Agur above. In this section the connection and parallelism of the parts are exhibited by repetition of thought, and often of words in the several clauses.

Ver. 2.—**What, my son?** *Mah*, "what," is repeated thrice, both to enforce the attention of the son, and to show the mother's anxious care for his good. She feels the vast importance of the occasion, and asks as in perplexity, "What shall I say? What advice shall I give thee?" "Son" is here not *ben*, but *bar*, one of the Aramaic forms which are found in these two last chapters. The word occurs also in Ps. ii. 12. **Son of my vows.** This might mean, "son who wast asked in prayer," like Samuel (1 Sam. i. 11), and dedicated to God, as the name Lemuel implies; or it may signify, "thou who art the object of my daily vows and prayers." Septuagint, "What, my son, wilt thou observe (τηρήσεις)? What? the sayings of God. My firstborn son, to thee I speak. What, son of my womb? What, son of my vows?"

Ver. 3.—*Exhortation to chastity.* **Give not thy strength unto women** (comp. ch. v. 9). *Chayil* is "vigour," the bodily powers, which are sapped and enervated by sensuality. The Septuagint has σὸν πλοῦτον; the Vulgate, *substantiam tuam*; but the prayerful, anxious mother would consider rather her son's personal well-being than his worldly circumstances, which, indeed, an Eastern monarch's licentiousness would not necessarily impair. **Nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings**; or, with a slight alteration in the punctuation (and an improved parallelism), *to them that destroy kings*; "expugnatricibus regum," as Schultens terms them. Women are meant; and the prince is enjoined not to surrender his

life, conduct, and actions to the influence of women, who, both by the dissipation and sensuality which they occasion, and the quarrels which they provoke, and the evil counsels which they give, often ruin kings and states (see the injunction, Deut. xvii. 11). The Vulgate rendering, *ad delendos reges*, looks as if the warning was against making wars of conquest against neighbouring kings; but this is not a satisfactory parallel to the former clause. Septuagint, "Give not thy wealth unto women, nor thy mind, nor thy life unto remorse (ὑστεροβουλίαν). Do all things with counsel; drink wine with counsel." This seems to belong to the next verse.

Vers. 4—7.—*The second admonition.* A warning against inebriety, and concerning a proper use of strong drink.

Ver. 4.—**It is not for kings**; or, as others read, *far be it from kings.* The injunction is repeated to indicate its vast importance. **Nor for princes strong drink**; literally, *nor for princes* (the word), *Where is strong drink?* (see on ch. xx. 1; and comp. Job xv. 23). The evils of intemperance, flagrant enough in the case of a private person, are greatly enhanced in the case of a king, whose misdeeds may affect a whole community, as the next verse intimates. St. Jerome reads differently, translating, "Because there is no secret where drunkenness reigns." This is in accordance with the proverb, "When wine goes in the secret comes out;" and, "Where drink enters, wisdom departs;" and again, "Quod latet in mente sobrii, hoc natat in ore ebrii." Septuagint, "The powerful are irascible, but let them not drink wine." "Drunkenness," says Jeremy Taylor ('Holy Living,' ch. iii. § 2), "opens all the sanctuaries of nature, and discovers the nakedness of the soul, all its weaknesses and follies; it multiplies sins and discovers them; it makes a man incapable of being a private friend or a public counsellor. It taketh a man's soul into slavery and imprisonment more than any vice whatsoever, because it disarms a man of all his reason and his wisdom, whereby he might be cured, and, therefore, commonly it grows upon him with age; a drunkard being still more a fool and less a man."

Ver. 5.—This gives a reason for the warning. **Lest they drink, and forget the Law.** That which has been decreed, and is right and lawful, the appointed ordinance, particularly as regards the administration of justice. Septuagint, "Lest drinking, they forget wisdom." **And pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted**; literally, *of all the sons of affliction*; i.e. the whole class of poorer people. Intemperance leads to selfish disregard of others' claims, an inability to examine questions impartially, and consequent perversion of justice. Isaiah (v. 23) speaks of intoxication as inducing men to "justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him."

Ver. 6.—There are cases where strong drink may be properly administered. **Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish** (Job xxix. 13; xxxi. 19). As a restorative, a cordial, or a medicine, wine may be advantageously used; it has a place in the providential economy of God. "Use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities," was St. Paul's advice to Timothy (1 Tim. v. 23). It is supposed to have been in consideration of the injunction in the text that the ladies of Jerusalem provided for criminals on their way to the place of execution a drink of medicated wine, which might deaden the pain of suffering. This was the draught rejected by Christ, who willed to taste the full bitterness of death (Matt. xxvii. 34; Mark xv. 23). The Septuagint has, "to those that are in sorrow;" so the Vulgate, *mœrentibus*, but this makes the two clauses tautological. **Wine unto those that be of heavy hearts** (Job iii. 20). "Wine," says the psalmist, "maketh glad the heart of man" (Ps. civ. 15). Says Homer, 'Iliad,' vi. 261—

"Great is the strength
Which generous wine imparts to wearied men."

"Wine," says St. Chrysostom ('Hom. in Ephes.,' xix.), "has been given us for cheerfulness, not for drunkenness. Wouldest thou know where wine is good? Hear what the Scripture saith, 'Give wine to them, etc. And justly, because it can mitigate asperity and gloominess, and drive away clouds from the brow" (comp. Ecclus. xxxiv. [xxxi.] 25, etc.).

Ver. 7.—**Let him drink, and forget his poverty.** Ovid, 'Art. Amat.,' i. 237—

"Vina parant animos, faciuntque caloribus aptos;
Cura fugit multo diluiturque mero.
Tunc veniunt risus; tunc pauper cornua sumit;
Tunc dolor, et curæ, rugaque frontis abit."

Thus is shown a way in which the rich can comfort and encourage their poorer brethren, which is a better method of using God's good gifts than by expending them on their own selfish enjoyment.

Vers. 8, 9.—The third exhortation, admonishing the king to judge righteously.

Ver. 8.—**Open thy mouth for the dumb.** The "dumb" is any one who for any reason

whatever is unable to plead his own cause; he may be of tender age, or of lowly station, or ignorant, timid, and boorish; and the prince is enjoined to plead for him and defend him (comp. Job xxix. 15). **In the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction**; literally, *the sons of passing away* (Isa. ii. 18); i.e. not orphans, children whose parents have vanished from the earth, nor strangers from a foreign country, nor, generally, mortals, subjects of frail human nature (all of which explanations have been given), but persons who are in imminent danger of perishing, certain, if left unaided, to come to ruin (comp. Job xxix. 12). Septuagint, "Open thy mouth for the Word of God, and judge all men soundly (ὑγιῶς)."

Ver. 9.—**Plead the cause**; rather, *minister judgment*, or *do right;* act in your official capacity so that the effect shall be substantial justice (comp. Zech. viii. 16).

Vers. 10—31.—Part IX. THIRD APPENDIX TO THE SECOND COLLECTION. This section contains an ode in praise of the virtuous woman, derived from a different source from that of the words of Agur, and belonging to a different age (see Introduction). It is an acrostic; that is, each verse begins with one of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, arranged in the usual order. We may compare this *mashal* with the alphabetical psalms, "Psalmi abcedarii," which are, more or less, of similar structure, but of which one only, the hundred and nineteenth, is so marked in the English versions. Other examples are Ps. ix., x., xxv., xxxiv., xxxvii., cxi., cxii., cxlv.; also Lam. i., ii., and iii. One object of this artificial construction was to render the matter easier to commit to memory. The spiritual expositors see in this description of the virtuous woman a prophetic representation of the Church of Christ in her truth and purity and influence. Thus Bede: "Hic sapientissimus regum Salomon laudes sanctæ Ecclesiæ versibus paucis sed plenissima veritate depingit. . . . Cujus (carminis) ordine perfectissimo alphabeti typice innuitur, quam plenissime hic vel animæ cujusque fidelis, vel totius sanctæ Ecclesiæ, quæ ex omnibus electis animabus una perficitur Catholica, virtutes ac præmia describantur."

Ver. 10.—ALEPH. **Who can find a virtuous woman?** The expression, *ishshah chayil*, "woman of force," has occurred in ch. xii. 4 (where see note). *Mulierem fortem*, St. Jerome terms her; γυναῖκα ἀνδρείαν is the rendering of the LXX., which places this section as the end of the whole Book of Proverbs. The expression combines the ideas of moral goodness and bodily vigour and activity. It is useless to try to fix the character upon any particular person. The representation is that of an ideal woman—the perfect housewife, the chaste helpmate of her husband, upright, God-fearing, economical, wise. See an anticipation of this character (ch. xviii. 22; xix. 14); and a very different view (Eccles. vii. 26). It is very remarkable to meet with such a delineation of woman in the East, where the female generally occupies a most degraded position, and is cut off from all sphere of activity and administration. To paint such a portrait needed inspiration of some sort. Such a one is hard to find. **Her price is far above rubies**; or, *pearls* (see on ch. xx. 15 and iii. 15). Septuagint, "Such a one is more valuable than precious stones." There may be allusion to the custom of giving treasure in exchange for a wife, purchasing her, as it were, from her friends (comp. Hos. iii. 2). At any rate, few only are privileged to meet with this excellent wife, and her worth cannot be estimated by any material object, however costly. St. Jerome, with a slight difference in the reading, has, *Procul, et de ultimis finibus pretium ejus.* You may go to the ends of the earth to find her equal in value.

Ver. 11.—BETH. **The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her.** The husband of such a wife goes forth to his daily occupations, having full confidence in her whom he leaves at home, that she will act discreetly, and promote his interests while he is absent (see the contrast in ch. vii. 20). **So that he shall have no need of spoil**; rather, *he shall not lack gain (shalal).* The wife manages domestic concerns so well that her husband finds his honest gains increase, and sees his confidence profitably rewarded. Septuagint, "Such a woman shall want not fair spoils." It is obvious to see in this an adumbration of the Church winning souls from the power of the enemy, especially as *shalal* is used for an enemy's spoils (Ps. lxviii. 12; Isa. liii. 12; and elsewhere).

Ver. 12.—GIMEL. **She will do him good and not evil** (comp. Ecclus. xxvi. 1—3). She is consistent in her conduct towards her husband, always pursuing his best interests. **All the days of her life**; in good times or bad, in the early spring-time of young affection, and in the waning years of declining age. Her love, based on high principles, knows no change or diminution. The old commentator refers to the conduct of St. Monica to her unbelieving and unfaithful

husband, narrated by St. Augustine in his 'Confessions,' ix. 9: "Having been given over to a husband, she served him as her lord; and busied herself to win him to thee, revealing thee to him by her virtues, in which thou madest her beautiful, and reverently amiable, and admirable to her husband."

Ver. 13.—DALETH. **She seeketh wool, and flax.** She pays attention to these things, as materials for clothing and domestic uses. Wool has been used for clothing from the earliest times (see Lev. xiii. 47; Job xxxi. 20, etc.), and flax was largely cultivated for the manufacture of linen, the processes of drying, peeling, hackling, and spinning being well understood (see Josh. ii. 6; Isa. xix. 9; Jer. xiii. 1, etc.). The prohibition about mixing wool and flax in a garment (Deut. xxii. 11) was probably based on the idea that all mixtures made by the art of man are polluted, and that what is pure and simple, such as it is in its natural state, is alone proper for the use of the people of God. **And worketh willingly with her hands**; or, *she worketh with her hands' pleasure*; i.e. with willing hands. The rendering of the Revised Version margin, after Hitzig, "She worketh at the business of her hands," is feeble, and does not say much. What is meant is that she not only labours diligently herself, but finds pleasure in doing so, and this, not because she has none to help her, and is forced to do her own work (on the contrary, she is represented as rich, and at the head of a large household), but because she considers that labour is a duty for all, and that idleness is a transgression of a universal law. Septuagint, "Weaving (μηρυομένη) wool and flax; she makes it useful with her hands."

Ver. 14.—HE. **She is like the merchants' ships.** She is like them in that she extends her operations beyond her own immediate neighbourhood, and **bringeth her food from afar**, buying in the best markets and on advantageous terms, without regard to distance, and being always on the look out to make honest profit. Septuagint, "She is like a ship trading from a distance, and she herself gathereth her livelihood." The expressions in the text point to active commercial operations by sea as well as land, such as we know to have been undertaken by Solomon, Jehoshaphat, and others (1 Kings ix. 26; xxii. 48), and such as the Hebrews must have noticed in the Phœnician cities, Sidon and Tyre.

Ver. 15.—VAV. **She riseth also while it is yet night.** Before dawn she is up and stirring, to be ready for her daily occupation. A lamp is always kept burning at night in Eastern houses, and as it is of very small dimensions, the careful housewife has to rise at midnight to replenish the oil, and she often then begins her household work by grinding the corn or preparing something for next day's meals (comp. ver. 18). Early rising before any great undertaking is continually mentioned in Scripture (see Gen. xix. 2; xxii. 3; Ps. lvii. 8; Jer. vii. 13; xxv. 4, etc.; Mark xvi. 2; John xx. 1). **And giveth meat to her household**; *deditque prædam domesticis suis*, Vulgate. The word for "meat" is *tereph*, which means "food torn in pieces" with the teeth (Ps. cxi. 5), and hence food to be eaten. The wife thus early prepares or distributes the food which will be wanted for the day. **And a portion to her maidens.** *Chok*, "final portion," may apply either to work or food. The Vulgate has *cibaria*, "meat;" Septuagint, ἔργα, "tasks." The former, which is in accordance with ch. xxx. 8, would be merely a repetition of the second clause, the meat mentioned there being here called the allotted portion, and would be simply tautological. If we take it in the sense of "appointed labour," we get a new idea, very congruous with the housewife's activity (comp. Exod. v. 14, where the same word is used in the case of the enforced labour of the Israelites).

Ver. 16.—ZAYIN. **She considereth a field, and buyeth it.** She turns her attention to a certain field, the possession of which is for some cause desirable; and, after due examination and consideration, she buys it. One is reminded of Christ's parable of the treasure hidden in a field, which the finder sold all that he had to purchase (Matt. xiii. 44). **With the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.** Her prudent management and economy give her means to buy vines and plant a vineyard, and thus to increase her produce. Possibly it is meant that she sees the field she has gotten is more fitted for grapes than corn, and she cultivates it accordingly. Virgil, 'Georg.,' ii. 229—

"Altera frumentis quoniam favet, altera Baccho,
Densa magis Cereri, rarissima quæque Lyæo."

Ver. 17.—KHETH. **She girdeth her loins with strength** (ver. 25). This seems at first sight a strange assertion to make concerning one of the weaker sex; but the phrase is metaphorically expressive of the energy and force with which she prepares herself for her work. Strength and vigour are, as it were, the girdle which she binds round her waist to enable her to conduct her operations with ease and freedom. So we have a similar metaphor boldly applied to God (Ps. xciii. 1): "The Lord reigneth, he is apparelled with majesty; the Lord is

apparelled, he hath girded himself with strength" (cf. Job xxxviii. 3). **Strengtheneth her arms.** By daily exercise she makes her arms firm and strong, and capable of great and continued exertion.

Ver. 18.—TETH. **She perceiveth that her merchandise is good;** Vulgate, *Gustavit et vidit quia bona est negotiatio ejus*, where the paraphrase, "she tastes and sees," expresses the meaning of the verb *taam* here used. Her prudence and economy leave her a large surplus profit, which she contemplates with satisfaction. There is no suspicion of arrogance or conceit. The pleasure that is derived from duty done and successfully conducted business is legitimate and healthy, a providential reward of good works. Septuagint, "She tastes that it is good to work." This comfort and success spur her on to further and more continued exertion. **Her candle** (*lamp*) **goeth not out by night.** She is not idle even when night falls, and outdoor occupations are cut short; she finds work for the hours of darkness, such as is mentioned in the next verse. One recalls Virgil's picture of the thrifty housewife ('Æneid,' viii. 407)—

"Inde ubi prima quies medio jam noctis abactæ
Curriculo expulerat somnum, cum femina primum,
Cui tolerare colo vitam tenuique Minerva
Impositum, cinerem et sopitos suscitat ignis,
Noctem addens operi, famulasque ad lumina longo
Exercet penso."

Some take the lamp here in an allegorical sense, as signifying life, happiness, and prosperity, as ch. xiii. 9 and xx. 20; others, as denoting a bright example of diligence and piety (Matt. v. 16). But the simple meaning seems to be the one intended. Wordsworth notes that the passage in Rev. xviii., which speaks of the "merchandise" of the false Church, also affirms that "the light of a candle" shall shine in her no more, the two metaphors in our passage applied to the true Church being there applied to Babylon.

Ver. 19.—YODH. **She layeth her hands to the spindle.** כִּישׁוֹר (*kishor*, a word not occurring elsewhere) is probably not the spindle, but the distaff, *i.e.* the staff to which is tied the bunch of flax from which the spinning-wheel draws the thread. To this she applies her hand; she deftly performs the work of spinning her flax into thread. **Her hands hold the distaff.** פֶּלֶךְ (*pelek*) is the spindle, the cylindrical wood (afterwards the wheel) on which the thread winds itself as it is spun. The hands could not be spared to hold the distaff as well as the spindle, so the first clause should run, "She stretches her hand towards the distaff." In the former clause *kishor* occasioned some difficulty to the early translators, who did not view the word as connected with the process of spinning. The Septuagint translates, "She stretches out her arms to useful works (ἐπὶ τὰ συμφέροντα);" Vulgate, *Manum suam misit ad fortia*. So Aquila and Symmachus, *ἀνδρεῖα*. This rather impedes the parallelism of the two clauses. There was nothing derogatory in women of high rank spinning among their maidens, just as in the Middle Ages noble ladies worked at tapestry with their attendants. We remember how Lucretia, the wife of Collatinus, was found sitting in the midst of her handmaids, carding wool and spinning (Livy, i. 57). Catullus, in his 'Epithal. Pel. et Thet.,' 312, describes the process of spinning—

"Læva colum molli lana retinebat amictum;
Dextera tum leviter deducens fila supinis
Formabat digitis; tum prono in pollice torquens
Libratum tereti versabat turbine fusum."
('Carm.,' lxiv.)

Ver. 20.—CAPH. She is not impelled by selfish greed to improve her means and enlarge her revenues. She is sympathizing and charitable, and loves to extend to others the blessings which have rewarded her efforts. **She stretcheth out her hand to the poor.** "Hand" is here *caph*, "the palm," evidently containing alms. She knows the maxim (ch. xix. 17), "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord," etc.; and she has no fear of poverty. **Yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.** "Hand," is here *yad*, with its nerves and sinews ready for exertion (see on ch. x. 4); and the idea is that she puts forth her hand to raise and soothe the poor man, not being satisfied with dealing alms to him, but exercising the gentle ministries of a tender love. Septuagint, "She opens her hands to the needy, and reaches forth her wrist (*καρπὸν*) to the poor." Like Dorcas, she is full of good works and almsdeeds (Acts ix. 36). It is doubtless implied that the prosperity which she experiences is the reward of this benevolence (ch. xxii. 9).

Ver. 21.—LAMED. **She is not afraid of the snow for her household.** "Snow," says Dr. Geikie ('Holy Land,' ii. 58), "covers the streets of Jerusalem two winters in three, but it generally comes in small quantities, and soon disappears. Yet there are sometimes very snowy winters. That of 1879, for example, left behind it seventeen inches of snow, even where there was no

drift, and the strange spectacle of snow lying unmelted for two or three weeks was seen in the hollows on the hillsides. Thousands of years have wrought no change in this aspect of the winter months, for Benaiah, one of David's mighty men, 'slew a lion in the midst of a pit in the time of snow' (2 Sam. xxiii. 20)." She has no fears concerning the comfort and health of her family even in the severest winter. **For all her household are clothed with scarlet;** with warm garments. The word used is שָׁנִים (*shanim*), derived from a verb meaning "to shine," and denoting a crimson or deep scarlet colour. This colour was supposed, and rightly, to absorb and retain heat, as white to repel it; being made of wool, the garments would be warm as well as stately in appearance. St. Jerome has *duplicibus* (*shenaim*), "with double garments," *i.e.* with one over the other. Warm garments were the more necessary as the only means of heating rooms was the introduction of portable chafing-dishes containing burning charcoal (see Jer. xxxvi. 22, etc.). The Septuagint has taken liberties with the text, "Her husband is not anxious concerning domestic matters when he tarries anywhere [χρονίζῃ, for which Delitzsch suggests χιονίζῃ], for all her household are well clothed." Spiritually, the Church fears not the severity of temptation or the chill of unbelief, when her children take refuge in the blood of Christ.

Ver. 22.—MEM. **She maketh herself coverings of tapestry** (*marbaddim*); as ch. vii. 16 (where see note). Pillows for beds or cushions are meant, though the translators are not of one mind on the meaning. St. Jerome has, *stragulatam vestem;* Aquila and Theodotion, περιστρώματα; Symmachus, ἀμφιτάπους, "shaggy on both sides;" Septuagint, "She makes for her husband double garments (διπλᾶς χλαίνας)." **Her clothing is silk and purple.** שֵׁשׁ (*shesh*) is not "silk," but "white linen" (βύσσος, *byssus*) of very fine texture, and costly. Purple garments were brought from the Phœnician cities, and were highly esteemed (see Cant. iii. 10; Jer. x. 9). The wife dresses herself in a way becoming her station, avoiding the extremes of sordid simplicity and ostentatious luxury. "For my own part," says St. François de Sales, quoted by Lesêtre, "I should wish any devout man or woman always to be the best-dressed person in the company, but at the same time, the least fine and affected, and adorned, as it is said, with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. St. Louis said that every one ought to dress according to his position, so that good and sensible people should not be able to say you are overdressed, nor the younger under-dressed" ('Vie Devot.,' iii. 25). So the Church is clothed in fine linen, clean and white, even the righteousness which Christ bestows (Rev. xix. 8), and invested in her Lord's royal robe, who hath made her children kings and priests unto God (Rev. i. 6; v. 10).

Ver. 23.—NUN. **Her husband is known in the gates.** Such a woman advances her husband's interests, increases his influence, and, by attending to his domestic concerns, enables him to take his share in public matters, so that his name is in great repute in the popular assemblies at the city gates (ver. 31; ch. viii. 3). She is indeed "a crown to her husband" (ch. xii. 4). **When he sitteth among the elders of the land.** Homer introduces Nausikaa speaking to her father of her duty to see that he is honourably clad when he goes to the council—

Καὶ δὲ σοὶ αὐτῷ ἔοικε μετὰ πρώτοισιν ἐόντα
Βουλὰς βουλεύειν καθαρὰ χροΐ εἵματ' ἔχοντα.
('Odyssey,' vi. 60.)

"For our costly robes,
All sullied now, the cleansing stream requires;
And thine especially, when thou appear'st
In council with the princes of the land,
Had need be pure."
(Cowper.)

St. Gregory sees here an adumbration of the day of judgment: "For the Redeemer of mankind is the 'Husband' of holy Church, who shows himself 'renowned' (*nobilis*, Vulgate) in the gates. Who first came in sight in degradation and in mockings, but shall appear on high at the entering in of his kingdom; and 'he sitteth among the elders of the land,' for that he shall decree sentence of condemnation together with the holy preachers of that same Church, as himself declares in the gospel (Matt. xix. 28)" ('Moral.,' vi. 9).

Ver. 24.—SAMECH. **She maketh fine linen, and selleth it.** The word for "fine linen" is *sadin*, not the same as in ver. 22, but equivalent to σινδών, and denoting linen garments; Delitzsch calls it "body-linen" (comp. Judg. xiv. 12, 13; Isa. iii. 23). **Delivereth girdles unto the merchant;** literally, *unto the Canaanite;* i.e. the Phœnician merchant, a generic name for all traders (see Isa. xxiii. 8; Zech. xiv. 21). Girdles were necessary articles of attire with the flowing robes of Eastern dress. The common kind were made of leather, as is the use at the present day; but a more costly article was of linen curiously worked in gold and silver thread, and studded with jewels and gold (see 2 Sam. xviii. 11; Dan. x. 5). So Virgil ('Æneid,' ix. 359) speaks of "aurea bullis cingula." We read of Queen Parysatis having certain villages assigned

her for girdle-money, *εἰς ζώνην δεδομέναι* (Xen., 'Anab.,' i. 4. 9). Cicero alludes to the same custom in his Verrine oration (ch. iii. 33): "Solere aiunt barbaros reges Persarum ac Syrorum plures uxores habere, his autem uxoribus civitates attribuere hoc modo: hæc civitas mulieri in redimiculum præbeat, hæc in collum, hæc in crines" (comp. Plato, 'Alcib. I.,' p. 123, B). Such rich and elaborately worked girdles the mistress could readily barter with Phœnician merchants, who would give in exchange purple (ver. 22) and other articles of use or luxury. On this passage St. Gregory thus moralizes: "What is signified by a garment of fine linen, but the subtle texture of holy preaching? In which men rest softly, because the mind of the faithful is refreshed therein by heavenly hope. Whence also the animals are shown to Peter in a linen sheet, because the souls of sinners mercifully gathered together are enclosed in the gentle quiet of faith. The Church therefore made and sold this fine garment, because she imparted in words that faith which she had woven by belief; and received from unbelievers a life of upright conversation. And she delivered a girdle to the Canaanite, because by the might of the righteousness she displayed, she constrained the lax doings of the Gentile world, in order that that might be maintained in their doings which is commanded, 'Let your loins be girded about'" ('Moral.,' xxxiii. 33).

Ver. 25.—AYIN. **Strength and honour are her clothing** (ver. 17); *ἰσχὺν καὶ εὐπρέπειαν*, Septuagint. She is invested with a moral force and dignity which arm her against care and worry; the power of a righteous purpose and strong will reveals itself in her carriage and demeanour. And thus equipped, **she shall rejoice in time to come**; or, *she laugheth* (Job v. 22; xxxix. 7) *at the future* (Isa. xxx. 8). She is not disquieted by any fear of what may happen, knowing in whom she trusts, and having done her duty to the utmost of her ability. The Greek and Latin versions seem to take the expression as referring to the day of death; thus the Vulgate, *Ridebit in die novissimo;* Septuagint, "She rejoices in the last days (*ἐν ἡμέραις ἐσχάταις*)." But it is best interpreted as above. The true servant of God is not afraid of any evil tidings, his heart being fixed, trusting in the Lord (Ps. cxii. 7).

Ver. 26.—PE. **She openeth her mouth with wisdom.** She is not merely a good housewife, attending diligently to material interests; she guides her family with words of wisdom. When she speaks, it is not gossip, or slander, or idle talk, that she utters, but sentences of prudence and sound sense, such as may minister grace to the hearers. The Septuagint has this verse before ver. 25, and the first hemistich again after ver. 27. So in Lam. ii., iii., iv., the *pe* and *ayin* verses change places. This is also the case in Ps. xxxvii. In the former passage the LXX. renders, "She openeth her mouth heedfully and lawfully (*προσεχόντως καὶ ἐννόμως*);" and in the other, "wisely and in accordance with law (*σοφῶς καὶ νομοθέσμως*)." **In her tongue is the law of kindness** (*thorath chesed*); i.e. her language to those around her is animated and regulated by love. As mistress of a family, she has to teach and direct her dependents, and she performs this duty with gracious kindness and ready sympathy. Septuagint, "She places order on her tongue."

Ver. 27.—TSADE. **She looketh well to the ways of her house**; the actions and habits of the household. She exercises careful surveillance over all that goes on in the family. **Eateth not the bread of idleness**; but rather bread won by active labour and conscientious diligence. She is of the opinion of the apostle who said "that if any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thess. iii. 10). Septuagint, "The ways of her house are confined (*στεγναὶ διατριβαὶ οἴκων αὐτῆς*), and she eats not idle bread." The first of these clauses may mean that the proceedings of her household, being confined to a narrow circle, are readily supervised. But the meaning is very doubtful; and Schleusner renders, "continuæ conversationes in ædibus ejus." St. Gregory applies our verse to the conscience, thus: "She considers the ways of her house, because she accurately examines all the thoughts of her conscience. She eateth not her bread in idleness, because that which she learned out of Holy Scripture by her understanding, she places before the eyes of the Judge by exhibiting it in her works" ('Moral.,' xxxv. 47).

Ver. 28.—KUPH. **Her children arise up, and call her blessed.** She is a fruitful mother of children, who, seeing her sedulity and prudence, and experiencing her affectionate care, celebrate and praise her, and own that she has rightly won the blessing of the Lord. **Her husband** also, **and he praiseth her**; in the words given in the next verse. Having the approbation of her husband and children, who know her best, and have the best opportunities of judging her conduct, she is contented and happy. Septuagint, "Her mercy (*ἐλεημοσύνη*) raises up her children, and they grow rich, and her husband praises her."

Ver. 29.—RESH. **Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.** The versions and some commentators take the encomium in the mean and restricted sense of praise for the acquisition of riches.

Thus the Vulgate, *Multæ filiæ congregaverunt divitias;* Septuagint, "Many daughters have obtained wealth." But it adds another rendering, "Many have wrought power (ἐποίησαν δύναμιν)," which is nearer the meaning in this place. *Chayil* (as we have seen, ver. 10) means "force," *virtus*, "strength of character" shown in various ways (comp. Numb. xxiv. 18; Ps. lx. 12). "Daughters," equivalent to "women," as Gen. xxx. 13; Cant. vi. 9. Roman Catholic commentators have, with much ingenuity, applied the whole description of the virtuous woman, and especially the present verse, to the Virgin Mary. We may regard it as a representation of the truly Christian matron, who loves husband and children, guides the house, is discreet, chaste, good, a teacher of good things (1 Tim. v. 14; Titus ii. 3, etc.).

Ver. 30.—SHIN. The writer confirms the husband's praise by assigning to it its just grounds. **Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain.** *Chen*, "favour," may signify either the good will with which one is regarded, or gracefulness, beauty. As being in close parallelism with the next words, it is best taken as referring to loveliness of form. Mere gracefulness, if considered as a token of a wife's work and usefulness, is misleading; and beauty is transitory and often dangerous. Neither of them is of any real value unless accompanied by religion. As the gnomic poet says—

Μὴ κρῖν', ὁρῶν τὸ κάλλος, ἀλλὰ τὸν τρόπον.

"Judge not at sight of beauty, but of life."

**But a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.** So we come back to the maxim with which the whole book began, that the foundation of all excellence is the fear of the Lord (ch. i. 7). Such, too, is the conclusion of Ecclesiastes (xii. 13), "Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." Septuagint, "False are charms (ἀρέσκειαι), and vain is the beauty of woman; for a prudent woman is blessed, and let her praise the fear of the Lord."

Ver. 31.—TAV. **Give her of the fruit of her hands.** So may she enjoy the various blessings which her zeal, prudence, and economy have obtained. Ps. cxxviii. 2, "Thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands; happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee." Septuagint, "Give her of the fruit of her lips." **And let her own works praise her in the gates.** She needs no far-fetched laudation; her lifelong actions speak for themselves. Where men most congregate, where the heads of the people meet in solemn assembly, there her praise is sung, and a unanimous verdict assigns to her the highest honour. Septuagint, "Let her husband be praised in the gates." This frequent introduction of the husband is curious. St. Gregory thus spiritualizes the passage: "As the entrance of a city is called the gate, so is the day of judgment the gate of the kingdom, since all the elect go in thereby to the glory of their heavenly country.... Of these gates Solomon says, 'Give her of the fruit of her hands, and her own works shall praise her in the gates.' For holy Church then receives of 'the fruit of her hands,' when the recompensing of her labour raises her up to the possession of heavenly blessings; for her 'works then praise her in the gates,' when in the very entrance to his kingdom the words are spoken to his members, 'I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat,' etc." ('Moral.,' vi. 9).

## HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*A mother's counsel.* The last chapter of the Book of Proverbs gives us the picture of a mother's counsel to her son—wise and good and eloquent with love and yearning anxiety. Here is a picture to suggest the inestimable advantage to a young man of a mother's guidance. In thoughtless, high-spirited youth this too often passes unheeded, and precious advice is then wasted on ungrateful ears. It would be more seemly to consider its unique merits.

I. IT SPRINGS FROM A WOMAN'S NATURE. We have many beautiful pictures of women in the Bible. Inspired women have conveyed to us some parts of the biblical teaching. Deborah (Judg. v. 7), the mother of Samuel, and now the mother of Lemuel, all help us with great Divine truths or holy thoughts and influences. It is the gift of women to see into truth with a flash of sympathy. The wonder is that we have so small a part of the Bible from the tongue and pen of women.

II. IT IS INSPIRED BY A MOTHER'S HEART. The biblical gallery of holy women does not introduce us to the cloisters. The Hebrew heroines were "mothers in Israel," not nuns. Maternity completes woman. "The perfect woman, nobly planned," is one who can think, love, and act with the large heart of a mother.

III. IT IS CHARACTERIZED BY UNSELFISH DEVOTION. There is nowhere in all creation

such an image of utterly unselfish, of completely self-sacrificing love as that of a woman for her child. She almost gives her life for his infant existence. All through his helpless years she watches over him with untiring care. When he goes forth into the world, she follows him with never-flagging interest. He may forget her; she will never forget him. If he does well, her joy is unbounded; if he does ill, her heart is broken. Without a thought of self, she spends herself on her child, and finds her life or her death in his conduct.

IV. IT IS GUIDED BY DEEP KNOWLEDGE. The mother may not know much of the outer world; she may be quite ignorant of the most recent dicta of science; some of her notions may seem old-fashioned to her modern-minded son. But foolish indeed will he be if he dares to despise her counsels on such grounds. She knows *him*—his strength and his weakness, his childish faults and his early promises. Here lies the secret of her wisdom.

V. IT CANNOT BE NEGLECTED WITHOUT CRUEL INGRATITUDE. The son may think himself wiser than his mother, but at least he should give reverent attention to her advice. So much love and care and thoughtfulness do not deserve to be tossed aside in a moment of impatience. The wise son will acknowledge that his mother's wishes deserve his most earnest consideration. It may be, then, that he will be held back in the hour of temptation by the thought of the poignant grief that his shameful fall would give to his mother. It is much for a life to be worthy of a good Christian mother's counsel.

Vers. 10—31.—*The typical woman.* I. HER SPHERE. This is domestic. 1. *In marriage.* The typical woman is a wife and mother, not a St. Agnes, the mystical bride of Christ, nor even a Virgin Mary. We see her in Sarah, in Naomi, in Hannah, in Eunice. There is invaluable service for the world which only women who are free from the ties of home can accomplish; there is a noble mission for single women. But there is nothing in Scripture, reason, or conscience to suggest that virginity is more holy than marriage, that the maiden is more saintly than the matron. 2. *In the work of the home.* Moreover, for unmarried women household cares and quiet home duties usually have the first call. Some women may be called to more public positions. A queen may adorn a throne. A Florence Nightingale may live as an angel of mercy to the suffering. But these are exceptional persons. Every Jewess was not a Deborah, and even the martial prophetess, unlike her French counterpart, Joan of Arc, was "a mother in Israel." 3. *Therefore with domestic responsibility.* The typical woman will be judged primarily in regard to domestic duties. The true wife is the helpmeet of her husband. Her first aim will be to "do him good" (ver. 12). If she fails here, her public service is of little account.

II. HER CHARACTER. This is described in a graphic picture of her life—a picture which is in striking contrast to the ignorance, the indolence, the inanity of an Oriental harem. Observe its chief features. 1. *Trustworthiness.* The true wife is her husband's confidant. She must be worthy of confidence by being (1) faithful, (2) sympathetic, (3) intelligent. 2. *Industry.* Nothing can be more foolish than the notion that a "lady" should have no occupation. The ideal woman rises early and busies herself with many affairs. In old days, when the spinning was done at home and most of the family garments were made by the women of the house, the clothing of husband and children bore testimony to the industry of the wife. Machinery has destroyed this antique picture. Yet the spirit of it remains. The true wife still finds an abundance of domestic occupations. 3. *Thrift.* The wife of the Proverbs is quite a business woman, selling the superfluous work of her hands to merchants, and buying land with the proceeds. Yet by her foresight she provides warm clothing for the winter, and therefore she can afford to laugh when the snow cometh. 4. *Strength.* "She girdeth her loins with strength." The physical education of women is just now receiving especial attention, and rightly so. It is a woman's duty to be strong, if by means of wholesome food and exercise she can conquer weakness. No doubt the ailments of many women spring from lassitude, indolence, and self-surrender. But even when bodily frailty cannot be conquered, strength of soul may be attained. 5. *Charity.* The strong and thrifty wife might be hard, cold, and selfish. But the true woman "stretcheth out her hand to the poor" (ver. 20). 6. *Gracious speech.*

So energetic a woman might still be thought somewhat unlovable if we had not this final trait: "in her tongue is the law of kindness" (ver. 26). How much may the tone of a woman's conversation do to keep peace in a household, and shed over it a spirit of love and gentleness! 7. *True religion.* This is the root of the matter. The typical woman "feareth the Lord" (ver. 30).

III. HER REWARD. 1. *In her influence.* "Her husband is known in the gates." She helps him to honour. Herself too busy in the private sphere to take her part directly in public life, yet indirectly she is a great force in the large world through her influence over her husband. 2. *In the success of her energies.* We have here a picture of a wife in affluence—not of a poor domestic drudge in the squalor of abject poverty. Nevertheless, the prosperity of the home largely depends upon her. Her thoughtfulness, energy, careful oversight of others and kindness of heart and words, are the chief causes of the welfare of her happy, comfortable home. 3. *In the honour of her family.* "Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her" (ver. 28). Surely this is a better reward than public fame. 4. *Continued influence.* This true woman deserves to have "the fruit of her hands." If she is to be spoken of "in the gates," it should be in praise of her domestic duties, which cannot but be known to her neighbours, however modest and retiring her manners may be.

Ver. 30.—*Rival attractions.* Lemuel's mother warns her son against the fascinations of superficial charms in his choice of a wife, and points to the attractiveness of a God-fearing woman.

I. THE VANITY OF BEAUTY. 1. *It is but temporary.* The bloom of beauty fades with youth; but a wife is to be a man's helpmeet throughout life, and, if both are spared, his companion in age. In making a choice for life a man should consider enduring traits. 2. *It is superficial.* Beauty of face and grace of form are only bodily attributes. They may have no corresponding mental, moral, and spiritual merits. 3. *It is deceptive.* The fascination of a pretty face may delude a man into neglecting more important considerations in the woman of his choice. Ill temper may be taken for strength of character, frivolity for liveliness, mere softness of disposition for love. But the great disillusion of lifelong companionship will dispel all these mistakes, when the discovery is too late to be of any use. On the other hand, there is no need to take refuge in a monkish contempt of beauty. All beauty is a work of God. It is the duty of a woman to make herself pleasing to others. The finest beauty is a product of health, good temper, and the expression of worthy sentiments—all of them desirable things. Note: The vanity of beauty shows the mistake of pursuing "art for art's sake," to the neglect of morality, duty, truth, and charity.

II. THE GRACE OF RELIGION. The "woman that feareth the Lord" is to be praised. Though, perhaps, less beautiful in form and countenance, she has the higher beauty of holiness. The Madonna stands infinitely above the Venus. The grace of the God-fearing woman has its own true attraction for those who can appreciate it. 1. It is *enduring.* Beauty fades; goodness endures. This should ripen with years into a more rich and mellow grace. 2. It is *deep.* The prolonged acquaintanceship that reveals the utter hollowness and unreality of those attractions which consist only in bodily form and skin-complexion only makes more apparent the treasures of a true and worthy character. Trouble that ploughs fatal furrows in the cheek of the mere "beauty" unveils the tender grace of the truly godly woman. Those scenes wherein earthly beauty fails open up wondrous treasures of heavenly grace. 3. It is *satisfying.* A feverish excitement accompanies the adoration of earthly beauty; but the beauty of a sweet, true, generous soul is restful and comforting. 4. It is *worthy of honour.* Poets give us their dreams of fair women. A higher subject would be the praises of God-fearing women. How much of the world's blessedness springs from the devotion of unselfish women—the self-sacrifices of true wives, the toils and prayers of good mothers!

Ver. 31.—*Woman's rights.* The strenuous advocacy of the rights of women by shrill oratory has injured the true cause of women by covering a serious subject with ridicule, and suggesting the unreality of the grievances urged. When extravagant demands are made, people assume that every just right has been conceded; and when

the self-elected advocates of women put forth a programme which the great body of wives and daughters repudiate, it is supposed that there is no ground for considering any complaint as to the legal and social treatment of women. But this is unreasonable and unjust. There are women's rights, and these rights are by no means universally conceded.

I. WOMEN HAVE A RIGHT TO WORK. The Oriental notion, that women are but idle ornaments of the harem, finds no place in the Bible. Here they appear freely in the world, and, though their first duties are in the home, they are not idle, nor are they wanting in enterprise. The ideal woman in the Book of Proverbs is a manufacturer, a merchant, and a landowner. Woman's work cannot be wholly the same as man's, because nature has placed limitations upon her physical energies. But she has spheres for work, and it is cruel, unjust, and selfish to keep her out of any region of activity where she can do good service, by law or by social displeasure. Two wrongs in particular need to be swept away. 1. *The notion that work is degrading to a woman.* Surely idleness is more degrading. It is rightly said that woman's sphere is the home. But it is not every woman who has a home. Surely it is a degrading and insulting idea that the main business of a young woman is to secure a husband, and so obtain a home. There are women who are manifestly cut out for other positions; many women never have an opportunity of obtaining a home of their own except by sacrificing themselves to men whom they do not love. In early life young girls are not the better for being kept in idleness, waiting for the chance that may turn up. Half the ailments of women of the comfortable classes come from want of occupation. It needs to be known and recognized that it is a right and honourable thing for a woman to be engaged in any ordinary occupation that is suitable to her powers. 2. *The fear of rivalry with men.* There have been professions the members of which have bitterly resented the invasion of their ranks by women. Such trade-unionism is most ungenerous. It is an humiliation to have to confess that men could not hold their own unless under a system of protection against the competition of women. Certainly no Christian principle can justify such selfishness.

II. WOMEN HAVE A RIGHT TO THE RESULTS OF THEIR WORK. 1. *In payment.* The wife who earns wages has a right to her purse as much as the husband to his. Where there is a true marriage, no thought of separate interests will rouse any jealousy as to the several possessions of the two. But true marriage is not always realized. We see brutal husbands living idly on the earnings of their wives. It is not enough that the poor women are supposed to be protected by a Married Woman's Property Act, for the husband is still too often the tyrant of the home. We shall only see a more just arrangement when Christian principles are applied to domestic practices. 2. *In honour.* "Let her own works praise her in the gates." Women who contribute to the service of society are deserving of double honour, because they have had to work under exceptional disadvantages. Women who have proved themselves wise, industrious, and generous in the home-life do not receive their meed of praise. Too much is taken for granted, and accepted without thanks, because the service is constant and the sacrifice habitual. In after-years, when it is too late to give the due acknowledgment, many a man has had to feel sharp pangs of regret at his heedless treatment of a wife's patient toil or a mother's yearning love. 3. *In position.* Opportunity should be proportionate to capacity. If women can work, they should have scope for work. It is the duty of Christian society to give to woman her true position. If she be "the weaker vessel," she needs more consideration, not less justice. Christ gave high honours to women, accepted their devoted service, and laid the foundation of Christian justice in regard to them.

## HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—31.—*The words of Lemuel.* The fear of God is the leading thought in these meditations; and this in a twofold relation—to the king in his rule in the state, and the woman in her rule in the house.

Vers. 2—9.—*A mother's maxims.* The mother's heart, deep in emotions of affection and urgent solicitude, is expressed in the passionate form of the address.

I. ON WOMEN, OR THE DUTY OF CHASTITY. (Ver. 3.) The weakness of this passion was one of the things, Alexander the Great was wont to say, which reminded him that he was mortal. David and Solomon were both warnings and beacon-lights against yielding to it (2 Sam. xii. 9, 10; comp. ch. ii., v., vii.).

II. ON WINE, OR THE DUTY OF TEMPERANCE. (Ver. 4, *sqq.*) Here is a sin in close affinity to the former (Hos. iv. 11). 1. *A vice degrading in all, drunkenness is most especially unbefitting those in high station.* Elah (1 Kings xvi. 8, 9), Benhadad (1 Kings xx. 16), and Belshazzar (Dan. v. 2—4), were all dark examples of the danger (comp. Hos. vii. 5). 2. *It may lead to moral perversion.* (Ver. 5.) The woman wrongly condemned by Philip of Macedon exclaimed, "I appeal from Philip drunk to Philip sober." Ahasuerus (Esth. i. 10, 11) and Herod (Mark vi. 21—28) appear to have been guilty of arbitrary conduct under the same besotting influence. Men "err through strong drink" (Isa. xxviii. 7). 3. *The true use of wine.* (Ver. 6.) It is a medicine for the fainting. It is a restorative under extreme depression. The Bible tolerates and admits the blessing of wine in moderation as promotive of social cheerfulness. It "maketh glad the heart of man," and is even said to "cheer God" (Judg. ix. 13). Hence libations were a part of the sacrificial feast offered to the Majesty on high. As an *anodyne* it is admitted here (ver. 7). But all this does not exempt from close circumspection as to time, place, persons, and circumstances in its use. The priests, when performing their sacred functions in the tabernacle and temple, were to abstain from wine. But here, as in other matters, there is large latitude given to the exercise of the private judgment, the personal Christian conscience. Any attempt to overrule the right of personal freedom creates a new class of evils. Let those who see their duty in that light adopt total abstinence; and others labour according to their ability to strike at the indirect and deeper causes of what many regard as a national vice. Wherever there is a widespread vice, it is rooted in some profound misery. The surest, though longest, cure is by the eradication of the pain of the mind which drives so many towards the nepenthes, or draught of oblivion.

III. ON THE FREE AND FULL ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE. (Vers. 8, 9.) The royal heart and hand are to be at the service of those who cannot help themselves—the widow, the orphan, the poor, and "all that are desolate and oppressed" (Job xxix. 15, 16). He is to be both advocate and judge. He is to be an earthly type of God. "Let his representatives on earth study the character of their King in heaven, and be conformed more fully to his image of forgiveness and love."—J.

Vers. 10—31.—*The virtuous housewife.* I. HER INFLUENCE IN THE SPHERE OF HOME. (Vers. 10—22.) 1. *Her exceeding worth.* (Vers. 10—12.) A costly treasure not everywhere to be found; no commonplace blessing; an ornament and a joy above all that earth affords of rare and beautiful. A treasure on which the heart of the possessor ever dwells with delight.

> "Continual comfort in a face,
> The lineaments of gospel books."

She is the rich source of revenue to her husband in all good things.

> "All other goods by fortune's hand are given;
> A wife is the peculiar gift of Heaven."
>
> (Pope.)

"If women be good," said Aristotle, "the half of the commonwealth may be happy where they are." "The greatest gift of God is a pious, amiable spouse, who fears God, loves his house, and with whom one can live in perfect confidence" (Luther). 2. *The picture of her domestic industry.* (Vers. 13—22.) It is an antique picture, the form and colouring derived from ancient custom; but the general moral effect is true for all times. The traits of the housewifely character are: (1) *The personal example of diligence.* She is seen from day to day spinning at her loom, the chief occupation of women in ancient times. She is an early riser (ver. 15). (2) *Her unrelaxing energy.* (Ver. 17.) She has no idle hour; her rest is in change of occupation. (3) *Her personal attention to business.* (Vers. 16, 18.) Whether examining land with a view to invest her savings in purchase and cultivation, or inspecting goods, her mind is in all she does.

She is not slothful in business, but glowing in spirit, and all that she does is done with heart. (4) *Her benevolence.* Her thrift is not of the odious form which begins and ends with home, and breeds a sordid miserliness out of hard-won gains. Her open hand outstretched to the poor (ver. 20) is one of the most winning traits in the picture. She has no lack of good herself, and always something over for the needy. (5) *Her care both for comfort and for ornament.* (Vers. 21, 22.) Both the very spheres of woman's activity. But she observes their true order. Her first thought is for the health of her household; she provides the warm "double garments" against the winter's snow. Her leisure is occupied with those fine works of artistic needlework by which elegance and beauty are contributed to the scene of home. Refinement adorning comfort,—this is the true relation. In finery without solid use and comfort there is no beauty nor worth.

II. FURTHER TRAITS AND DETAILS OF THE PICTURE. (Vers. 23—31.) 1. *She reflects consideration on her husband.* Her thrift makes him rich; her noble character gives him additional title to respect. His personality derives weight from the possession of such a treasure, the devotion of such a heart. Her business capacity, her energy, and the quiet dignity of her life and bearing; the mingled sense and shrewdness, charm and grace of her conversation (vers. 24—27);—are all a source of fame, of noble self-complacency, of just confidence to the man who is blessed to call her "mine." 2. *Her life and work earn for her perpetual thanks and benedictions.* (Vers. 28, 29.) Her children, as they grow up, bless her for the inestimable boon of a mother's care and love. She has revealed to them God; and never can they cease to believe in goodness so long as they recollect her. She basks in the sunshine of a husband's constant approval. "Best of wives!" "Noblest of women!" is the thought ever in his heart, often on his lips. 3. *It is religion which gives enduring worth and immortality to character.* (Vers. 30, 31.) Beauty is a failing charm or a deception of the senses. But religious principle gives a spiritual beauty to the plainest exterior. Being and doing from religious motives, to religious ends,—this is a sowing for eternal fruits. And the works of love for God's sake and man's fill the air with fragrance to the latest end of time, and are found unto praise, honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.—J.

Vers. 1—3.—*Motherhood.* We have not many words from women's lips in the inspired record, and we may therefore esteem the more highly those we possess. The verses bring out—

I. THE STRONG CLAIMS OF MOTHERHOOD. "The son of my womb;" "the son of my vows." These claims are based upon: 1. *Motherhood as such.* Upon all that motherhood means to us; upon the fact that the mother has borne her child, has cherished him at her own breast, has watched over his infancy and childhood with sedulous care, has shielded and succoured him, has fed and clothed him; as we say in one word—has "mothered" him. 2. *Motherly training and dedication.* The early experiences of the mother include much beyond the physical realm; they include the education of the intellect, the training of the will, the first imparting of religious instruction, the solemn dedication of her child to the service of God, repeated and earnest prayer on his behalf. Her child is not only her offspring; he is "the son of her vows," the one on whom she has expended her most fervent piety. 3. *Maternal affection and anxiety.* The words of Lemuel's mother are charged with deep affection and profound solicitude. And it is those who truly love us, and who are unselfishly devoted to our interest, that have the strongest claim upon us. A claim which is only that of natural relationship, and is not crowned and completed by affection, falls very short indeed of that which is strengthened and sanctified by sacrificial love.

II. THE HOPE OF MOTHERHOOD. The mother hopes for good and even great things for and from her child; he is to stand among the strong, the wise, the honoured, the useful.

III. ITS BITTER AND CRUEL DISAPPOINTMENT. When the son of much sorrow and prayer, of much patient training and earnest entreaty, who had a noble opportunity before him—when he virtually signs away his inheritance, "gives his strength" to the destroyer, takes the path which leads to entire dethronement and ruin, then is there such a bitter and such a cruel disappointment as only a mother's heart can feel and know. Then perishes a fond and proud and precious hope; then enters and takes possession a saddening, a crushing sorrow.

IV. ITS RIGHT TO REMONSTRATE. "What, my son? This of thee?—of thee whom I have loved and taught and trained? of thee for whom I have yearned and prayed? of thee from whom I have had a right to hope for such better things? Oh, lose not thy fair heritage! take the portion, live the life, wear the crown, still within thy reach!" A true and faithful mother has a right which is wholly indisputable, and strong with surpassing strength, to speak thus in affectionate expostulation to one who owes so much to her, and has returned her nothing. And what is—

V. THE FILIAL DUTY? Surely it is to receive such remonstrance with deep respect; to give to it a patient and dutiful attention; to take it into long and earnest consideration; to resolve that, cost what it may, the path of penitence and renewal shall be trodden; that anything shall be endured rather than a mother's heart be pierced by the hand of her own child!—C.

Ver. 6.—*The allowable as the exceptional.* It is often the case that that which is wrong as a rule is right as an exception; what it would be unwise, if not unlawful, to do under ordinary circumstances, it may be most wise and even obligatory to do in emergencies. This applies particularly, but not exclusively, to the subject of the text—

I. THE USE OF STIMULANTS. In a state of health and during the discharge of daily duties, shun the use of stimulants; depend upon that which nourishes and builds up. "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish;" to the man who, by exposure or by some suddenly inflicted wound, or by starvation, is brought down to the brink of death, administer the reviving cordial. What we should not depend upon for daily strength we do well to fall back upon in the time of extremity, or in the case of special need.

II. THE EMPLOYMENT OF STRONG LANGUAGE OR VERY VIVID ILLUSTRATION. It is a great mistake to be always speaking in superlatives, or to be habitually indulging in expletives, or to be regularly resorting to highly coloured illustrations. It is a sign and also a source of weakness. These very soon lose their power by repetition, and then there is nothing in reserve. And the man who has no power in reserve is he who will find himself beaten in the battle. Temperate language, moderation in the use of imagery and the expression of disapproval, is the true and wise course. Strong language is for quite exceptional cases; it has its opportunity, but should be content to wait for it.

III. RESORT TO VIOLENCE. There are occasions when physical force should be and must be employed. The magistrate is compelled to resort to it; so also is the schoolmaster, and even the parent. But the less the better. Bodily chastisement is always regrettable, and only to be resorted to when all other means have failed. Its constant exercise only hardens the object of it, and it is not unlikely to harden the hand that administers it. The wise teacher and the wise parent will do his best to reduce it to its very lowest point.

IV. AFFECTIONATE DEMONSTRATIVENESS. This has its time and place, but it is an exceptional rather than a constant one in the conduct of our life. When any one has lacked the tenderness and the affection which our heart craves, and is hungry for human love, when the free and full manifestation of heartfelt kindness will be like water to the parched lips, let it be freely and fully given. But the perpetual exhibition of endearment, whether in word or deed, is a mistake.

V. THE APPEAL TO SELF-INTEREST ON THE PART OF THE MORALIST AND RELIGIOUS TEACHER. We should, as a rule, place moral obligations and religious duty on the ground of conviction; we should continually endeavour to impress men with the feeling that they are sacredly bound to respect themselves, to regard the rights of their brethren, to respond to the claims of God, their Father and their Saviour. Religion is the response of the human soul to the boundless claim of Infinite Goodness and Love. But Christ has himself taught us that it is right and well sometimes to make our appeal to the sense of self-interest—to say to men, "If not for God's sake, who has a sovereign and supreme claim on your attention; if not for the sake of those who are related to you and dependent on you; yet for your own sake, because you love life and hate death, hearken and obey" (see Mark viii. 36, 37).—C.

Vers. 8, 9.—*The function and the privilege of power.* God gives to some men

place and power; they may inherit it, or they may win their way to it by the force of their talent or their merit. When they have reached it, what should be the use they make of it? We may look first at—

I. WHAT HAS BEEN ITS HABIT. Only too often the actual use that has been made of high station and of civil or military power is that of (1) indulgence; or (2) appropriation; or (3) oppression. Men have used their elevation only to drink the sweet cup of pleasure; or to secure to themselves the spoils of high office, the treasures which lay within their grasp; or to find a mean and despicable gratification in the enforcement of their own dignity and the humiliation of those beneath them. This is "human," if by human we understand that which is natural to man as sin has dwarfed and spoilt his nature, perverting his powers and degrading his delights. But of man as God meant him to be, and as a Divine Redeemer is renewing him, all this is utterly unworthy. Let us see—

II. WHAT IS ITS TRUE FUNCTION. It is that of *righteousness*. A man is placed on high in order that he may "judge righteously." Whether he be the king, as in David's and Solomon's time; or whether he be the magistrate, as in our own time; or whether he be the teacher, or the manufacturer, or the farmer, or the master or father in the home; whatever be the kind or measure of authority enjoyed, the function of power is to judge righteously; it is to do justice; it is to see that innocency is acquitted and guilt condemned; it is to take pains and exercise patience in order that worth may be rewarded and that sin may be shamed; it is to be a tower of refuge to those who are conscious of rectitude, and to be a source of fear to those who know that they have been "doing evil;" it is to be a strength to the righteous and a terror to the guilty.

III. WHAT IT SHOULD COUNT ITS PECULIAR PRIVILEGE; IT IS TO BEFRIEND THE FRIENDLESS. There are those who are too weak to be of much service to their neighbours; there are those who are too selfish to cherish the ambition; but the strong man who is the good man, the man in power who has in him the spirit of his Master, will rejoice in his power mainly because it enables him to help those who would otherwise go on and go down without a helper; (1) those suffering from physical privation —the blind, the deaf, the dumb; (2) those lacking mental qualifications—the weak-minded, the timid, the reserved; (3) those too poor to purchase the aid that is sometimes essential to justice and right; (4) those over whom some great disaster, which is at the same time a cruel wrong, impends—"appointed to destruction." To lift up those who have been wrongfully laid low, to befriend the unfortunate and the desolate, to stand by the side of those who cannot assert their own claims, to be eyes to the blind and a voice to the dumb, to "make the widow's heart to sing for joy," to place the destitute in the path which leads up to competency and honour,—to act in the spirit and to promote the cause of beneficence is the true privilege, as it is the brightest crown and the deepest joy, of power.—C.

Vers. 10—31.—*Christian womanhood.* If Solomon did write these words, we need not be surprised that he speaks of the rarity of the ideal woman; for she is hardly to be found in a crowded harem. It is the Christian home that contains her. We look at—

I. HER CHARACTERISTICS. And these are: 1. *Piety.* "She feareth the Lord" (ver. 30). She has within her the spirit of reverence, and the life she lives is one in which worship and the study of the will of God have no small share. She has a seat and is at home in the sanctuary; she is also constant and earnest in the quiet chamber of devotion; she knows well that the happiness of her home and the well-being of her household depend upon the favour of the heavenly Father. 2. *Purity.* She is a "virtuous woman" (ver. 10). She gives her whole heart to her husband, and enjoys his full confidence (ver. 11). 3. *Industry.* The writer dwells upon the labours she puts forth for the sake of her husband and her household. 4. *Wisdom.* (Ver. 26.) Her conversation is far removed from mere idle gossip or the vanities of an empty curiosity. She is familiar with "the Law of the Lord;" she knows what is the secret of lasting happiness. She can guide her sons and daughters in the way of life; and she instils her heaven-born wisdom into minds that welcome it and will never lose it. 5. *Kindness.* "The law of kindness is on her lips." She is one that does not rule by

the "constant droppings" of censure, but by the never-failing stream of gentleness and encouragement. Love, not fear, is the sceptre which she holds, and is the source of her strength. 6. *Beneficence.* (Ver. 20.)

II. HER REWARD. 1. *Affection and honour* on the part of those who are nearest to her. Her husband trusts and praises her (ver. 28), and her children "rise up and call her blessed." 2. *Strength and dignity* in her home. She is "clothed upon with" the tributes woven by love and esteem. Her influence is felt much oftener than it is recognized, and long after her face and her voice are no longer seen and heard. 3. *Security* against future want. She "laugheth at the time to come," while those who lack her prudence and her skill have reason to shrink from the thought of it. 4. *The prosperity* of her relatives. Her husband, relieved of care and worry at home, is able to do his proper work, and succeeds in his sphere (ver. 23).

III. HER COMMONNESS IN THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST. It might be difficult to find "the virtuous woman" in the land and the time when Lemuel dwelt (ver. 10); but she may be found to-day in any number of Christian homes. Holding the faith of Jesus Christ, governed by his principles, living his life, animated by his Spirit, fulfilling his law of love, the wife and mother is to be seen taking an honoured place, filling her home with the sweet fragrance of purity and affection, exerting her benign and gracious influence on her husband and her children. You have not to take a long journey to reach her, nor to take much pains to find her; she is at home in "the castle of the noble, in the mansion of the wealthy, and in the cottage of the poor and the lowly."

1. Let us freely acknowledge our great indebtedness to her. Those who have had the priceless advantage of a mother possessed of the Christian virtues and graces have more to thank God for than if they had inherited a titled name or an ample fortune. 2. If it be open to us, let us join her ranks. To be a woman living under the commanding influence of Christian principle, breathing a Christian spirit, and shedding a Christian influence in the home in which we live,—what is there, this side the gate of heaven, that any human spirit could more wisely wish to be? To be such is to be doing a most excellent work of God; it is to be filling a most honourable and useful sphere.—C.

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TO

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*[The Exposition of the first six chapters of this book is by the Rev. S. T. Taylor-Taswell; and that on the remaining chapters by the Rev. W. J. Deane.]*