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## **Barnes' Notes on the Bible** **Volume 6 -** **Proverbs**

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*To the Students of the Words, Works and Ways of God:*

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# PROVERBS

## THE INTRODUCTION TO PROVERBS

**1.** The opening words of the book (<sup><2001></sup>Proverbs 1:1) give us its current Hebrew title, of which the first word has been adopted by translators, and “Proverbs” has become the common heading of the book in the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the King James Version. At one time a title of honor, the Book of Wisdom, or the “all-excellent wisdom,” was applied by both Jews and Christians to this book, indicating that the book took its place, as the representative of the Wisdom of which the Hebrews thought so much, at the head of the whole class of books, canonical or apocryphal, which were known as Sapiential.

The Hebrew word for “proverb” (*mashal*)<sup><4912></sup> has a much more definite significance than the Greek *παροιμία*<sup><3942></sup>, and the Latin “proverbium.” Its root-meaning is that of comparison, the putting of this and that together, noting likeness in things unlike; it corresponds to the Greek *παραβολή*<sup><3850></sup> rather than *παροιμία*<sup><3942></sup>. That it was applied also to moral apophthegms of varying length, pointed and pithy in their form, even though there might be no similitude, is evident enough throughout the book.

(The word sometimes has a more extended meaning. Discourses of more or less a poetic character, without formal comparison, and with no didactic result, are, as in the case of Balaam (<sup><0420></sup>Numbers 23:7,18; 24:3,15,20,21,23), and Job (<sup><8201></sup>Job 27:1; 29:1), and Ezekiel (<sup><3702></sup>Ezekiel 17:2; 20:49; 24:3), described as “parables.” The triumph-song of <sup><0227></sup>Numbers 21:27-30, uttered by those who “speak in proverbs,” serves as another instance of the wider meaning.)

Proverbs are characteristic of a comparatively early stage in the mental growth of most nations. A single startling or humorous fact serving as the type of all similar facts (e.g., <sup><0902></sup>1 Samuel 10:12); the mere result of an induction to which other instances may be referred (e.g., <sup><0213></sup>1 Samuel 24:13); a law, with or without a similitude, or explaining in this manner the

course of events in the lives of men or in the history of their nation (<sup><2612></sup>Jeremiah 31:29; <sup><2682></sup>Ezekiel 18:2): these things furnish proverbs found in the history of all nations, generally in its earlier stages. There is little or no record of their birth. No one knows their author. They find acceptance with people from their inherent truth or semblance of truth. Afterward, commonly at a much later period, people make collections of them.

**2.** The Book of Proverbs, however, is not such a collection. So far as it includes what had previously been current in familiar sayings, there was a process of selection, guided by a distinct didactic aim — excluding all that were local, personal, or simply humorous, and receiving those which fell in with the ethical purpose of the teacher. As in the history of other nations, so among the Hebrews (compare <sup><1043></sup>1 Kings 4:31), there rose up, at a certain stage of culture, those to whom the proverb was the most natural mode of utterance, who embodied in it all that they had observed or thought out as to the phenomena of nature or of human life. So pre-eminently was the sage to whose authorship the Book of Proverbs is assigned — Solomon, the son of David.

The definite precision of <sup><1042></sup>1 Kings 4:32 leads to the inference that there was at the time when that book was written a known collection of sayings ascribed to Solomon far longer than the present book, and of songs which are almost, or altogether, lost to us. The scope of that collection may probably have included a far wider range of subjects (such as trees, creatures, etc.), than the present book, which is from first to last ethical in its scope, deals but sparingly, through the larger portion of its contents, with the world of animals and plants, and has nothing that takes the form of fable.

**3.** The structure of the book shows, however, that it is a compilation from different sources as well as a selection from the sayings of one man only; and a compilation which, in its present form, was made some three centuries after the time of Solomon. One considerable section of the book consists of proverbs that were first arranged and written out under Hezekiah (<sup><1250></sup>Proverbs 25:1). Agur (<sup><2100></sup>Proverbs 30:1) and Lemuel (<sup><2100></sup>Proverbs 31:1) are named as the authors of the last two chapters. The book is, therefore, analogous in its composition to the Psalms; it is an anthology from the sayings of the sages of Israel, taking its name from him who was the chiefest of them, just as the Book of Psalms is an anthology

from the hymns not only of David, but also of the sons of Korah and others.

The question as to how far the book gives us the teaching of Solomon himself, what portions of it may be assigned to him, and what may be attributed to some later writers, has been answered very differently. However, certain landmarks present themselves, dividing the book into sections, each of which is a complete whole.

- (a) <sup><2000></sup>Proverbs 1:1-6 is the title and introduction to the book, describing its contents and aim. There seems good reason for believing that, though <sup><2000></sup>Proverbs 1:1 gave the original title of the book, the other verses were added by the last compiler, in whose hands it took its present shape.
- (b) <sup><2000></sup>Proverbs 1:7 is something of a motto, laying down the principle which is the basis of the whole book. This may be assigned to the same compiler.
- (c) <sup><2000></sup>Proverbs 1:8—9:18; one long exhortation, addressed by the teacher to his scholar, and each sub-section opening with the words, “my son” or “my children.” In Proverbs 8 there is a change to a higher strain. Wisdom herself speaks, and not to the individual seeker, but to the sons of men at large (<sup><2000></sup>Proverbs 8:4). This personification of Wisdom as a living power, and the stress laid upon her greatness and beauty, contrasted with the “strange woman,” the “foreigner,” i.e., the harlot or adulteress, whose fascination is most perilous to the soul entering on its time of trial, are the characteristic features of this portion.

The whole of this section has been ascribed by some commentators to a later author than Solomon, on the grounds which are, to say the least, very uncertain.

- (1) It has been inferred from e.g., <sup><2000></sup>Proverbs 10:1, that the compiler wished to indicate that Proverbs 1—9 were by another writer, an inference thought to be confirmed by the contrast between the styles of writing.
- (2) The warnings (e.g., <sup><2000></sup>Proverbs 1:10, etc.) against the life of robbers as a besetting danger for the young are affirmed to point to a time of greater disorder than the reign of Solomon.
- (3) New words or forms are alleged to fall in with the same theory.

(4) Traces of the influence of the Book of Job are adduced to place the composition of this portion after the beginning of the 7th century B.C., to which the Book of Job is referred.

To which it may be answered:

- (1) The difference of style is not greater than would be natural in one who in maturer age was writing a preface to maxims which had been noted down separately from time to time.
- (2) The life of the outlaw was one of constant recurrence in the earlier history of Israel (e.g., <sup><000></sup>Judges 9:4), and there is no ground for supposing that it was entirely suppressed under Solomon.
- (3) The argument from special words, always more or less fallacious, is traversed by the far larger number of words, which are common in nearly the same proportion to all parts of the book.
- (4) The uncertainty as to the date of Job makes any argument based upon it of very doubtful weight.)

Arguments, in favor of the identity of authorship, are not lacking

- (1) There are no warnings against idolatry, such as would have been natural in one who lived under the later kings of Judah;
  - (2) the danger of contamination from foreign vices was precisely that which began to be felt under Solomon;
  - (3) the forms of luxury, described in <sup><1076></sup>Proverbs 7:16,17, are such as were conspicuous in his reign (<sup><1103></sup>1 Kings 10:28.)
- (d) <sup><1001></sup>Proverbs 10:1—22:16. The title indicates that the section had an independent origin. The continuous teaching is replaced by a series of isolated maxims, short, pithy, antithetic, the true type of the Hebrew proverbs, hardly ever carried beyond the limits of a single verse, dealing with the common facts of life, and viewing them from the point of prudence. This is the kernel of the whole book, representing the wisdom which made Solomon famous among men. Containing about 400 of these maxims, it may be thought of as probably a selection from the larger number referred to in <sup><1102></sup>1 Kings 4:32, made possibly under the direction of the king himself, and prefaced by the more homiletic teachings of Proverbs 1—9. Though there is no systematic order, here and there two or

more verses in succession deal with the same topic in a way which throws some light on the process by which the selection had been made, as though there had been something like a commonplace book, in which, though there was no systematic arrangement, there was a certain degree of grouping under different heads or catch-words.

(For example, <sup><2006></sup>Proverbs 10:6 and <sup><2007></sup>Proverbs 10:7; <sup><2008></sup>Proverbs 10:8 and <sup><2009></sup>Proverbs 10:9; <sup><2003></sup>Proverbs 10:13 and <sup><2004></sup>Proverbs 10:14; <sup><2006></sup>Proverbs 10:16 and <sup><2007></sup>Proverbs 10:17; <sup><2008></sup>Proverbs 10:18 and <sup><2009></sup>Proverbs 10:19; <sup><2012></sup>Proverbs 11:25 and <sup><2012></sup>Proverbs 11:26; <sup><2013></sup>Proverbs 11:30 and <sup><2013></sup>Proverbs 11:31, and especially the recurrence of the name “Yahweh,” <sup><2053></sup>Proverbs 15:33; 16:1-9,11, and of the word “king” in <sup><2060></sup>Proverbs 16:10,12-15.)

Certain phrases too are characteristic of this section.

For example, the “fountain” or “well of life” (<sup><2001></sup>Proverbs 10:11; 13:14; 14:27; 16:22), the “tree of life” (<sup><2013></sup>Proverbs 11:30; 13:12; 15:4), the “snares of death” (<sup><2034></sup>Proverbs 13:14; 14:27), the “destruction” that follows upon evil-doing (<sup><2004></sup>Proverbs 10:14,15; 13:3; 14:28; 18:7), the use of a special word for “speaking” or “uttering” either truth or falsehood (<sup><2027></sup>Proverbs 12:17; 14:5,25; 19:5,9), of another for “perverting” or “overthrowing” (<sup><2036></sup>Proverbs 13:6; 19:3; 22:12), the use of a special form of an unusual verb for “meddling” (<sup><2074></sup>Proverbs 17:14; 18:1; 20:3; and nowhere else in the Old Testament), etc.

As regards the substance of the teaching; stress is laid (Especially in <sup><2053></sup>Proverbs 15:3,8,9,11,16,25,26,29,33; 16:1-7,9,11,33.) on the thought that Yahweh, the “Lord,” is the supreme Giver of all good, the Judge and Ruler of mankind, all-knowing, and ordering all things; that the king, thought of in the ideal greatness which was natural in the time of Solomon, and hardly so at a later period, was as the counterpart and representative of Yahweh, an earthly Providence (<sup><2060></sup>Proverbs 16:10-15; 19:6,12; 20:8,26,28; 21:1).

(e) <sup><2027></sup>Proverbs 22:17—24:22: a section containing the more continuous teaching, the personal address, of the teacher to his “son” (<sup><2035></sup>Proverbs 23:15,19,26; 24:13,21), the same warnings against sins of impurity (<sup><2027></sup>Proverbs 23:27,28), the same declaration of the end which the teacher has in view (<sup><2027></sup>Proverbs 22:17-21), as are met with in Proverbs 1—9. It

may seem a natural hypothesis that the same writer, having made the selection which forms the central portion of the book, wrote both prologue and epilogue to it, and that this, with the short section (f), was the form in which the book was current until it received its last additions in the reign of Hezekiah.

(f) <sup><1003></sup>Proverbs 24:23-34: a section with a new title. “These things also belong to the wise,” i.e., are spoken by them, fulfill the promise of the title (<sup><1006></sup>Proverbs 1:6) that it would include the “words of the wise,” wherever the compiler found them. Short as the section is, it presents in the parable of the field of the slothful (<sup><1000></sup>Proverbs 24:30-34) some characteristic features not to be found in the other portions of the book. What had been spoken before barely and briefly (<sup><1009></sup>Proverbs 6:9) is now reproduced with pictorial vividness. What was before a general maxim, becomes sharper and more pointed as a lesson of experience.

(g) Proverbs 25—29:27. The superscription of this section presupposes the existence of a previous collection, known as the Proverbs of Solomon, and recognized as at once authentic and authoritative. It shows that there were also current, orally, or in writing, other proverbs not included in that collection. It brings before us a marked instance of the activity of that period in collecting, arranging, and editing the writings of an earlier age. It is a distinct statement, that both the collection that precedes, and that which follows, were at that time, after careful inquiry, recognized to be by Solomon himself. The chapters to which it is prefixed present a general resemblance to the portion (Proverbs 10—22:16) which all critics have regarded as the oldest portion of the book. There is the same stress laid on the ideal excellence of the kingly office (compare <sup><1012></sup>Proverbs 25:2-7 with <sup><1010></sup>Proverbs 16:10-15), the same half-grouping under special words and thoughts.

For example, in <sup><1012></sup>Proverbs 25:2-7 referring to kings, in the words “take away” (<sup><1014></sup>Proverbs 25:4,5), in the use of the same word (in Hebrew) for “strife,” or “cause” (<sup><1019></sup>Proverbs 25:9), of “gold” (<sup><1011></sup>Proverbs 25:11,12), of the “feel” in the first twelve verses of Proverbs 26, of the “slothful” in <sup><1013></sup>Proverbs 26:13-16, of the “righteous” in <sup><1010></sup>Proverbs 29:2,7,16. The average length of the proverbs is about the same, in most there is the same general parallelism of the clauses. There is a freer use of direct similitudes. In one passage (<sup><1013></sup>Proverbs 27:23-27) there is, as an exceptional

case, instruction which seems to be economic rather than ethical in its character, designed, it may be, to uphold the older agricultural life of the Israelites as contrasted with the growing tendency to seek wealth by commerce, and so fall into the luxury and profligacy of the Phoenicians.

**(h)** Proverbs 30—31: These two chapters present problems of greater difficulty, and open a wider field for conjecture. The word translated “prophecy” (<sup><280></sup>Proverbs 30:1; 31:1; *massa* <sup><485></sup> is elsewhere, with scarcely an exception, rendered “burden,” either in its literal sense, or, as denoting a solemn speech or oracle, uttered by a prophet (compare the titles of Isaiah 13—23.)

The Vulgate in both passages gives “visio.” The Septuagint substitutes an entirely different verse for <sup><280></sup>Proverbs 30:1, and in <sup><280></sup>Proverbs 31:1 gives *χρηματισμος* <sup><538></sup>.

If this meaning be received here, it indicates a marked difference between these chapters and the hortative addresses, or the collections of apophthegms of which, up to this time, the book had been composed.

Some have maintained that allusion is here made to a “land” of Massa (<sup><0254></sup>Genesis 25:14; <sup><303></sup>1 Chronicles 1:30); that its inhabitants were among the “children of the East,” whose wisdom had become proverbial (<sup><103></sup>1 Kings 4:30); and that their words were therefore thought worthy of being appended to those of the sage by whom they were surpassed. With the help of some changes in the vowel-points of the original, <sup><280></sup>Proverbs 30:1 is transformed into “Agur, the son of her to whom Massa is obedient,” i.e., the queen of Massa; and <sup><280></sup>Proverbs 31:1 appears as “The words of (or “for”) Lemuel, king of Massa, which his mother taught him.” Agur and Lemuel are thus made out to be brothers, and the queen is made the possessor of a wisdom which places her on a level with the queen of the South, or with the son of David himself. The hypothesis is ingenious rather than satisfying.

The “prophecy” is addressed to two disciples, Ithiel (compare <sup><6107></sup>Nehemiah 11:7) and Ucal. Some take these names to be two ideal names, the first meaning “God is with me,” and the second “I am strong,” both names of the same ideal person, the representative of a divine wisdom, meeting (<sup><280></sup>Proverbs 30:4,5) the confession of ignorance and

blindness. By others the words are treated as not being names at all, but part of the opening words of Agur himself, the introduction to the strange complaint, or confession, which opens so abruptly (<sup>~3102</sup>Proverbs 30:2).

The leading features of the section are less didactic, more enigmatic in character, as though it corresponded specifically to the “dark sayings” of <sup>~1006</sup>Proverbs 1:6. The phenomena are grouped into quaternions, and show a strange intermingling of facts belonging to the brute and to the human world; in this, whensoever and by whomsoever written, showing the influence of the Book of Job as clearly as the earlier sections did. Probably, the section is a fragment of a work written by one belonging originally to the country to which many critics have been led to refer the Book of Job itself, a proselyte to the faith which the occurrence of the name Yahweh (<sup>~3109</sup>Proverbs 30:9) proves that the writer had received. The reign of Hezekiah was conspicuous for the re-opening of contact with these neighboring nations (<sup>~4323</sup>2 Chronicles 32:23), for the admission of converts from them among the citizens of Zion (Psalm 87), and for the zeal shown in collecting and adding to the canon whatever bore upon it the stamp of a lofty and heavenly wisdom.

(i) <sup>~3103</sup>Proverbs 31:1-9. Most Jewish and some Patristic commentators have conjectured that Lemuel is a name for Solomon, and that the words of his mother’s reproof were spoken when the first promise of his reign was beginning to pass into sensuality and excess. Others have suggested that Lemuel is simply an ideal name, he who is “for God,” the true king who leads a life consecrated to the service of Yahweh. We must be content to confess our ignorance as to who Lemuel was, and what was the occasion of the “prophecy.” It probably belongs to the same period as Proverbs 30 and was added to the book not earlier than the time of Hezekiah.

(j) <sup>~3110</sup>Proverbs 31:10-31. The last portion of the book forms, more distinctly, perhaps, than any other, a complete whole in itself. From beginning to end, there is but one subject, the delineation of a perfect wife. The section is alphabetic in its structure. The form may have been adopted, as in the case of the alphabetic Psalms, partly as a help to memory, partly from the delight which, in certain stages, generally comparatively late in the history of literature, is felt in choosing a structure which presents difficulties and requires ingenuity to overcome them. The absence of any historical allusions makes it impossible to fix any precise date for it.

**4.** The ethical teaching of the Book of Proverbs rests upon principles which have their application to the varying circumstances of life.

The book belongs to a period when people had been taught to see more clearly than before the relative importance of the moral and the ceremonial precepts which seemed, in the Law of Moses, to stand on the same level as enjoined by divine authority. The language of Samuel (<sup><4952></sup>1 Samuel 15:22), of Asaph (<sup><4803></sup>Psalm 50:13,14), of David (<sup><4516></sup>Psalm 51:16,17), had impressed itself on the minds of the people at large, and on one who, like the writer of the Book of Proverbs, had grown up under the immediate influence of the teacher (Nathan) who, after the death of Samuel, stood at the head of the prophetic order. The tendency to discriminate between moral and positive obligations thus originated, would be fostered by contact with other Semitic nations, such as Edom and Sheba, standing on the same footing as regards the fundamental principles of ethics, but not led, as Israel had been, through the discipline of typical or symbolic ordinances. If the Book of Job was already known to the Israelite seekers after wisdom, the grandeur of its thoughts and the absence in it of any reference to the Law as such, would strengthen the conviction that instruction might be given, leading to a life of true wisdom and holiness and yet not including any direct reference to ceremonial or ritual precepts. These would be preserved in the traditions of household life, the example of parents, the teaching of priests and Levites; while a teacher such as the writer of the Book of Proverbs could aim at laying the foundation of a godly life independently of them, and exhibit that life in its completeness.

This accounts for the absence from the Proverbs of all mention of obligations on which devout Israelites at all times must have laid stress, and to which Pharisaism in its later developments gave an exaggerated prominence.

(There is no reference to the law of the Sabbath, nor to the payment of tithes, nor to the observance of the Passover and other feasts. What is true of the Book of Job, that, with the exception of the frequent occurrence of Yahweh as the distinctive name of God, it contains but little that would indicate any knowledge of the Law, or an Israelite origin, is true, to nearly the same extent, here.)

It was this negative characteristic which fitted the book to do a work which could not otherwise have been done so well, both for the education of Israel, and for that of mankind at large. The Jew was to be taught to

recognize a common ground upon which he and they alike stood (<sup><4123></sup>Mark 12:33). The Greek, when the sacred books of Israel were brought before him in his own language, could find in such a book as Proverbs, that which he could understand and sympathize with — teaching as to life and its duties, vices and their penalties, not unlike that which he found in his own literature. It was significant of the attractive power which this book exercised on the minds of men during the period between the Old and New Testaments, when there was no “open vision,” and the gift of prophecy was for a time withdrawn, that the two most prominent books in the collection which we know as the Apocrypha, the only two, indeed, that have a marked didactic character, the Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus, were based upon its model, and to a large extent reproduced its precepts.

The teaching of the Book of Proverbs was, however, in its essence, identical with that which formed the basis of the faith of Israel. Its morality was not merely the result of a wide observation of the consequences of good and evil conduct, but was essentially religious. The constant occurrence of the divine name in the form Jehovah, which was the characteristic inheritance of Israel, and which is more frequently used than that of God Elohim, is in itself a sufficient proof that there was no surrender of the truth of which that name was the symbol. The reverence of Yahweh (<sup><3107></sup>Proverbs 1:7) stood in the very front of its teaching as the beginning of wisdom. The temper thus indicated, that of awe and reverence, rooted in the consciousness of man’s littleness and weakness in the presence of the Eternal and the Infinite, was at once the motive and the crown (<sup><3105></sup>Proverbs 2:5) of the life of obedience to the laws of duty which the teaching of the book enjoins. If outward prosperity, “length of days,” and “riches and honor” (<sup><3106></sup>Proverbs 3:16; 10:27), attach to those who keep His commandments, men are taught also that He educates and trains them by “chastening” and “correction” (<sup><3103></sup>Proverbs 3:11,12). All powers of intellect and speech, all efforts after holiness, are thought of as His gifts (<sup><3101></sup>Proverbs 16:1,9), even as people are taught to recognize His bounty in all the outward blessings of their lives, and in the family relationships which make up the happiness of home (<sup><3104></sup>Proverbs 19:14). When people are told to seek wisdom, they are led on to think of it as clothed with a personal life, in closest fellowship with the Eternal, inseparably one with Him (<sup><3102></sup>Proverbs 8:22,30). And, since the wisdom which the book inculcates is thus raised far above the level of earthly prudence, so also the reward is

more than outward prosperity. “Righteousness delivereth from death” (<sup><2110></sup>Proverbs 11:4), turns, i.e., the inevitable end of life into a euthanasia. In contrast with the wicked, of whom it is true that “when he dieth his expectation shall perish” (<sup><2107></sup>Proverbs 11:7), it is written of the righteous that he “hath hope in his death” (<sup><2142></sup>Proverbs 14:32).

**5.** The application of these principles to practical and social life presupposes a state of society in which the simplicity of village life is giving way to the sudden development of the wealth and luxury which belong to cities. The dangers against which the young are warned with oft-repeated earnestness are those of extravagance, indebtedness, drunkenness, impurity leading to open lawlessness, and the life of the freebooter. Other faults incident to different temperaments are each, in their turn, held up to reprobation.

(For example, idleness (<sup><2159></sup>Proverbs 15:19; 19:15,24; 24:30-34; 26:13-16), pride (<sup><2168></sup>Proverbs 16:18; 18:12), uncontrolled speech (<sup><2100></sup>Proverbs 10:10,19; 18:7), the lack of reverence for parents and for the aged (<sup><2131></sup>Proverbs 13:1; 15:5; 19:26).

With the practical wisdom which is characteristic of the book, appealing, as it does, to those that are halting between two opinions, and inclining to the worse, stress is laid not chiefly on the sin but on the folly of the vice, not on its eternal, but its temporal consequences. People are urged to act first from secondary, prudential motives, to shun the poverty, wretchedness, ignominy, which are the consequences of self-indulgence, that so they may learn the habits of self-restraint which will make them capable of higher thoughts, and obedient to the divine law, as finding in that obedience itself their exceeding great reward. The remedies for these evils the writer or writers of the Book of Proverbs saw were to be found in education. Individuals and nations alike needed discipline and restraint. Individuals would find this in the training of home, in the counsels, warnings, and, if necessary, the chastisements also, by which the unruly will is checked and guided; nations, in the stern, inflexible, incorruptible administration of justice controlled by a wise and righteous king (<sup><2160></sup>Proverbs 16:10,12-14; 20:8,26,28). Hence, kings are counseled no less than subjects (<sup><2136></sup>Proverbs 28:16; 29:12; 31:4): the king is advised not to rely too much on his own unaided judgment, but to surround himself with wise and prudent counselors (<sup><2146></sup>Proverbs 24:6), and to refer all to that wisdom, which is the gift of God (<sup><2185></sup>Proverbs 8:15).

No ethical manual would be complete, unless it assigned to woman, as well as man, her right position in the social order. From her folly (<sup><3112></sup>Proverbs 11:22) and degradation (<sup><3126></sup>Proverbs 2:16-19; 5:3-14; 7:6-27) spring the worst evils; in her excellence is the crown and glory of a man's life (<sup><3116></sup>Proverbs 11:16; 12:4). No picture of ideal happiness is brighter than that of a home which is thus made perfect with the clear brightness of true union (<sup><3155></sup>Proverbs 5:15-20). The "prudent wife" is thought of as one of God's best gifts (<sup><3194></sup>Proverbs 19:14), "building her house" (<sup><3140></sup>Proverbs 14:1) on the only true foundation. Her influence on her children is as great as that of their father, if not greater (<sup><3108></sup>Proverbs 1:8; 6:20). They owe what they have of goodness to her loving persuasion. Their sins and follies are a heaviness and reproach to her (<sup><3101></sup>Proverbs 10:1; 17:25). They are bound to render to her a true and loving obedience (<sup><3108></sup>Proverbs 1:8; 6:20). The teaching on this subject culminates in Proverbs 31, consisting as it does:

(1) of prophecy or oracular speech as to the office of a king and the special temptations incident to it, which comes from one who was herself the mother of a king, and

(2) of the picture of a perfect wife, wise, active, liberal, large-hearted, the ideal which the young man, seeking for the true blessedness of life, was to keep in view.

**6.** The Septuagint, or Greek Version of the Book of Proverbs, presents several points of interest. What was true of the Septuagint translation as a whole, that it seemed to bridge over the chasm that had divided the Jew from the Greek, holds good in a special degree of this part of it. In making that translation, the Jew would have to familiarize himself with the terminology of Greek ethical writers, and to note the precise equivalents for the attributes, moral and intellectual, of which the book treats so fully. In reading it, the Greek would find himself, far more than he would in reading law or psalm or prophet, on common ground on which he and the Jew could meet. The very words with which the Greek version of the book abounds, such as σοφία <sup><4678></sup>, φρονησις <sup><5428></sup>, συνεσις <sup><4907></sup>, δικαιοσυνη <sup><1343></sup>, were those which were echoing in every lecture-room in Alexandria. Since the book itself, according to its traditional authorship, was the first-fruits of that largeness of heart which admitted contact with other nations and familiarity with their modes of thought and speech, so the translation tended to give prominence to that side of Judaism in which it presented

itself to people, not as prophetic, typical, ceremonial, but wholly or chiefly as a monotheistic system of pure ethics.

Hence, this book, almost alone of the books of the Old Testament, served as a model for the Hellenistic writers of the two centuries B.C. The Wisdom of Solomon, the Wisdom of Sirach or the son of Sirach (compare the prologue), probably also other lost books of the same kind, confessed in their very titles, yet more in their whole structure and tone, that the Proverbs of Solomon (especially Proverbs 8) had left their stamp upon them.

Philo's language, descriptive of the Logos, is a reflection of the Greek words in which Wisdom is personified.

(Μιμουμενος <340> τας <3588> του <3588> πατρος <3962>, ὁδους <3598>, προς <4314> παραδειγματα <3856> αρχετυπα <5179> εκεινου <1565> βλεπων <991>.  
— Philo, “De Conf. Ling.” III. 342.)

(ὡς <5613> ισχυρα <2478> εποιει <4160> τα <3588> θεμελια <2310> της <3588> γης <1093> ημην <2252> παρ' <3844> αυτω <846> ἄρμοζουσα <718>; εγω <1473> ημην <2252> η <1510> προσεχαιρεν <5463>, καθ' <2596> ἡμεραν <2250> δε <1161> ευφραινομην <2165> εν <1722> προσωπω <4383> αυτου <846> εν <1722> παντι <3956> καιρω <2540>. — <1189> Proverbs 8:29,30.)

In the teaching of John, may be traced, in the highest aspects of Christian theology, the influence of the vivid portraiture of the personified Sophia of the Proverbs.

The phrases which came to express the eternal generation of the Λογος <3056> as the μονογενης <3439> υἱος <5207> (<4014> John 1:14,18), such, for example, as προ <4253> του <3588> αιωνος <165>, εν <1722> αρχη <746>, were used of her. The doxology which ascribes to the Lamb that was slain πλουτον <4149> και <2532> σοφιαν <4678> και <2532> ισχυν <2479> και <2532> τιμην <5092> και <2532> δοξαν <1391> (<41812> Revelation 5:12) is all but an echo of the words in which Wisdom speaks of herself (εμη <1691> φρονησις <5428>, εμη <1691> δε <1161> ισχυς <2479> ... πλουτος <4149> και <2532> δοξα <1391> εμοι <1698> ὑπαρχει <5225>, <11814> Proverbs 8:14,18). Even the εσκηνωσεν <4637> εν <1722> ἡμιν <2254> of <4014> John 1:14 can hardly be separated altogether from the εγω <1473> ἡ <3588> σοφια <4678>, κατεσκηνωσα <2681> βουλην <1012> και <2532> γνωσιν <1108> of <11812> Proverbs 8:12.)

It lay in the nature of the case, both as to the thoughts of Philo, and yet more as to the higher teaching of John, that, so far as the Divine Wisdom was personified, the masculine, not the feminine, word should gain the ascendancy. A system in which σοφία <sup><4678></sup> had been the dominant word might have led to an earlier development of that attractive power of the “ever-feminine,” of which Mariolatry was a later growth; or might have become one in which, as in the rabbinic exegesis of Proverbs 8, Wisdom was identified with the Law given by Moses, and yet existing before the world was.

An instance, hardly less striking, of the influence exercised by the teaching of the Greek Version is seen in <sup><2149></sup>Luke 11:49. If our Lord was speaking of Himself as ἡ <sup><3588></sup> σοφία <sup><4678></sup> του <sup><3588></sup> Θεου <sup><2316></sup> that sent its prophets and Apostles into the world and sent them in vain, then we have a direct indication that He sought to lead His disciples to identify Him with the personal Wisdom of whom such great things are said in Proverbs 8, and who utters a like complaint (<sup><1000></sup>Proverbs 1:20-33). If, however, the Wisdom of God be taken as the title of some lost book, the inference is that the teaching of the Book of Proverbs had impressed itself so deeply on the minds of the Jews of Palestine no less than on those of Alexandria as to give rise there also to a “Sapiential” literature in which Wisdom appeared as the sender of those Apostles and prophets, on whom, as its foundation, the Church was to be built. If, further, we take in the thought that our Lord’s representations of His work, as they were determined, on one side, by the Messianic language of Isaiah, were influenced, on another, by the teaching of Proverbs 8; 9; the invitation in <sup><1095></sup>Proverbs 9:5 may be the source from whence flowed the deeper parable of John 6 and of the Last Supper; the “house” which Wisdom built, with its <sup><4769></sup> στυλοι <sup><2033></sup> ἑπτα <sup><2033></sup> (<sup><1000></sup>Proverbs 9:1), the starting-point of the thought that the Church is the “house of God” (<sup><5485></sup>1 Timothy 3:15), “built” upon the rock (<sup><4068></sup>Matthew 16:18) of the Apostles as the <sup><4769></sup> στυλοι <sup><4769></sup> of that house (<sup><4019></sup>Galatians 2:9; <sup><5485></sup>1 Timothy 3:15); and the feast which she prepared (<sup><1000></sup>Proverbs 9:2,3) the origin of the parable of the Wedding Feast.

Thus, also, may be explained the stress which Paul lays on the fact that Christ Jesus <sup><1096></sup> εγεννηθη <sup><2254></sup> ἡμιν <sup><4678></sup> σοφια <sup><575></sup> απο <sup><2316></sup> Θεου <sup><4013></sup> (<sup><4013></sup>1 Corinthians 1:30), that He is <sup><2316></sup> Θεου <sup><4678></sup> σοφια <sup><4012></sup> (<sup><4012></sup>1 Corinthians 1:24), that in Him are hid “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (<sup><5103></sup>Colossians 2:3). Its influence on Patristic theology is shown by the prominence given to <sup><1082></sup>Proverbs 8:22 (see the note) throughout the Arian

controversy; and more remote after-growths of the Greek version of this book, may be noted in the Achamoth, or **Σοφία** <sup><4678></sup>, of the Gnostic systems of Basilides and Valentinus, in the church dedicated by Constantine to the Divine Wisdom, in the retention of that name by Justinian when he built the temple which, as the Mosque of Santa Sophia, still attracts the admiration of Christendom, and lastly, in the commonness of the personal name Sophia, the only one of its class that has become popular, while others, such as Irene, Agape, Pistis, Dikaiosyne, have fallen almost or altogether into oblivion.

The direct use of the Book of Proverbs in the New Testament presents some special features. Quotations from it are not very numerous, and are brought in, not with such words as **γεγραπται** <sup><1125></sup>, **ἡ** <sup><3588></sup> **γραφη** <sup><1124></sup> **λεγει** <sup><3004></sup>, or as coupled with the name of Solomon, but as current and familiar sayings, as if the book had been used generally in education and its maxims impressed upon the memory. In almost all cases the quotations are from the Septuagint Version, in some instances even where it differs widely from the Hebrew. It will be worth while, as the circumstances just mentioned often hinder the quotations or allusive references from attracting the attention of the English reader, to refer to some, at least, of the more striking examples in parallel columns.

The student should compare the Greek of:

<sup><10181></sup> **Proverbs 3:11,12** with <sup><8125></sup> **Hebrews 12:5,6**

<sup><10384></sup> **Proverbs 3:34** with <sup><5046></sup> **James 4:6**

<sup><10426></sup> **Proverbs 4:26** with <sup><8123></sup> **Hebrews 12:13**

<sup><10151></sup> **Proverbs 11:31** with <sup><6048></sup> **1 Peter 4:18**

<sup><10137></sup> **Proverbs 13:7** with <sup><1761></sup> **2 Corinthians 6:10**

<sup><10218></sup> **Proverbs 22:8** with <sup><1707></sup> **2 Corinthians 9:7**

<sup><10228></sup> **Proverbs 22:8** with <sup><8107></sup> **Galatians 6:7**

<sup><10421></sup> **Proverbs 24:21** with <sup><6127></sup> **1 Peter 2:17**

<sup><10237></sup> **Proverbs 25:7** with <sup><2410></sup> **Luke 14:10**

<sup><10521></sup> **Proverbs 25:21** with <sup><6121></sup> **Romans 12:20**

<sup><10161></sup> **Proverbs 26:11** with <sup><6022></sup> **2 Peter 2:22**

<sup><10271></sup> **Proverbs 27:1** with <sup><5044></sup> **James 4:14,16**

<sup><10104></sup> **Proverbs 30:4** (24:27 in Septuagint). **τις** <sup><5101></sup> **ανεβη** <sup><305></sup> **εις** <sup><1519></sup> **τον** <sup><3588></sup> **ουρανον** <sup><3772></sup> **και** <sup><2532></sup> **κατεβη** <sup><2597></sup> with <sup><4813></sup> **John 3:13.**)

The familiarity of the New Testament writers with the Greek version of the book is, however, shown in other ways. Over and above their use of the same ethical terminology ( σοφια <4678>, συνεσις <4907>, φρονησις <5428>, επιγνωσις <1922> Θεου <2316>, αισθησις <144>), its influence is to be traced in their choice of a word which occupies a prominent position in the vocabulary of Christendom. In Proverbs, prophetic stress is laid upon the φοβος <5401> Θεου <2316> as the αρχη <746> σοφιας <4678>, the groundwork of all virtues: the word occurs thirteen times, to say nothing of the parallel passages in <1909> Psalm 19:9; 34:11; 111:10. It might have been expected that it would be found not less prominent in the teaching of the New Testament. There, however, it is found but seldom ( <4031> Acts 9:31; <4051> 2 Corinthians 5:11; <4001> 2 Corinthians 7:1; <4052> Ephesians 5:21). It is not difficult to see why the old phrase was felt to be no longer adequate. In proportion as Κυριος <2962> came to be identified in men's minds with the Lord Jesus, and love in return for His love the one constraining motive, would there seem something harsh and jarring in a phrase which would come to them as equivalent to "the fear of Christ." Happily, the Septuagint version of the Book of Proverbs supplied also the synonym that was needed. In <4007> Proverbs 1:7 there is an alternative rendering, standing in juxtaposition to the other, namely, ευσεβεια <2150>; ευσεβεια <2150> εις <1519> Θεου <2316> αρχη <746> αισθησεως <144>. The word occurs also in <1031> Proverbs 13:11, and in <2310> Isaiah 11:2, where also it stands together with an alternative rendering πνευμα <4151> φοβου <5401> Θεου <2316>. The substantive, and yet more the adjective ευσεβης <2152>, occurs with greater frequency in the Apocryphal books, especially in Ecclesiasticus. The way was thus prepared for the prominence which the word gains, just as the necessity was beginning to be felt, in the latest Epistles of the New Testament. It occurs ten times in the Pastoral Epistles of Paul, and four times in Second Peter; <4012> Acts 3:12 (where the King James Version gives "holiness"), being the only other passage. The temper of devoutness, reverence, godliness, had thus taken the place in Christian terminology of the older "fear of the Lord."

For the most part, the choice of the Greek equivalents for the more prominent ethical or philosophical terms of the Proverbs is singularly felicitous. The history of the dominant word of the book (*chochmah*) <12450>, or more commonly in the plural, *chochmoth*, wisdom is indeed almost an exact parallel to that of the σοφια <4678> by which it was rendered. As used in the earlier books of the Old Testament ( <1028> Exodus 28:3; 35:10,31,35;

36:1) it, or its cognate adjective, is applied to the wisdom of those who had the skill or art which was required for the ornamentation of the tabernacle. We have traces of a higher application in <sup><6046></sup>Deuteronomy 4:6; 34:9. As used of the wisdom of Solomon in 1 Kings, and throughout Job and the Psalms, as in the Proverbs, the higher prevails exclusively. So, in like manner, Aristotle describes the gradual elevation of the Greek σοφος <sup><4680></sup>, how it was first applied to sculptors like Pheidias and Polycleitos, how σοφια <sup><4678></sup> thus came to be known as αρετη <sup><703></sup> τεχνης <sup><5078></sup>, then became equivalent to the highest accuracy in all things, and finally was thought of as ουδεμιας <sup><376></sup> γενεσεως <sup><1078></sup>, separated altogether from the idea of art-production. So too, the use of φρονησις <sup><5428></sup> for a Hebrew word indicating the power which divides, discerns, distinguishes, is appropriate if the chief office of φρονησις <sup><5428></sup> be τα <sup><3588></sup> καθ' <sup><2596></sup> ἑκαστα <sup><1538></sup> γνωριζειν <sup><1107></sup>. The general choice of αισθησις <sup><144></sup> rather than επιστημη <sup><1990></sup> for the rendering of the equivalent Hebrew word showed that they recognized the essentially practical character of the knowledge of which the Proverbs spoke, as perceiving the right thing to be done, and the right word to be said, in each detail of life.

Lastly, may be noted here some salient features of this Greek Version.

**(a)** In not a few places it adds to the existing Hebrew; the addition sometimes having the character of an alternative rendering, sometimes consisting of entirely new matter.

(For example, consult the Greek of <sup><21007></sup>Proverbs 1:7; 4:27; 6:8; 7:22: after <sup><21092></sup>Proverbs 9:12; 11:14; 16:5; 18:8 (substituted for the Hebrew); <sup><21093></sup>Proverbs 19:13 (substituted for the Hebrew); 23:31; 24:21; 27:16 (substituted for the Hebrew); <sup><21091></sup>Proverbs 30:31 (apparently, a paraphrase for the Hebrew).)

**(b)** Sometimes the insertions or variations have the character of an exegetical gloss, toning down or making more explicit what might seem doubtful or misleading in the original.

(For example, <sup><21028></sup>Proverbs 1:28; 2:16; 3:9; 13:11; 16:4 (as an alternative rendering); <sup><21071></sup>Proverbs 17:1; 21:9; 27:19; 27:22; 30:19.)

The arrangement of the closing chapters in the Greek Version also presents striking peculiarities, the whole of Proverbs 30 and <sup><21001></sup>Proverbs 31:1-9

being inserted after ~~3102~~ Proverbs 24:22, as part of the same chapter, and the acrostic description of the true wife ending the book as Proverbs 29. The most probable explanation of the transposition is that it originated in some accidental dislocation in the manuscript from which the translation was made.

# THE PROVERBS

## NOTES ON PROVERBS 1

The long exhortation (Proverbs 1—9), characterized by the frequent recurrence of the words “my son,” is of the nature of a preface to the collection of the “Proverbs of Solomon” (<sup><2001></sup>Proverbs 10:1). On <sup><2001></sup>Proverbs 1:1-7, see the introduction to Proverbs.

<sup><2001></sup>**Proverbs 1:2.** The writer’s purpose is to educate. He is writing what might be called an ethical handbook for the young, though not for the young only. Of all books in the Old Testament, this is the one which we may think of as most distinctively educational. A comparison of it with a similar manual, the “sayings of the fathers,” in the Mishna, would help the student to measure the difference between Scriptural and rabbinical teaching.

*Wisdom* The power by which human personality reaches its highest spiritual perfection, by which all lower elements are brought into harmony with the highest, is presently personified as life-giving and creative. Compare the notes of <sup><1832></sup>Job 28:23, etc.

*Instruction* i.e., discipline or training, the practical complement of the more speculative wisdom.

*Understanding* The power of distinguishing right from wrong, truth from its counterfeit. The three words σοφία <sup><4678></sup>, παιδεία <sup><3809></sup>, φρονησις <sup><5428></sup> (Septuagint), express very happily the relation of the words in the Hebrew.

<sup><2001></sup>**Proverbs 1:3.** *Wisdom* Not the same word as in <sup><2001></sup>Proverbs 1:2; better, perhaps, thoughtfulness.

*justice* Rather, righteousness. The word in the Hebrew includes the ideas of truth and beneficence as well as “justice.”

*Judgment* The teaching of the Proverbs is to lead us to pass a right sentence upon human actions, whether our own or another’s.

*Equity* In the Hebrew (see the margin) the plural is used, and expresses the many varying forms and phases of the one pervading principle.

**Proverbs 1:4.** This verse points out the two classes for which the book will be useful:

- (1) the “simple,” literally the “open,” the open-hearted, the minds ready to receive impressions for good or evil (**Proverbs 1:22**); and
- (2) the “young,” who need both knowledge and discipline.

To these the teacher offers the “subtilty,” which may turn to evil (**Exodus 21:14**) and become as the wisdom of the serpent (**Genesis 3:1**), but which also takes its place, as that wisdom does, among the highest moral gifts (**Matthew 10:16**); the “knowledge” of good and evil; and the “discretion,” or discernment, which sets a man on his guard, and keeps him from being duped by false advisers. The Septuagint renderings, **πανουργια** for “subtilty,” **αισθησις** for “knowledge,” **εννοια** for “discretion,” are interesting as showing the endeavor to find exact parallels for the Hebrew in the terminology of Greek ethics.

**Proverbs 1:5.** But it is not for the young only that he writes. The “man of understanding” may gain “wise counsels,” literally, the power to “steer” his course rightly on the dangerous seas of life. This “steersmanship,” it may be noted, is a word almost unique to Proverbs (compare “counsel” in **Proverbs 11:14; 12:5, 24:6**).

**Proverbs 1:6.** The book has yet a further scope; these proverbs are to form a habit of mind. To gain through them the power of entering into the deeper meaning of other proverbs, is the end kept in view. Compare Matthew 13.

The rendering “interpretation” spoils the parallelism of the two clauses, and fails to express the Hebrew. In Hab. 2:6, it is rendered “taunting proverb.” Here “riddle” or “enigma” would better express the meaning.

**Proverbs 1:7.** The beginning of wisdom is found in the temper of reverence and awe. The fear of the finite in the presence of the Infinite, of the sinful in the presence of the Holy (compare **Job 42:5,6**), this for the Israelite was the starting-point of all true wisdom. In the Book of Job (**Job 28:28**) it appears as an oracle accompanied by the noblest poetry. In **Psalm 111:10** it comes as the choral close of a temple hymn. Here it

is the watchword of a true ethical education. This fear has no torment, and is compatible with child-like love. But this and not love is the “beginning of wisdom.” Through successive stages and by the discipline of life, love blends with it and makes it perfect.

<sup><200></sup>**Proverbs 1:9.** To the Israelite’s mind no signs or badges of joy or glory were higher in worth than the garland around the head, the gold chain around the neck, worn by kings and the favorites of kings (<sup><044></sup>Genesis 41:42; <sup><205></sup>Daniel 5:29).

<sup><210></sup>**Proverbs 1:10.** The first great danger which besets the simple and the young is that of evil companionship. The only safety is to be found in the power of saying “No,” to all such invitations.

<sup><211></sup>**Proverbs 1:11.** The temptation against which the teacher seeks to guard his disciple is that of joining a band of highway robbers. The “vain men” who gathered around Jephthah (<sup><0710></sup>Judges 11:3), the lawless or discontented who came to David in Adullam (<sup><022></sup>1 Samuel 22:2), the bands of robbers who infested every part of the country in the period of the New Testament, and against whom every Roman governor had to wage incessant war, show how deeply rooted the evil was in Palestine. Compare the <sup><907></sup>Psalm 10:7,10 note.

*Without cause* Better, in vain; most modern commentators join the words with “innocent,” and interpret them after <sup><809></sup>Job 1:9. The evil-doers deride their victims as being righteous “in vain.” They get nothing by it. It does them no good.

<sup><212></sup>**Proverbs 1:12.** i.e., “We will be as all-devouring as Sheol. The destruction of those we attack shall be as sudden as that of those who go down quickly into the pit.” Some render the latter clause, and upright men as those that go down to the pit. “Pit” here is a synonym for Sheol, the great cavernous depth, the shadow-world of the dead.

<sup><213></sup>**Proverbs 1:13,14.** The second form of temptation (see <sup><210></sup>Proverbs 1:10 note) appeals to the main attraction of the robber-life, its wild communism, the sense of equal hazards and equal hopes.

<sup><217></sup>**Proverbs 1:17.** Strictly speaking, this is the first proverb (i.e., similitude) in the book; a proverb which has received a variety of interpretations. The true meaning seems to be as follows: “For in vain, to

no purpose, is the net spread out openly. Clear as the warning is, it is in vain. The birds still fly in. The great net of God's judgments is spread out, open to the eyes of all, and yet the doers of evil, willfully blind, still rush into it." Others take the words as pointing to the failure of the plans of the evil-doers against the innocent (the "bird"): others, again, interpret the proverb of the young man who thinks that he at least shall not fall into the snares laid for him, and so goes blindly into them.

**Proverbs 1:19.** Not robbery only, but all forms of covetousness are destructive of true life.

**Proverbs 1:20.** Wisdom is personified. In the Hebrew the noun is a feminine plural, as though this Wisdom were the queen of all wisdoms, uniting in herself all their excellences. She lifts up her voice, not in solitude, but in the haunts of men "without," i.e., outside the walls, in the streets, at the highest point of all places of concourse, in the open space of the gates where the elders meet and the king sits in judgment, in the heart of the city itself (**Proverbs 1:21**); through sages, lawgivers, teachers, and yet more through life and its experiences, she preaches to mankind. Socrates said that the fields and the trees taught him nothing, but that he found the wisdom he was seeking in his converse with the men whom he met as he walked in the streets and agora of Athens.

**Proverbs 1:22.** Compare the **Psalm 1:1** note.

- (1) The "simple," literally, "open," i.e. fatally open to evil;
- (2) the "scorners," mocking at all good;
- (3) lastly, the "fools" in the sense of being hardened, obstinate, perverse, hating the knowledge they have rejected.

**Proverbs 1:23.** The teaching of Divine Wisdom is essentially the same as that of the Divine Word (**John 7:38,39**). "Turning," repentance and conversion, this is what she calls the simple to. The promise of the Spirit is also like His (**John 14:26**). And with the spirit there are to be also the "words" of Wisdom. Not the "spirit" alone, nor "words" alone, but both together, each doing its appointed work — this is the divine instrumentality for the education of such as will receive it.

**Proverbs 1:24.** The threats and warnings of Wisdom are also foreshadowings of the teaching of Jesus. There will come a time when "too

late” shall be written on all efforts, on all remorse. Compare <sup><150></sup>Matthew 25:10,30.

<sup><1026></sup>**Proverbs 1:26.** Compare the marginal reference. The scorn and derision with which men look on pride and malice, baffled and put to shame, has something that answers to it in the Divine Judgment. It is, however, significant that in the fuller revelation of the mind and will of the Father in the person of the Son no such language meets us. Sadness, sternness, severity, there may be, but, from first to last, no word of mere derision.

<sup><1027></sup>**Proverbs 1:27.** *Desolation* Better, tempest. The rapid gathering of the clouds, the rushing of the mighty winds, are the fittest types of the suddenness with which in the end the judgment of God shall fall on those who look not for it. Compare <sup><1029></sup>Matthew 24:29 etc.; <sup><1724></sup>Luke 17:24.

<sup><1029></sup>**Proverbs 1:29-31.** This is no arbitrary sentence. The fault was all along their own. The fruit of their own ways is death.

<sup><1029></sup>**Proverbs 1:32.** *Turning* Wisdom had called the simple to “turn,” and they had turned, but it was “away” from her. For “prosperity” read carelessness. Not outward prosperity, but the temper which it too often produces, the easy-going indifference to higher truths, is that which destroys.

## NOTES ON PROVERBS 2

<101> **Proverbs 2:1.** Now in the divine order comes the promise

(<101> Proverbs 2:5). The conditions of its fulfillment are stated in

<101> Proverbs 2:1-4 in four sets of parallel clauses, each with some shade of distinct meaning. Thus, not “receiving” only, but “hiding” or treasuring up — not the “ear” only, but the “heart” — not the mere “cry,” but the eager “lifting up the voice.”

<101> **Proverbs 2:4.** Note the illustrations.

(1) Contact with Phoenician commerce, and joint expeditions in ships of Tarshish (see <1720> Psalm 72:10 note), had made the Israelites familiar with the risks and the enterprise of the miller’s life. Compare Job 28:

(2) The treasure hidden in a field, is the second point of comparison. Such treasure-seeking has always been characteristic of the East. Compare <1034> Matthew 13:44.

<101> **Proverbs 2:5.** The promise. The highest blessedness is to know God (<1017> John 17:3). If any distinction between “the LORD” Jehovah and “God” (Elohim) can be pressed here, it is that in the former the personality, in the latter the glory, of the divine nature is prominent.

<101> **Proverbs 2:6.** People do not gain wisdom by any efforts of their own, but God gives it according to the laws of His own goodness.

<101> **Proverbs 2:7.** *Sound wisdom* “Soundness,” an idea which passes on into that of health and safety. Compare “sound doctrine” in <1010> 1 Timothy 1:10; <1048> 2 Timothy 4:3.

<1018> **Proverbs 2:8.** *saints* The devout and God-fearing. Compare <1018> Psalm 85:8 etc. The occurrence of the word here, in a book that became more and more prominent as prophetic utterances ceased, probably helped to determine its application in the period of the Maccabean struggles to those who especially claimed for themselves the title of “devout” (Chasidim, the **Ασιδαῖοι** of 1 Macc. 7:13).

<1010> **Proverbs 2:10.** Another picture of the results of living in the fear of the Lord. Not that to which it leads a man, but that from which it saves

him, is brought into view. Notice also that it is one thing for wisdom to find entrance into the soul, another to be welcomed as a “pleasant” guest.

**Proverbs 2:12-15.** The evil-doers here include not robbers and murderers only (Proverbs 1:10-16), but all who leave the straight path and the open day for crooked ways, perverse counsels, deeds of darkness. “To delight etc.” (Proverbs 2:14) is the lowest depth of all.

**Proverbs 2:16.** The second great evil, the warnings against which are frequent (see the marginal reference). Two words are used to describe the class.

(1) “The strange woman” is one who does not belong to the family, one who by birth is outside the covenant of Israel.

(2) “The stranger” is none other than a foreigner.

It is the word used of the “strange” wives of Solomon (1 Kings 11:1,8), and of those of the Jews who returned from Babylon (Ezra 10; *passim*). The two words together, in connection with those which follow, and which imply at once marriage and a profession of religious faith, point to some interesting facts in the social history of Israel. Whatever form the sin here referred to had assumed before the monarchy (and the Book of Judges testifies to its frequency), the contact with Phoenicians and other nations under Solomon had a strong tendency to increase it. The king’s example would naturally be followed, and it probably became a fashion to have foreign wives and concubines. At first, it would seem, this was accompanied by some show of proselytism (Proverbs 2:17); but the old pagan leaven (influence) presently broke out; the sensual worship of other gods led the way to a life of harlotry. The stringent laws of the Mosaic code (Leviticus 19:29; 21:9; Deuteronomy 23:18) probably deterred the women of Israel from that sin, and led to a higher standard of purity among them than prevailed among other nations.

Most interpreters have, however, generalized the words as speaking of any adulteress. The Septuagint as if reluctant to speak of facts so shameful, has allegorized them, and seen in the temptress the personification of “evil counsel.”

**Proverbs 2:17.** *The guide of her youth* Better, the familiar friend (compare Proverbs 16:28; 17:9). The “friend” is, of course, the

husband, or the man to whom the strange woman first belonged as a recognized concubine. Compare <sup><4184></sup>Jeremiah 3:4

*The covenant of her God* The sin of the adulteress is not against man only but against the Law of God, against His covenant. The words point to some religious formula of espousals. Compare <sup><4124></sup>Malachi 2:14.

<sup><1028></sup>**Proverbs 2:18.** The house of the adulteress is as Hades, the realm of death, haunted by the spectral shadows of the dead (Rephaim, see the <sup><4880></sup>Psalm 88:10 note), who have perished there.

<sup><1029></sup>**Proverbs 2:19.** The words describe more than the fatal persistency of the sinful habit when once formed. A resurrection from that world of the dead to “the paths of life” is all but impossible.

<sup><1021></sup>**Proverbs 2:20.** The previous picture of shame and sin is brought before the disciple as an incentive to a better course.

<sup><1022></sup>**Proverbs 2:21,22.** Noticeable here is the Hebrew love of home and love of country. To “dwell in the land” is (compare <sup><1212></sup>Exodus 20:12; <sup><4528></sup>Leviticus 25:18, etc.) the highest blessing for the whole people and for individual men. contrast with it is the life of the sinner cut off from the land (not “earth”) of his fathers.

## NOTES ON PROVERBS 3

**Proverbs 3:2.** Three words carry on the chain of blessings:

- (1) “Length of days” (see the <sup>4916</sup>Psalm 91:16 note);
- (2) “Years of life,” i.e., of a life worth living (compare <sup>4915</sup>Psalm 30:5; 42:8);
- (3) “Peace,” tranquility inward and outward, the serenity of life continuing through old age until death. Compare <sup>5008</sup>1 Timothy 4:8.

**Proverbs 3:3.** The two elements of a morally perfect character:

- (1) “mercy,” shutting out all forms of selfishness and hate.
- (2) “Truth,” shutting out all deliberate falsehood, all hypocrisy, conscious or unconscious.

The words that follow possibly refer to the Eastern custom of writing sacred names on pieces of papyrus or parchment, and wearing them around the neck, as charms and talismans against evil. Compare, however, <sup>4008</sup>1 Peter 3:3,4.

**Proverbs 3:4.** Compare <sup>4005</sup>Luke 2:52. These are the two conditions of true human growth.

**Proverbs 3:5.** In preaching “trust in God” the moralist anticipates the teaching that man is justified by faith. To confide in God’s will, the secret of all true greatness, is to rise out of all our anxieties and plans and fears when we think of ourselves as the arbiters of our own fortunes, and so “lean to our own understanding.”

**Proverbs 3:6.** Not in acts of solemn worship or great crises only, but “in all thy ways;” and then God will make the “path” straight and even.

**Proverbs 3:7.** The great hindrance to all true wisdom is the thought that we have already attained it.

**Proverbs 3:8.** *Navel* The central region of the body is taken as the representative of all the vital organs. For “health” we should read healing,

or, as in the marg. There is probably a reference to the local applications used by the surgery of the period as means of healing.

**Proverbs 3:9.** “Substance” points to capital, “increase” to revenue. The Septuagint as if to guard against ill-gotten gains being offered as an atonement for the ill-getting, inserts the qualifying words, “honor the Lord from thy righteous labors.”

**Proverbs 3:10.** Compare the marginal reference. This fullness of outward blessings does not exclude the thought of the “chastening” (**Proverbs 3:11**), without which the discipline of life would be incomplete. “Presses” are the vats of a Roman vineyard, into which the wine flowed through pipe from the wine-press.

**Proverbs 3:11.** *Despise ... be weary* The temper is not that of contempt. To struggle impatiently, to fret and chafe, when suffering comes on us, is the danger to which we are exposed when we do not accept it as from the hands of God. Compare **Jonah 4:9**; **Job 5:17**.

**Proverbs 3:12.** The first distinct utterance of a truth which has been so full of comfort to many thousands; it is the summing up of all controversies (compare **John 9:2**) as to the mystery of suffering. The apostle writing to the Hebrews can find no stronger comfort (**Hebrews 12:6**) than this; the Church, in her visitation service, has no truer message for the sufferer.

**Proverbs 3:13.** The first beatitude of the Proverbs introduces a new lesson. “Getteth understanding,” literally as in the margin, probably in the sense of “drawing forth from God’s store, from the experience of life” (as in **Proverbs 8:35**; **18:22**). The preciousness of wisdom is dwelt on here, not the use to be made of it.

**Proverbs 3:14.** Compare **Proverbs 2:4**. “Fine gold” is apparently a technical word of that commerce, the native gold in the nugget or the dust.

**Proverbs 3:15.** *Rubies* The *peninnim*<sup>†1643</sup> were among the costly articles of traffic, and red or rose-colored (**Lamentations 4:7**). The last fact has led some to identify them with coral, or (as in the King James Version) with “rubies.” Most commentators, however, have identified them

with pearls, which may connect this passage with <sup><1076></sup>Matthew 7:6; 13:45. The words of the promise here are almost the echo of <sup><1081></sup>1 Kings 3:11-13.

<sup><1087></sup>**Proverbs 3:17.** “Ways” and “paths” describe the two kinds of roads, the “highway” and the “byway.” In both these he who was guided by Wisdom would walk securely.

<sup><1088></sup>**Proverbs 3:18.** This and the other references in Proverbs (<sup><1089></sup>Proverbs 11:30; 13:12; 15:4) are the only allusions in any book of the Old Testament, after Genesis, to the “tree” itself, or to its spiritual significance. Further, there is the tendency to a half-allegorizing application of that history. “The tree of life” which Adam was not to taste lies open to his children. Wisdom is the “tree of life,” giving a true immortality. The symbol entered largely into the religious imagery. of Assyria, Egypt, and Persia. Philo, going a step further, found in the two trees the ideal representatives of speculative knowledge and moral wisdom; and the same image subserves a higher purpose in the promises and the visions of <sup><1097></sup>Revelation 2:7; 22:2.

<sup><1089></sup>**Proverbs 3:19.** Hereto Wisdom has been thought of in relation to men. Now the question comes, What is she in relation to God? and the answer is, that the creative act implies a Divine Wisdom, through which the Divine will acts. This thought, developed in Proverbs 8, is the first link in the chain which connects this “Wisdom” with the Divine Word, the Logos of John’s Gospel. Compare <sup><1096></sup>Psalm 33:6; <sup><1098></sup>John 1:3. The words of the writer of the Proverbs take their place among the proofs of the dogmatic statements of the Nicene Creed.

<sup><1091></sup>**Proverbs 3:20.** Compare <sup><10907></sup>Genesis 1:7; 7:11; Job 38. Looking upon the face of Nature, men see two storehouses of the living water, without which it would be waste and barren. From the “depths” rush forth the surging waves, from the “clouds” falls the gentle rain or “dew;” but both alike are ordered by the Divine Wisdom.

<sup><1092></sup>**Proverbs 3:21.** *Let not them depart* i.e., The wisdom and discretion of the following clause. Keep thine eye on them, as one who watches over priceless treasures.

<sup><1095></sup>**Proverbs 3:25.** Under the form of this strong prohibition there is an equally strong promise. So safe will all thy ways be that to fear will be a sin.

~~<1087>~~ **Proverbs 3:27-35.** A marked change in style. The continuous exhortation is replaced by a series of maxims.

*From them to whom it is due* literally, as in the margin. The precept expresses the great Scriptural thought that the so-called possession of wealth is but a stewardship; that the true owners of what we call our own are those to whom, with it, we may do good. Not to relieve them is a breach of trust.

~~<1088>~~ **Proverbs 3:28.** Procrastination is especially fatal to the giving impulse. The Septuagint adds the caution: “for thou knowest not what the morrow will bring forth.”

~~<1089>~~ **Proverbs 3:29.** *Securely* i.e., “With full trust,” without care or suspicion. Compare ~~<1087>~~ Judges 18:7,27.

~~<1090>~~ **Proverbs 3:31.** A protest against the tendency to worship success, to think the lot of the “man of violence” enviable, and therefore to be chosen.

~~<1091>~~ **Proverbs 3:32.** The true nature of such success. That which people admire is an abomination to Yahweh. His “secret,” i.e., His close, intimate communion as of “friend with friend,” is with the righteous.

~~<1092>~~ **Proverbs 3:33.** The thought, like that which appears in ~~<3878>~~ Zechariah 5:3,4, and pervades the tragedies of Greek drama, is of a curse, an Ate, dwelling in a house from generation to generation, the source of ever-recurring woes. There is, possibly, a contrast between the “house” or “palace” of the rich oppressor and the lowly shepherd’s hut, the “sheep-cote” (~~<1098>~~ 2 Samuel 7:8) ennobled only by its upright inhabitants.

~~<1094>~~ **Proverbs 3:34.** *Surely* Better, If he scorneth the scorers, i.e., Divine scorn of evil is the complement, and, as it were, the condition, of divine bounty to the lowly (compare the marginal reference and the ~~<1095>~~ Proverbs 1:26 note).

~~<1096>~~ **Proverbs 3:35.** The margin conveys the thought that “fools” glory in that which is indeed their shame. Others take the clause as meaning “every fool takes up shame,” i.e., gains nothing but that.

## NOTES ON PROVERBS 4

**Proverbs 4:1.** The words “ye children” indicate as usual a new section returning, after the break of Proverbs 3:27-35, to the old strain of fatherly counsel.

**Proverbs 4:2.** *Doctrine* Knowledge orally given and received.

**Proverbs 4:3.** Probably the words of Solomon himself, who looks back from his glorious throne and his matured wisdom to the training which was the starting point. The part taken by Bathsheba in 1 Kings 1, no less than the friendship between her and Nathan, indicates that a mother’s training might well have laid the foundation of the king’s future wisdom. Among the Israelites and Egyptians alone, of the nations of the old world, was the son’s reverence for the mother placed side by side with that which he owed to his father.

*Only beloved*, literally “only,” but the word is used apparently (as in Genesis 22:2,12) in its derived sense, “beloved like an only son.” The Vulgate gives “unigenitus.” Compare the words applied to our Lord, as the “only begotten” (John 1:14), the “beloved” (Ephesians 1:6).

**Proverbs 4:4-20.** The counsel which has come to him, in substance, from his father. Compare it with 2 Samuel 23:2 etc.; 1 Chronicles 28:9, 29:17; Psalm 15; Psalm 24; Psalm 37.

**Proverbs 4:7.** Or, “The beginning of wisdom is — get wisdom.” To seek is to find, to desire is to obtain.

**Proverbs 4:12.** The ever-recurring parable of the journey of life. In the way of wisdom the path is clear and open, obstacles disappear; in the quickest activity (“when thou runnest”) there is no risk of falling.

**Proverbs 4:13.** *She is thy life* Another parallel between personified Wisdom in this book and the Incarnate Wisdom in John 1:4.

**Proverbs 4:16.** A fearful stage of debasement. Sin is the condition without which there can be no repose.

<sup><1047></sup>**Proverbs 4:17.** i.e., Bread and wine gained by unjust deeds. Compare <sup><1018></sup>Amos 2:8. A less probable interpretation is, “They eat wickedness as bread, and drink violence as wine.” Compare <sup><1816></sup>Job 15:16; 34:7.

<sup><1048></sup>**Proverbs 4:18.** *Shining ... shineth* The two Hebrew words are different; the first having the sense of bright or clear. The beauty of a cloudless sunshine growing on, shining as it goes, to the full and perfect day, is chosen as the fittest figure of the ever increasing brightness of the good man’s life. Compare the marginal reference.

<sup><1049></sup>**Proverbs 4:19.** Compare our Lord’s teaching (<sup><3110></sup>John 11:10; 12:35).

<sup><1050></sup>**Proverbs 4:20.** The teacher speaks again in his own person.

<sup><1052></sup>**Proverbs 4:22.** *Health* See the <sup><1018></sup>Proverbs 3:8 note.

<sup><1053></sup>**Proverbs 4:23.** Better, as in the margin, i.e., with more vigilance than men use over anything else. The words that follow carry on the same similitude. The fountains and wells of the East were watched over with special care. The heart is such a fountain, out of it flow the “issues” of life. Shall men let those streams be tainted at the fountain-head?

<sup><1054></sup>**Proverbs 4:24-26.** Speech turned from its true purpose, the wandering eye that leads on to evil, action hasty and inconsiderate, are the natural results where we do not “above all keeping keep our heart” (<sup><1053></sup>Proverbs 4:23).

<sup><1057></sup>**Proverbs 4:27.** The ever-recurring image of the straight road on which no one ever loses his way represents here as elsewhere the onward course through life of the man who seeks and finds wisdom.

## NOTES ON PROVERBS 5

<sup><1010></sup>**Proverbs 5:1.** The formula of a new counsel, introducing another warning against the besetting sin of youth (<sup><1016></sup>Proverbs 2:16).

<sup><1010></sup>**Proverbs 5:2.** *And that thy lips may keep* literally, “and thy lips shall keep.”

<sup><1010></sup>**Proverbs 5:3.** *Smoother than oil* The same comparison is used in marginal reference to describe the treachery of a false friend.

<sup><1010></sup>**Proverbs 5:4.** *Wormwood* In Eastern medicine this herb, the absinthium of Greek and Latin botanists, was looked upon as poisonous rather than medicinal. Compare <sup><6611></sup>Revelation 8:11.

<sup><1010></sup>**Proverbs 5:6.** Or (with the Septuagint and Vulgate), Lest she should ponder (or “She ponders not”) the way of life, her paths move to and fro (unsteady as an earthquake); she knows not. The words describe with a terrible vividness the state of heart and soul which prostitution brings upon its victims; the reckless blindness that will not think, tottering on the abyss, yet loud in its defiant mirth, ignoring the dreadful future.

<sup><1010></sup>**Proverbs 5:9.** *Thine honor* i.e., “The grace and freshness of thy youth” (compare <sup><3416></sup>Hosea 14:6; <sup><7108></sup>Daniel 10:8). The thought of this is to guard the young man against the sins that stain and mar it. The slave of lust sacrifices “years” that might have been peaceful and happy to one who is merciless.

<sup><1010></sup>**Proverbs 5:10.** *Strangers* The whole gang of those into whose hands the slave of lust yields himself. The words are significant as showing that the older punishment of death (<sup><1022></sup>Deuteronomy 22:21; <sup><2668></sup>Ezekiel 16:38; <sup><3015></sup>John 8:5) was not always inflicted, and that the detected adulterer was exposed rather to indefinite extortion. Besides loss of purity and peace, the sin, in all its forms, brings poverty.

<sup><1010></sup>**Proverbs 5:11.** Yet one more curse is attendant on impurity. Then, as now, disease was the penalty of this sin.

<sup><1052></sup>**Proverbs 5:12.** More bitter than slavery, poverty, disease, will be the bitterness of self-reproach, the hopeless remorse that worketh death.

<sup><1054></sup>**Proverbs 5:14.** The conscience-stricken sinner had been “almost” given up to every form of evil in the sight of the whole assembly of fellow-townsmen; “almost,” therefore, condemned to the death which that assembly might inflict (<sup><10100></sup>Leviticus 20:10; <sup><10222></sup>Deuteronomy 22:22). The public scandal of the sin is brought in as its last aggravating feature.

<sup><1055></sup>**Proverbs 5:15.** The teacher seeks to counteract the evils of mere sensual passion chiefly by setting forth the true blessedness of which it is the counterfeit. The true wife is as a fountain of refreshment, where the weary soul may quench its thirst. Even the joy which is of the senses appears, as in the Song of Solomon, purified and stainless (see <sup><1059></sup>Proverbs 5:19 marginal reference).

<sup><1056></sup>**Proverbs 5:16.** Wedded love streams forth in blessing on all around, on children and on neighbors and ill the streets, precisely because the wife’s true love is given to the husband only.

<sup><1059></sup>**Proverbs 5:19.** Better, “A loving hind (is she) and pleasant roe.” As in the whole circle of Arab and Persian poetry the antelope and the gazelle are the chosen images of beauty, so they served with equal fitness for the masculine and feminine types of it. (Compare the names Tabitha and Dorcas (<sup><4036></sup>Acts 9:36).

<sup><1060></sup>**Proverbs 5:20.** Emphasis is laid (see the <sup><10216></sup>Proverbs 2:16 note) upon the origin of the beguiler.

<sup><1052></sup>**Proverbs 5:21.** One more warning. The sin is not against man, nor dependent on man’s detection only. The secret sin is open before the eyes of Yahweh. In the balance of His righteous judgment are weighed all human acts.

*Pondereth* Note the recurrence of the word used of the harlot herself (see <sup><1006></sup>Proverbs 1:6 note): she ponders not, God does.

<sup><1052></sup>**Proverbs 5:23.** The end of the sensual life: to “die without instruction,” life ended, but the discipline of life fruitless; to “go astray,” as if drunk with the greatness of his folly (the same word is used as for “ravished” in <sup><1059></sup>Proverbs 5:19, see marg.), even to the end. This is the

close of what might have gone on brightening to the perfect day  
(~~3148~~ Proverbs 4:18).

## NOTES ON PROVERBS 6

**Proverbs 6:1.** *Surety* The “pledge,” or security for payment, which, for example, David was to bring back from his brothers (<sup><0178></sup>1 Samuel 17:18). So the word was used in the primitive trade transactions of the early Israelites.

In the warnings against this suretyship, in the Book of Proverbs, we may trace the influence of contact with the Phoenicians. The merchants of Tyre and Sidon seem to have discovered the value of credit as an element of wealth. A man might obtain goods, or escape the pressure of a creditor at an inconvenient season, or obtain a loan on more favorable terms, by finding security. To give such security might be one of the kindest offices which one friend could render to another. Side by side, however, with a legitimate system of credit there sprang up, as in later times, a fraudulent counterfeit. Phoenician or Jewish money-lenders (the “stranger”) were ready to make their loans to the spendthrift. He was equally ready to find a companion (the “friend”) who would become his surety. It was merely a form, just writing a few words, just “a clasping of the hands” (see the marginal reference) in token that the obligation was accepted, and that was all. It would be unfriendly to refuse. And yet, as the teacher warns his hearers, there might be, in that moment of careless weakness, the first link of a long chain of ignominy, galling, fretting, wearing, depriving life of all its peace. The Jewish law of debt, hard and stern like that of most ancient nations, might be enforced against him in all its rigour. Money and land might go, the very bed under him might be seized, and his garment torn from his back (<sup><0116></sup>Proverbs 20:16; 22:27), the older and more lenient law (<sup><0225></sup>Exodus 22:25-27) having apparently fallen into disuse. He might be brought into a life-long bondage, subject only to the possible relief of the year of jubilee, when the people were religious enough to remember and observe it. His wives, his sons, his daughters might be sharers in that slavery (<sup><0418></sup>Nehemiah 5:3-5). It was doubtful whether he could claim the privilege which under <sup><0210></sup>Exodus 21:2 belonged to an Israelite slave that had been bought. Against such an evil, no warnings could be too frequent or too urgent.

*Stricken thy hand* The natural symbol of the promise to keep a contract; in this case, to pay another man's debts. Compare <sup><1078></sup>Proverbs 17:18, 22:26; <sup><878></sup>Job 17:3; <sup><678></sup>Ezekiel 17:18.

<sup><1012></sup>**Proverbs 6:2.** Or, "If thou art snared ... if thou art taken," etc.

<sup><1012></sup>**Proverbs 6:3.** Better, "Do this now, O my son, and free thyself when thou hast come into thy friend's house; go, how thyself down (perhaps "stamp with thy foot," or "hasten"), press hotly upon thy friend. By persuasion, and if need be, by threats, get back the bond which thou hast been entrapped into signing." The "friend" is, as before, the companion, not the creditor.

<sup><1012></sup>**Proverbs 6:6.** The warning against the wastefulness of the prodigal is followed by a warning as emphatic against the wastefulness of sloth. The point of comparison with the ant is not so much the foresight of the insect as its unwearied activity during the appointed season, rebuking man's inaction at a special crisis (<sup><1014></sup>Proverbs 6:4). In <sup><1015></sup>Proverbs 30:25, the storing, provident habit of the ant is noticed.

<sup><1017></sup>**Proverbs 6:7.** The words express the wonder with which the Hebrew observer looked on the phenomena of insect life. "Guide," better captain, as in <sup><1018></sup>Joshua 10:24. The Septuagint introduces here a corresponding reference to the industry of the bee.

<sup><1011></sup>**Proverbs 6:11.** The similitude is drawn from the two sources of Eastern terror: the "traveler," i.e., "the thief in the night," coming suddenly to plunder; the "armed man," literally "the man of the shield," the armed robber. The habit of indolence is more fatally destructive than these marauders.

<sup><1012></sup>**Proverbs 6:12.** *A naughty person* literally, "a man of Belial," i.e., a worthless man (see the <sup><1013></sup>Deuteronomy 13:13 note). This is the portrait of the man who is not to be trusted, whose look and gestures warn against him all who can observe. His speech is tortuous and crafty; his wink tells the accomplice that the victim is already snared; his gestures with foot and hand are half in deceit, and half in mockery.

<sup><1015></sup>**Proverbs 6:15.** The duper and the dupe shall share the same calamity.

**Proverbs 6:16-19.** A new section, but not a new subject. The closing words, “he that soweth discord” (**Proverbs 6:19**, compare **Proverbs 6:14**), lead us to identify the sketch as taken from the same character. With the recognized Hebrew form of climax (see **Proverbs 30:15,18,24**; **Amos 1; 2**; **Job 5:19**), the teacher here enumerates six qualities as detestable, and the seventh as worse than all (seven represents completeness), but all the seven in this instance belong to one man, the man of Belial (**Proverbs 6:12**).

**Proverbs 6:21-22.** The thought of **Proverbs 3:3** is carried step further. No outward charm, but the law of obedience, shall give safety to the traveler, when he sleeps or when he wakes.

**Proverbs 6:23.** Compare **Psalm 119:105**.

**Proverbs 6:24.** *Evil woman* literally, “woman of evil.” In reading what follows, it must be remembered that the warning is against the danger of the sin of the adulterous wife.

**Proverbs 6:25.** *Eyelids* Possibly pointing to the Eastern custom of painting the eyes on the outside with kohl so as to give brightness and languishing expression.

**Proverbs 6:26.** The two forms of evil bring, each of them, their own penalty. By the one a man is brought to such poverty as to beg for “a piece of bread” (compare **1 Samuel 2:36**): by the other and more deadly sin he incurs a peril which may affect his life. The second clause is very abrupt and emphatic in the original; “but as for a man’s wife; she hunts for the precious life.”

## NOTES ON PROVERBS 7

**Proverbs 7:1.** The harlot adulteress of an Eastern city is contrasted with the true feminine ideal of the Wisdom who is to be the “sister” and “kinswoman” (Proverbs 7:4) of the young man as he goes on his way through life. See Proverbs 8 in the introduction.

**Proverbs 7:6.** *Casement* The latticed opening of an Eastern house, overlooking the street (compare Judges 5:28).

**Proverbs 7:7.** *Simple* In the bad sense of the word (Proverbs 1:22 note); “open” to all impressions of evil, empty-headed and empty-hearted; lounging near the house of ill-repute, not as yet deliberately purposing to sin, but placing himself in the way of it at a time when the pure in heart would seek their home. There is a certain symbolic meaning in the picture of the gathering gloom (Proverbs 7:9). Night is falling over the young man’s life as the shadows deepen.

**Proverbs 7:11.** *Loud and stubborn* Both words describe the half-animal signs of a vicious nature. Compare Hosea 4:16.

**Proverbs 7:14.** This pretence of a religious feast gives us an insight into some strange features of popular religion under the monarchy of Judah. The harlot uses the technical word (Leviticus 3:1) for the “peace-offerings,” and makes them the starting-point for her sin. They have to be eaten on the same day that they are offered (Leviticus 7:15,16), and she invites her victim to the feast. She who speaks is a “foreigner” who, under a show of conformity to the religion of Israel, still retains her old notions (see Proverbs 2:16 note), and a feast-day to her is nothing but a time of self-indulgence, which she may invite another to share with her. If we assume, as probable, that these harlots of Jerusalem were mainly of Phoenician origin, the connection of their worship with their sin would be but the continuation of their original “cultus.”

**Proverbs 7:16.** The words point to the art and commerce which flourished under Solomon.

*Carved works* Most commentators take the original as meaning “striped coverlets of linen of Egypt.”

<sup><1077></sup>**Proverbs 7:17.** The love of perfumes is here, as in <sup><1074></sup>Isaiah 3:24, a sign of luxurious vice.

*Cinnamon* The Hebrew word is identical with the English. The spice imported by the Phoenician traders from the further East, probably from Ceylon, has kept its name through all changes of language.

<sup><1079></sup>**Proverbs 7:19.** The reference to the husband is probably a blind. The use of the word “goodman” is due to the wish of the English translators to give a colloquial character to this part of their Version. The Hebrew is merely “the man.” A touch of scorn may be noticed in the form of speech: not “my husband,” but simply “the man.”

<sup><1072></sup>**Proverbs 7:21.** *Fair speech* The Hebrew word is usually translated “doctrine,” or “learning” (<sup><1005></sup>Proverbs 1:5; 4:2; 9:9); possibly it is used here in keen irony.

<sup><1072></sup>**Proverbs 7:22.** *As a fool ...* literally, “As a fetter to the correction of a fool,” the order of which is inverted in the King James Version The Septuagint, followed by the Syriac Version, has another reading, and interprets the clause: “As a dog, enticed by food, goes to the chain that is to bind him, so does the youth go to the temptress.” None of the attempts of commentators to get a meaning out of the present text are in any degree satisfactory.

<sup><1073></sup>**Proverbs 7:23.** The first clause does not connect itself very clearly with the foregoing, and is probably affected by the corrupt text which makes it perplexing.

<sup><1076></sup>**Proverbs 7:26.** The house of the harlot is now likened to a field of battle strewn with the corpses of the many slain.

## NOTES ON PROVERBS 8

**Proverbs 8:1.** A companion picture to that in Proverbs 7, and serving in some measure to generalize and idealize it. Wisdom also calls (**Proverbs 8:5**) to the “simple” and the “fools,” and they have to choose between her voice and that of the temptress.

**Proverbs 8:2,3.** The full enumeration of localities points to the publicity and openness of Wisdom’s teaching (see **Proverbs 1:20** note), as contrasted with the stealth and secrecy and darkness which shroud the harlot’s enticements (**Proverbs 7:9**).

**Proverbs 8:4.** *Men ... sons of man* The two words are used, which, like viri and homines, describe the higher and the lower, the stronger and the weaker. Compare the **Psalm 49:2** note.

**Proverbs 8:6.** *Excellent* literally, “princely things.” The word is not the same as in marginal reference, and is elsewhere always used of persons (compare “captain” in **1 Samuel 9:16**; **2 Samuel 5:2**). The poetic style of this part of the book applies it here to the things taught, or to the character of the teaching.

**Proverbs 8:8,9.** Words of the ideal Wisdom, which find their highest fulfillment in that of the Incarnate Word. Compare **Luke 4:22**; **Matthew 11:19**.

**Proverbs 8:12.** Wisdom first speaks warnings (**Proverbs 1:24** note), next promises (**Proverbs 2:1** note); but here she neither promises nor threatens, but speaks of her own excellence. “Prudence” is the “subtilty” (see the margin), the wiliness of the serpent (**Genesis 3:1**), in itself neutral, but capable of being turned to good as well as evil. Wisdom, occupied with things heavenly and eternal, also “dwells with” the practical tact and insight needed for the life of common men. “Witty inventions” are rather counsels. The truth intended is, that all special rules for the details of life spring out of the highest Wisdom as their source.

**Proverbs 8:15.** Not only the common life of common men, but the exercise of the highest sovereignty, must have this Wisdom as its ground. Compare with this passage (**Proverbs 8:15-21**) the teaching of **1**

Kings 3:5-14. The word rendered “princes” (<sup><1085></sup>Proverbs 8:15) is different from that in <sup><1086></sup>Proverbs 8:16; the first might, perhaps, be rendered “rulers.”

<sup><1088></sup>**Proverbs 8:18.** *Durable riches* i.e., Treasure piled up for many years; ancient wealth.

<sup><1089></sup>**Proverbs 8:19.** *Gold* The “choice, fine gold” of margin reference. The “fine gold” in the second clause is a different word, and perhaps represents gold extracted from the ore.

<sup><1092></sup>**Proverbs 8:22.** A verse which has played an important part in the history of Christian dogma. Wisdom reveals herself as preceding all creation, stamped upon it all, one with God, yet in some way distinguishable from Him as the object of His love (<sup><1080></sup>Proverbs 8:30). John declares that all which Wisdom here speaks of herself was true in its highest sense of the Word that became flesh (<sup><1000></sup>John 1:1-14): just as Apostles afterward applied Wisd. 7:22-30 to Christ (compare <sup><1015></sup>Colossians 1:15; <sup><1008></sup>Hebrews 1:3).

*Possessed* The word has acquired a special prominence in connection with the Arian controversy. The meaning which it usually bears is that of “getting” (<sup><1040></sup>Genesis 4:1), “buying” (<sup><1042></sup>Genesis 47:22), “possessing” (<sup><1025></sup>Jeremiah 32:15). In this sense one of the oldest divine names was that of “Possessor of heaven and earth” (<sup><1049></sup>Genesis 14:19,22). But the idea of thus “getting” or “possessing” involved, as a divine act in relation to the universe, the idea of creation, and thus in one or two passages the word might be rendered, though not accurately, by “created” (e.g., <sup><1093></sup>Psalms 139:13). It would seem accordingly as if the Greek translators of the Old Testament oscillated between the two meanings; and in this passage we find the various renderings **ἐκτίσε** <sup><1036></sup> “created” (Septuagint), and **ἐκτησατο** <sup><1032></sup> “possessed” (Aquila). The text with the former word naturally became one of the stock arguments of the Arians against the eternal co-existence of the Son, and the other translation was as vehemently defended by the orthodox fathers. Athanasius receiving **ἐκτίσεν** <sup><1036></sup>, took it in the sense of appointing, and saw in the Septuagint a declaration that the Father had made the Son the “chief,” the “head,” the “sovereign,” over all creation. There does not seem indeed any ground for the thought of creation either in the meaning of the root, or in the general usage of the word. What is meant in this passage is that we cannot think of

God as ever having been without Wisdom. She is “as the beginning of His ways.” So far as the words bear upon Christian dogma, they accord with the words of <sup><4000></sup>John 1:1, “the Word was with God.” The next words indeed assert priority to all the works of God, from the first starting point of time.

<sup><1082></sup>**Proverbs 8:23.** *I was set up* Rather, “I was anointed” (compare <sup><4006></sup>Psalm 2:6 margin: <sup><14815></sup>2 Chronicles 28:15). The image is that of Wisdom anointed, as at her birth, with “the oil of gladness.”

*Or ever the earth was* literally, “from the times before the earth.”

<sup><1084></sup>**Proverbs 8:24.** Compare Genesis 1; Job 22; 26; 38: A world of waters, “great deeps” lying in darkness, this was the picture of the remotest time of which man could form any conception, and yet the co-existence of the uncreated Wisdom with the eternal Yahweh was before that.

<sup><1085></sup>**Proverbs 8:25.** Compare <sup><19102></sup>Psalm 90:2. What the Psalmist said of Yahweh, the teacher here asserts of Wisdom; she was before the everlasting hills.

<sup><1086></sup>**Proverbs 8:26.** *The highest part of the dust of the world* literally, “the head of the dusts of the world;” an image of either:

(1) the dry land, habitable, fit for cultivation, as contrasted with the waters of the chaotic deep; or

(2) man himself. Compare <sup><20030></sup>Ecclesiastes 3:20.

<sup><1027></sup>**Proverbs 8:27.** *A compass* Better as in the margin and <sup><18214></sup>Job 22:14 (see the note), i.e., the great vault of heaven stretched over the deep seas.

<sup><1088></sup>**Proverbs 8:30.** *As one brought up with him* i.e., As his foster child. Others take the word in the original in another sense, “I was as his artificer,” a rendering which falls in best with the special point of the whole passage, the creative energy of Wisdom. Compare Wisdom 7:21,22.

*Daily* Hebrews “day by day.” As the Creator rejoiced in His workmanship (<sup><0004></sup>Genesis 1:4,10,12,13), so Wisdom rejoiced in the exuberance of her might and strength.

<sup><1088></sup>**Proverbs 8:31.** Wisdom rejoices yet more in the world as inhabited by God’s rational creatures. (compare <sup><23518></sup>Isaiah 45:18). Giving joy and

delight to God, she finds her delight among the sons of men. These words, like the rest, are as an unconscious prophecy fulfilled in the Divine Word, in whom were “hid all the treasures of Wisdom.” Compare the marginal reference: in Him the Father was well pleased; and yet His “joy also is fulfilled,” not in the glory of the material universe, but in His work among the sons of men.

~~<1082>~~ **Proverbs 8:32.** The old exhortation with a new force. The counsels are no longer those of prudence and human experience, but of a Wisdom eternal as Yahweh, ordering all things.

~~<1084>~~ **Proverbs 8:34.** The image is suggested probably by the Levites who guarded the doors of the sanctuary (~~<1001>~~ Psalm 134:1; 135:2). Not less blessed than theirs is the lot of those who wait upon Wisdom in the temple not made with hands.

~~<1085>~~ **Proverbs 8:35.** Wisdom then is the only true life. The Word, the Light, is also the Life of man (~~<1004>~~ John 1:4). The eternal life is to know God and Christ (~~<1078>~~ John 17:3).

## NOTES ON PROVERBS 9

**Proverbs 9:1.** A parable full of beauty, and interesting in its parallelism to the parables of our Lord (<sup><128></sup>Matthew 22:3,4; <sup><246></sup>Luke 14:16).

*Seven pillars* The number is chosen as indicating completeness and perfection. God revealing Himself in nature, resting in His work, entering into covenant with human beings — these were the ideas conveyed by it.

**Proverbs 9:2.** *Mingled her wine* i.e., with myrrh and other spices, to give flavor and strength.

**Proverbs 9:3.** Wisdom and the “foolish woman” (<sup><103></sup>Proverbs 9:13) speak from the same places and to the same class — the simple, undecided, wavering, standing at the diverging point of the two paths that lead to life or death.

**Proverbs 9:5.** A parallel to the higher teaching of the Gospels (compare <sup><167></sup>John 6:27; <sup><153></sup>Matthew 26:26).

**Proverbs 9:7-9.** These verses seem somewhat to interrupt the continuity of the invitation which Wisdom utters. The order of thought is, however, this: “I speak to you, the simple, the open ones, for you have yet ears to hear: but from the scorner or evil doer, as such, I turn away.” The words are illustrated by <sup><131></sup>Matthew 13:11ff.

**Proverbs 9:10.** *The holy* The word in the Hebrew is plural, agreeing, probably, with *Elohim* <sup><430></sup> understood (so in <sup><103></sup>Proverbs 30:3). The knowledge of the Most Holy One stands as the counterpart to the fear of Yahweh.

**Proverbs 9:12.** The great law of personal retribution (compare <sup><102></sup>Matthew 7:2). The Septuagint makes a curious addition to this verse, “My son, if thou wilt be wise for thyself, thou shalt be wise also for thy neighbors; but if thou turn out evil, thou alone shalt bear evil. He who resteth on lies shall guide the winds, and the same shall hunt after winged birds, for he hath left the ways of his own vineyard, and has gone astray with the wheels of his own husbandry. He goeth through a wilderness

without water, and over a land set in thirsty places, and with his hands he gathereth barrenness.”

<sup><1093></sup>**Proverbs 9:13.** The picture of the harlot as the representative of the sensual life, the Folly between which and Wisdom the young man has to make his choice (<sup><1093></sup>Proverbs 9:3 note). “Simple,” in the worst sense, as open to all forms of evil. “Knoweth nothing,” ignorant with the ignorance which is willful and reckless.

<sup><1094></sup>**Proverbs 9:14.** Contrast with <sup><1091></sup>Proverbs 9:1, etc. The foolish woman has her house, but it is no stately palace with seven pillars, like the home of Wisdom. No train of maidens wait on her, and invite her guests, but she herself sits at the door, her position as prominent as that of Wisdom, counterfeiting her voice, making the same offer to the same class (compare <sup><1096></sup>Proverbs 9:16 with <sup><1094></sup>Proverbs 9:4).

<sup><1097></sup>**Proverbs 9:17.** The besetting sin of all times and countries, the one great proof of the inherent corruption of man’s nature. Pleasures are attractive because they are forbidden (compare <sup><1097></sup>Romans 7:7).

<sup><1098></sup>**Proverbs 9:18.** Compare the marginal reference. With this warning the long introduction closes, and the collection of separate proverbs begins. Wisdom and Folly have each spoken; the issues of each have been painted in life-like hues. The learner is left to choose.

## NOTES ON PROVERBS 10

**Proverbs 10:1.** See the introduction.

**Proverbs 10:2.** *Righteousness* Including, perhaps, the idea of benevolence. Compare the use of δικαιοσύνη <sup><1343></sup>, in <sup><1006></sup>Matthew 6:1 (the older reading), and <sup><409></sup>2 Corinthians 9:9,10.

**Proverbs 10:3.** *Casteth away ...* Better, “overturns, disappoints the strong desire of the wicked.” Tantalus-like, they never get the enjoyment they thirst after.

**Proverbs 10:4.** *Slack* The word is elsewhere translated as “deceitful” (<sup><8137></sup>Job 13:7; <sup><9012></sup>Psalms 120:2,3; <sup><2076></sup>Hosea 7:16; <sup><2480></sup>Jeremiah 48:10). The two thoughts run easily into each other.

**Proverbs 10:5.** The son is called upon to enter upon the labors of others, and reap where they have sown. To sleep when the plenteous harvest lies ready for the sickle is the most extreme laziness.

**Proverbs 10:6.** *Covereth ...* The meaning is perhaps, the violence which the wicked has done is as a bandage over his mouth, reducing him to a silence and shame, like that of the leper (<sup><8135></sup>Leviticus 13:45; <sup><3307></sup>Micah 3:7) or the condemned criminal (<sup><1008></sup>Esther 7:8), whose “face is covered.”

**Proverbs 10:8.** *A prating ... fall* Better, as in the margin. Inward self-contained wisdom is contrasted with self-exposed folly.

**Proverbs 10:9.** *Shall be known* literally, “shall be made to know” (see <sup><2319></sup>Jeremiah 31:19; <sup><1086></sup>Judges 8:16 margin) in the sense of exposed.

**Proverbs 10:10.** In <sup><1008></sup>Proverbs 10:8 the relation between the two clauses was one of contrast, here of resemblance. Cunning, reticence, and deceit (<sup><1162></sup>Proverbs 6:12 note) bring sorrow no less than garrulity.

**Proverbs 10:11.** Compare <sup><1006></sup>Proverbs 10:6. Streams of living water (like the “fountain of living waters” of <sup><2123></sup>Jeremiah 2:13; 17:13, and the “living water” of <sup><840></sup>John 4:10), flow from the mouth of the righteous, but that of the wicked is “covered,” i.e., stopped and put to silence by their own violence.

<sup><2002></sup>**Proverbs 10:12.** *Love covereth all sins* i.e., First hides, does not expose, and then forgives and forgets all sins.

<sup><2003></sup>**Proverbs 10:13.** i.e., The wisdom of the wise is seen in the words that issue from his lips; the folly of the fool is not only seen in his speech, but brings upon him the chastisement which he well deserves.

<sup><2004></sup>**Proverbs 10:14.** *Lay up* The point of the maxim is that the wise man reserves what he has to say for the right time, place, and persons (compare <sup><1006></sup>Matthew 7:6), as contrasted with the foolish, ever giving immediate utterance to what destroys himself and others.

<sup><2005></sup>**Proverbs 10:15.** *Destruction* That which crushes, throws into ruins. Wealth secures its possessors against many dangers; poverty exposes men to worse evils than itself, meanness, servility, and cowardice. Below the surface there lies, it may be, a grave irony against the rich; see <sup><2081></sup>Proverbs 18:11.

<sup><2006></sup>**Proverbs 10:16.** A warning against the conclusion to seek wealth first of all, which men of lower natures might draw from <sup><2005></sup>Proverbs 10:15.

*“Quaerenda pecunia primum est;  
Virtus post nummos?” — Horace, Ep. 1. i. 53.*

Such an inference is met by the experience, that while wealth gotten by honest industry is not only, like inherited riches a defense, but also a blessing, the seeming profit (rather than “fruit”) of the wicked tends to further sin (<sup><5450></sup>1 Timothy 6:10), and so to punishment. Compare <sup><4021></sup>Romans 6:21.

<sup><2007></sup>**Proverbs 10:17.** literally, A way of life is he that keepeth instruction. The verb “ereth” is better rendered in the margin. The influence for good or evil spreads beyond the man himself.

<sup><2008></sup>**Proverbs 10:18.** Better, He who hideth hatred is of lying lips. He who cherishes hatred, is either a knave, or a fool — a knave if he hides, a fool if he utters it.

<sup><2009></sup>**Proverbs 10:19.** *There wanteth not sin* Some render this, “Sin shall not cease,” etc., i.e., many words do not mend a fault. Silence on the part

both of the reprover and the offender is often better. The King James Version is, however, preferable.

**Proverbs 10:20.** The tongue, the instrument of the mind is contrasted with the heart or mind itself, the just with the wicked, the choice silver with the worthless “little,” the Hebrew word being possibly taken in its primary sense as a “filing” or “scraping” of dross or worthless metal. If the tongue is precious, how much more the mind! If the heart is worthless, how much more the speech!

**Proverbs 10:21.** *Feed* The Hebrew word, like ποιμαίνειν <sup><4165></sup>, includes the idea of guiding as well as nourishing; doing a shepherd’s work in both.

*For want of wisdom* Some prefer, through him who wanteth understanding, referring to a person. The wise guides others to safety; the fool, empty-headed, and empty-hearted, involves others like himself in destruction.

**Proverbs 10:23.** As the fool finds his sport in doing mischief, so the man of understanding finds in wisdom his truest refreshment and delight.

**Proverbs 10:24.** *The fear* i.e., The thing feared (compare the marginal reference).

*Shall be granted* Or, He (Yahweh) giveth the desire of the righteous.

**Proverbs 10:25.** Or, when the whirlwind is passing, then the wicked is no more. Compare <sup><4024></sup>Matthew 7:24-27.

*The righteous ...* In the later rabbinic interpretation this was applied to the Messiah as being the Just One, the Everlasting Foundation, on whom the world was established.

**Proverbs 10:26.** The teeth set on edge by the sour wine used by peasants (<sup><8214></sup>Ruth 2:14; <sup><3921></sup>Psalms 69:21), the eye irritated by wood-smoke, these shadow the annoyance of having a messenger who will loiter on the way.

**Proverbs 10:28.** Transpose “hope” and “expectation.” The expectant waiting of the righteous is joyful at the time, and ends in joy: the eager hope of the wicked comes to nought.

◀10:29▶ **Proverbs 10:29.** Omit “shall be.” The meaning is: “The Way of Yahweh,” i.e., the Divine Order of the world, has its two sides. It is “strength to the upright, destruction to the workers of iniquity.”

◀10:30▶ **Proverbs 10:30.** *The wicked shall rot inhabit* The other and higher side of the same law of the divine government appears in ▶40:5▶ Matthew 5:5.

◀10:31▶ **Proverbs 10:31.** *Bringeth forth ...* As a tree full of life and sap brings forth its fruit. So the “froward tongue” is like a tree that brings forth evil and not good fruit; it “shall be cut down.” The abuse of God’s gift of speech will lead ultimately to its forfeiture. There shall, at last, be the silence of shame and confusion.

◀10:32▶ **Proverbs 10:32.** *Know* i.e., “Know, and therefore utter.” So, in like manner, the “mouth of the wicked” knows, and therefore speaks frowardness, and that only.

## NOTES ON PROVERBS 11

**Proverbs 11:1.** This emphatic reproduction of the old rule of <sup><200></sup>Deuteronomy 25:13,14 is perhaps a trace of the danger of dishonesty incidental to the growing commerce of the Israelites. The stress laid upon the same sin in <sup><206></sup>Proverbs 16:11; 20:10; bears witness to the desire of the teacher to educate the youth of Israel to a high standard of integrity, just as the protest of Hosea against it (<sup><217></sup>Hosea 12:7) shows the zeal of the prophet in rebuking what was becoming more and more a besetting sin.

*A just weight* literally, as in the margin, indicating a time when stones rather than metal were used as a standard of weight. Compare <sup><253></sup>Deuteronomy 25:13.

**Proverbs 11:2.** A rabbinic paraphrase of the second clause is: “Lowly souls become full of wisdom as the low place becomes full of water.”

**Proverbs 11:4.** *The day of wrath* Words true in their highest sense of the great “diesirae” of the future, but spoken in the first instance (compare <sup><305></sup>Zephaniah 1:15-18) of any “day of the Lord,” any time of judgment, when men or nations receive the chastisement of their sins. At such a time “riches profit not.”

**Proverbs 11:7.** Significant words, as showing the belief that when the righteous died, his “expectation” (i.e., his hope for the future) did not perish. The second clause is rendered by some, “the expectation that brings sorrow.”

**Proverbs 11:9.** *Through knowledge* Better, By the knowledge of the just, shall they (i.e., the neighbors) be delivered.

**Proverbs 11:11.** *The blessing of the upright* Probably the prayers which he offers for the good of the city in which he dwells, and which avail to preserve it from destruction (compare <sup><1823></sup>Genesis 18:23-33); or “the blessing which God gives the upright.”

**Proverbs 11:12.** None but the man “void of wisdom” will show contempt for those about him. The wise man, if he cannot admire or praise, will at least know how to be silent.

**Proverbs 11:13.** The man who comes to us with tales about others will reveal our secrets also. Faithfulness is shown, not only in doing what a man has been commissioned to do, but in doing it quietly and without garrulity.

**Proverbs 11:14.** *Counsel* See **Proverbs 1:5** note. This precept may well be thought of as coming with special force at the time of the organization of the monarchy of Israel. Compare **1 Kings 12:6**.

**Proverbs 11:15.** See the marginal reference. The play upon “sure” and “suretiship” in the King James Version (though each word is rightly rendered) has nothing corresponding to it in the Hebrew, and seems to have originated in a desire to give point to the proverb.

**Proverbs 11:16.** Or, “The gracious woman wins and keeps honor, as (the conjunction may be so rendered) strong men win riches.”

**Proverbs 11:18.** *Deceitful work* Work which deceives and disappoints the worker; in contrast with the “sure reward” of the second clause.

Omit “shall be” and render, “but he that soweth righteousness worketh a sure reward.”

**Proverbs 11:21.** literally, “hand to hand.” The meaning of which is, “Hand may plight faith to hand, men may confederate for evil, yet punishment shall come at last;” or “From hand to hand, from one generation to another, punishment shall descend on the evil doers.”

**Proverbs 11:22.** The most direct proverb, in the sense of “similitude,” which has as yet met us.

*Jewel of gold* Better, ring; i.e., the nose-ring (**Genesis 24:22,47**; **Isaiah 3:21**).

*Without discretion* literally, “without taste,” void of the subtle tact and grace, without which mere outward beauty is as ill-bestowed as the nose-ring in the snout of the unclean beast. If we may assume that in ancient

Syria, as in modern Europe, swine commonly wore such a ring to hinder them doing mischief, the similitude receives a fresh vividness.

**Proverbs 11:24.** *Withholdeth more than is meet* i.e., Is sparing and niggardly where he ought to give. The contrast is stated in the form of a paradox, to which the two following verses supply the answer. Some render, “There is that withholdeth from what is due,” i.e., from a just debt, or from the generosity of a just man.

**Proverbs 11:25.** *Liberal soul* literally, “the soul that blesses,” i.e., gives freely and fully. The similitudes are both of them essentially Eastern. Fatness, the sleek, well filled look of health, becomes the figure of prosperity, as leanness of misfortune (**Proverbs 13:4; 28:25;** **Psalm 22:29;** **Isaiah 10:16**). Kindly acts come as the refreshing dew and soft rain from heaven upon a thirsty land.

**Proverbs 11:26.** In the early stages of commerce there seems no way of making money rapidly so sure as that of buying up grain in time of famine, waiting until the dearth presses heavily, and then selling at famine prices. Men hate this selfishness, and pour blessings upon him who sells at a moderate profit.

**Proverbs 11:27.** *Procureth* Better, striveth after. He who desires good, absolutely, for its own sake, is also unconsciously striving after the favor which attends goodness.

**Proverbs 11:28.** *Branch* Better, leaf, as in **Psalm 1:3;** **Isaiah 34:4.**

**Proverbs 11:29.** *He that troubleth ...* The temper, niggardly and worrying, which leads a man to make those about him miserable, and proves but bad economy in the end.

**Proverbs 11:30.** *Winneth souls* Better, a wise man winneth souls. He that is wise draws the souls of people to himself, just as the fruit of the righteous is to all around him a tree of life, bearing new fruits of healing evermore. The phrase is elsewhere translated by “taketh the life” (**1 Kings 19:4;** **Psalm 31:13**). The wise man is the true conqueror. For the Christian meaning given to these words, see the New Testament reference in the margin.

~~<01E3>~~ **Proverbs 11:31.** The sense would appear to be, “The righteous is requited, i.e., is punished for his lesser sins, or as a discipline; much more the wicked, etc.” Compare ~~<01E8>~~ 1 Peter 4:18.

## NOTES ON PROVERBS 12

**Proverbs 12:1.** *British* Dumb as a brute beast. The difference between man and brute lies chiefly in the capacity of the former for progress and improvement, and that capacity depends upon his willingness to submit to discipline and education. Compare <sup><1992></sup>Psalm 49:12.

**Proverbs 12:4.** *Virtuous* The word implies the virtue of earnestness, or strength of character, rather than of simple chastity.

*A crown* With the Jews the sign of kingly power only, but also of joy and gladness. Compare <sup><2181></sup>Song of Solomon 3:11.

**Proverbs 12:6.** *Shall deliver them* i.e., The righteous themselves.

**Proverbs 12:9.** Two interpretations are equally tenable;

(1) as in the King James Version, He whom men despise, or who is “lowly” in his own eyes (compare <sup><0823></sup>1 Samuel 18:23), if he has a slave, i.e., if he is one step above absolute poverty, and has some one to supply his wants, is better off than the man who boasts of rank or descent and has nothing to eat. Respectable mediocrity is better than boastful poverty.

(2) He who, though despised, is a servant to himself, i.e., supplies his own wants, is better than the arrogant and helpless.

**Proverbs 12:10.** *Regardeth* literally, “knoweth.” All true sympathy and care must grow out of knowledge. The duty of a person to animals:

(1) rests upon direct commandments in the Law (<sup><0210></sup>Exodus 20:10; 23:4,5);

(2) connects itself with the thought that the mercies of God are over all His works, and that man’s mercy, in proportion to its excellence, must be like His (<sup><3041></sup>Jonah 4:11); and

(3) has perpetuated its influence in the popular morality of the East.

*Tender mercies* Better, “the feelings, the emotions,” all that should have led to mercy and pity toward man.

**Proverbs 12:11.** The contrast is carried on between the life of industry and that of the idle, “vain person” of the “baser sort” (the “Raca” of <sup><1012></sup>Matthew 5:22). We might have expected that the second clause would have ended with such words as “shall lack bread,” but the contrast goes deeper. Idleness leads to a worse evil than that of hunger.

**Proverbs 12:12.** The meaning seems to be: The “net of evil men” (compare <sup><1017></sup>Proverbs 1:17) is that in which they are taken, the judgment of God in which they are ensnared. This they run into with such a blind infatuation, that it seems as if they were in love with their own destruction. The marginal rendering gives the thought that the wicked seek the protection of others like themselves, but seek in vain; the “root of the just” (i.e., that in them which is fixed and stable) alone yields that protection.

**Proverbs 12:14.** See <sup><1030></sup>Proverbs 13:2 note.

**Proverbs 12:16.** The “fool” cannot restrain his wrath; it rushes on “presently” (as in the margin, on the same day, however, uselessly. The prudent man knows that to utter his indignation at reproach and shame will but lead to a fresh attack, and takes refuge in reticence.

**Proverbs 12:17.** The thought which lies below the surface is that of the inseparable union between truth and justice. The end does not justify the means, and only he who breathes and utters truth makes the righteous cause clear.

**Proverbs 12:20.** The “deceit” of “those who imagine evil” can work nothing but evil to those whom they advise. The “counselors of peace” have joy in themselves, and impart it to others also.

**Proverbs 12:23.** Another aspect of the truth of <sup><1004></sup>Proverbs 10:14.

**Proverbs 12:24.** *Under tribute* The comparison is probably suggested by the contrast between the condition of a conquered race (compare <sup><610></sup>Joshua 16:10; <sup><1013></sup>Judges 1:30-33), and that of the freedom of their conquerors from such burdens. The proverb indicates that beyond all political divisions of this nature there lies an ethical law. The “slothful” descend inevitably to pauperism and servitude. The prominence of compulsory labor under Solomon (<sup><1021></sup>1 Kings 9:21) gives a special significance to the illustration.

~~<1026>~~ **Proverbs 12:26.** *Is more excellent than* Rather, the just man guides his neighbor.

~~<1027>~~ **Proverbs 12:27.** The word rendered “roasteth” occurs nowhere else; but the interpretation of the King James Version is widely adopted. Others render the first clause thus: “The slothful man will not secure (keep in his net) what he takes in hunting,” i.e., will let whatever he gains slip from his hands through want of effort and attention.

## NOTES ON PROVERBS 13

**Proverbs 13:1.** *Heareth* The verb of the second clause is inserted in the first, just as in the next verse that of the first is inserted in the second. Stress is laid upon the obstinacy of the scorner who refuses to hear, not only “instruction,” but also the much stronger “rebuke.”

**Proverbs 13:2.** *The fruit of his mouth* Speech rightly used is itself good, and must therefore bring good fruit.

*Eat violence* i.e., Bring upon itself repayment in kind for its deeds of evil.

**Proverbs 13:7.** Compare Proverbs 11:24. There is a seeming wealth behind which there lies a deep spiritual poverty and wretchedness. There is a poverty which makes a person rich for the kingdom of God.

**Proverbs 13:8.** On the one side is the seeming advantage of wealth. The rich man who gets out of many troubles often escapes from a just retribution by his money. But then the poor man in his turn is free from the risk of the threats and litigation that beset the rich. He “hears no rebuke” (the words are not used as in Proverbs 13:1) just as the dead “hear not the voice of the oppressor” (Job 3:18) or the abuse of the envious.

**Proverbs 13:9.** Very beautiful in its poetry is the idea of the light “rejoicing” in its brightness (compare Psalm 19:5; Job 38:7). Note also the distinction between the “light” and the “lamp.” The righteous ones have the true light in them. That which belongs to the wicked is only derived and temporary, and even that shall be extinguished before long. Compare a like distinction in John 1:8; 5:35.

**Proverbs 13:10.** Either:

(1) “By pride alone comes contention” — that is the one unfailing spring of quarrels; or

(2) “By pride comes contention only” — it, and it alone, is the fruit of pride.

**Proverbs 13:11.** *By vanity* literally, “by a breath,” i.e., by a windfall, or sudden stroke of fortune, not by honest labor. The general meaning

seems to be that the mere possession of riches is as nothing; they come and go, but the power to gain by skill of hand (“labor”) is everything.

**Proverbs 13:12.** *When the desire cometh* The desire comes, it is a tree of life: i.e., the object of our desires is attained. Compare **Proverbs 3:18**.

**Proverbs 13:15.** *Hard* The primary meaning of the original word is permanence (compare **Deuteronomy 21:4**; **Micah 6:2**). This may be applied as here to the hard dry rock, to running streams, or to stagnant pools. In either case, the idea is that of the barren dry soil, or the impassable marsh, in contrast with the fountain of life, carrying joy and refreshment with it.

**Proverbs 13:19.** The connection is somewhat obscure. Either, “Satisfied desire is pleasant, therefore it is an abomination to fools to depart from the evil on which their minds are set;” or, “Sweet is the satisfaction of desire, yet the wicked will not depart from the evil which makes that satisfaction impossible.”

**Proverbs 13:22.** An expression of trust, that in the long run the anomalies of the world are rendered even (compare the marginal references). The heaped up treasures of the wicked find their way at last into the hands of better men.

**Proverbs 13:23.** The contrast is the ever recurring one between honest poverty and dishonest wealth. “The new-plowed field of the poor is much food, but there are those, who, though rich, perish through their disregard of right.”

## NOTES ON PROVERBS 14

~~2043~~ **Proverbs 14:1.** *Every wise woman* literally, Wise women. The fullest recognition that has as yet met us of the importance of woman, for good or evil, in all human society.

~~2043~~ **Proverbs 14:3.** *A rod of pride* i.e., The pride shown in his speech is as a rod with which he strikes down others and himself.

~~2043~~ **Proverbs 14:4.** i.e., Labor has its rough, unpleasant side, yet it ends in profit. So also, the life of contemplation may seem purer, “cleaner “than that of action. The outer business of the world brings its cares and disturbances, but also “much increase.” There will be a sure reward of that activity in good works for him who goes, as with “the strength of the ox,” to the task to which God calls him.

~~2043~~ **Proverbs 14:6.** *Findeth it not* literally, there is none. The successful pursuit of wisdom presupposes at least earnestness and reverence. The scoffer shuts himself out from the capacity of recognizing truth.

~~2043~~ **Proverbs 14:8.** The Hebrew counterpart to the Greek “Know thyself.” “The highest wisdom is for a person to understand his own way. The most extreme folly is self-deceit.” The word “deceit” may, however, involve fraud practiced upon others. The folly of fools shows itself then in their ceaseless effort to deceive.

~~2043~~ **Proverbs 14:9.** *Fools make a mock* The verb in the Hebrews is singular, the noun plural. The King James Version assumes that the number is altered to individualize the application of the maxim. Others translate it: “Sin mocks the fools who are its victims,” i.e., disappoints and ruins them; or, “A sin-offering does but mock the worshippers when they are willfully wicked:” they expect to gain God’s favor, and do not gain it. So taken it becomes parallel to ~~2043~~ Proverbs 15:8; 21:7.

~~2043~~ **Proverbs 14:10.** A striking expression of the ultimate solitude of each man’s soul at all times, and not merely at the hour of death. Something there is in every sorrow, and in every joy, which no one else can share. Beyond that range it is well to remember that there is a Divine Sympathy, uniting perfect knowledge and perfect love.

<sup><10412></sup>**Proverbs 14:12.** *A way ...* The way of the fool, the way of self-indulgence and self-will.

<sup><10413></sup>**Proverbs 14:13.** Sorrow of some kind either mingles itself with outward joy, or follows hard upon it.

<sup><10414></sup>**Proverbs 14:14.** *Shall be satisfied* These words are not in the original. Repeat the verb from the first clause, “He who falls away from God in his heart, shall be filled with his own ways; and the good man (shall be filled) with that which belongs to him.”

<sup><10415></sup>**Proverbs 14:15.** *Simple* In the bad sense (compare <sup><10122></sup>Proverbs 1:22).

<sup><10417></sup>**Proverbs 14:17.** The contrast lies between two forms of evil. Hasty anger acts foolishly, but the “man of wicked devices,” vindictive and insidious, incurs all men’s hatred.

<sup><10418></sup>**Proverbs 14:18.** *Crowned* The teacher anticipates the truth, and the paradox, of the Stoic saying, “The wise is the only king.”

<sup><10419></sup>**Proverbs 14:20.** The maxim, jarring as it is, represents the generalization of a wide experience; but the words which follow (<sup><10420></sup>Proverbs 14:21) show that it is not to be taken by itself. In spite of all the selfish morality of mere prudence, the hearer is warned that to despise his “neighbor” (Christians must take the word in all the width given to it by the parable of the Good Samaritan) is to sin. The fullness of blessing comes on him who sees in the poor the objects of his mercy.

<sup><10421></sup>**Proverbs 14:22.** *Err* In the sense of wandering from the right way, the way of life.

<sup><10423></sup>**Proverbs 14:23.** The contrast between a single, thorough deed, and the mere emptiness of speech.

<sup><10424></sup>**Proverbs 14:24.** “The crown,” i.e., the glory of the wise man constitutes his wealth. He alone is truly rich even as he alone (compare <sup><10418></sup>Proverbs 14:18 note) is truly king.

The seeming tautology of the second clause is really its point. Turn “the foolishness of fools” as you will, it comes back to “foolishness” at last.

<sup><1425></sup>**Proverbs 14:25.** In the second clause, “destroyeth life” might have been expected as the antithesis to “delivereth souls.” But what worse could be said? “A deceitful witness speaketh lies.” All destruction is implied in falsehood.

<sup><1426></sup>**Proverbs 14:26.** *His children* Probably, the children whom the LORD adopts, and who are true to their adoption.

<sup><1427></sup>**Proverbs 14:27.** See the marginal reference and <sup><2001></sup>Proverbs 10:11 note.

<sup><1428></sup>**Proverbs 14:28.** A protest against the false ideal of national greatness to which Eastern kings, for the most part, have bowed down. Not conquest, or pomp, or gorgeous array, but a happy and numerous people form the true glory of a king. The word translated “prince” is of doubtful meaning; but the translation is supported by the Septuagint, Vulg, and most commentators.

<sup><1429></sup>**Proverbs 14:29.** *Exalteth folly* Lifts it up, as it were, on high, and exposes it to the gaze of all men.

<sup><1430></sup>**Proverbs 14:30.** *Sound heart* literally, “heart of health,” that in which all emotions and appetites are in a healthy equilibrium. The contrast with this is the envy which eats, like a consuming disease, into the very bones and marrow of a man’s moral life.

<sup><1431></sup>**Proverbs 14:31.** *Honoureth him* i.e., God, who is the Maker of poor and rich alike.

<sup><1432></sup>**Proverbs 14:32.** Consult marginal reference. The hope which abides even “in death” must look beyond it.

<sup><1433></sup>**Proverbs 14:33.** Omit “that which is.” “Wisdom” is the subject of both clauses. She is “made known,” i.e., by the very force of contrast, in the midst of fools; or she is reserved and reticent in the one, noisy and boastful in the other. The Septuagint and some other versions get over the difficulty, by reading “Wisdom is not made known.”

<sup><1434></sup>**Proverbs 14:34.** *Reproach* The word so rendered has this sense in the Targum of <sup><1307></sup>Leviticus 20:17. Its more usual meaning is “mercy,” “piety;” hence, some have attached to the word rendered “sin” the sense of

“sin-offering,” and so get the maxim “piety is an atonement for the people.”

## NOTES ON PROVERBS 15

<sup><2152></sup>**Proverbs 15:2.** *Useth knowledge aright* Rather, makes knowledge goodly. The power of well-considered speech to commend true wisdom, is contrasted with the pouring (literally as in the margin) forth of folly.

<sup><2153></sup>**Proverbs 15:3.** The teaching which began with the fear of the Lord (<sup><21007></sup>Proverbs 1:7) would not be complete without this assertion of His omnipresent knowledge.

<sup><2154></sup>**Proverbs 15:4.** *A wholesome tongue* literally, as in the margin, the same word as “sound” in <sup><21430></sup>Proverbs 14:30 (see the note). A more literal rendering would be soundness of speech.

*Tree of life* Compare <sup><21088></sup>Proverbs 3:18 note.

*Breach in the spirit* With the sense of vexation (compare <sup><23514></sup>Isaiah 65:14).

<sup><2157></sup>**Proverbs 15:7.** *Not so* The word translated “so” is taken by some in its etymological force as “strong,” “firm,” and the passage is rendered “the heart of the fool disperseth (supplied from the first clause) what is weak and unsteady,” i.e., “falsehood and unwisdom.” The Septuagint takes it as an adjective, “the heart of the fool is unstedfast.” The phrase as it stands in the King James Version is, however, of frequent occurrence (<sup><04818></sup>Genesis 48:18; <sup><22011></sup>Exodus 10:11; <sup><04217></sup>Numbers 12:7).

<sup><21510></sup>**Proverbs 15:10.** Better, There is a grievous correction, i.e., nothing less than death, to him that forsaketh the way.

<sup><21513></sup>**Proverbs 15:13.** Some prefer to render the last clause, “In sorrow of heart the breath is oppressed.”

<sup><21515></sup>**Proverbs 15:15.** *Afflicted* The affliction meant here is less that of outward circumstances than of a troubled and downcast spirit. Life to the cheerful is as one perpetual banquet, whether he be poor or rich. That which disturbs the feast is anxiety, the taking (anxious) thought” of <sup><01634></sup>Matthew 6:34.

<sup><21516></sup>**Proverbs 15:16.** This proverb has its completion in the teaching of <sup><01633></sup>Matthew 6:33.

<sup><2157></sup>**Proverbs 15:17.** *A dinner of herbs* The meals of the poor and the abstemious. The “stalled ox,” like the “fatted calf” of <sup><2153></sup>Luke 15:23, would indicate a stately magnificence.

<sup><2159></sup>**Proverbs 15:19.** The slothful goes on his journey, and for him the path is thick set with thorns, briars, fences, through which he cannot force his way. For the “righteous” (better, upright), the same path is as the broad raised causeway of the king’s highway. Compare <sup><2418></sup>Isaiah 40:3.

<sup><2151></sup>**Proverbs 15:20.** To “despise” a mother is to cause her the deepest grief, and is therefore not unfitly contrasted with “making a glad father.”

<sup><2152></sup>**Proverbs 15:21** i.e., The empty-hearted, rejoicing in folly, goes the wrong way; the man of understanding, rejoicing in wisdom, goes the right way.

<sup><2152></sup>**Proverbs 15:22.** *Counsellors* The Hebrew word, used almost as an official title (<sup><1372></sup>1 Chronicles 27:32; <sup><2126></sup>Isaiah 1:26; 19:11), brings before us the picture of the council-chamber of Eastern countries, arranged for a solemn conference of the wise.

<sup><2152></sup>**Proverbs 15:23.** Probably, a special reference to debates in council (<sup><2152></sup>Proverbs 15:22). They bring before us the special characteristic of the East, the delight in ready, improvised answers, solving difficulties, turning aside anger. Compare the effect on the scribe (<sup><4128></sup>Mark 12:28).

<sup><2154></sup>**Proverbs 15:24.** *Above ... beneath* The one path is all along upward, leading to the highest life. It rescues the “wise” from the other, which is all along downward, ending in the gloom of Sheol.

<sup><2155></sup>**Proverbs 15:25.** *The widow* Here, as elsewhere (<sup><6108></sup>Deuteronomy 10:18; <sup><1985></sup>Psalms 68:5), the widow, as the most extreme type of desolation, stands as the representative of a class safer in their poverty under the protection of the Lord, than the proud in the haughtiness of their strength.

<sup><2156></sup>**Proverbs 15:26.** Some prefer the margin, and render, words of pleasantness are pure. Gracious words are to God as a pure acceptable offering, the similitude being taken from the Levitical ritual, and the word “pure” in half ceremonial sense (compare <sup><3011></sup>Malachi 1:11).

~~<0157>~~ **Proverbs 15:27.** *Gifts* There is a special application to the office of the judge. The Aramaic Targum paraphrases the first words of this passage as: “he who gathers the mammon of unrighteousness,” using the words with special reference to wealth obtained by unjust judgments. May we infer that Christ’s adoption of that phrase (~~<0160>~~ Luke 16:9) had a point of contact with this proverb, through the version then popularly used in the synagogues of Palestine?

~~<0158>~~ **Proverbs 15:28.** Contrast the “studying” of the wise before he answers and the hasty babbling of the foolish. The teaching of our Lord (~~<0109>~~ Matthew 10:19) presents us with a different and higher precept, resting upon different conditions.

~~<0159>~~ **Proverbs 15:29.** Compare ~~<0161>~~ John 9:31.

~~<0160>~~ **Proverbs 15:30.** *The light of the eyes* The brightness which shines in the eyes of one whose heart and face are alike full of joy. Such a look acts with a healing and quickening power. Compare ~~<0165>~~ Proverbs 16:15.

*A good report* i.e., Good news.

~~<0161>~~ **Proverbs 15:31.** *The reproof of life* i.e., The reproof that leads to, or gives life, rather than that which comes from life and its experience.

~~<0163>~~ **Proverbs 15:33.** *The instruction of wisdom* i.e., The discipline that leads to wisdom.

## NOTES ON PROVERBS 16

The proverbs in <sup><D161></sup>Proverbs 16:1-7 have, more than any other group, an especially religious character impressed upon them. The name of Yahweh as Giver, Guide, Ruler, or Judge, meets us in each of them.

<sup><D162></sup>**Proverbs 16:1.** Better, The plans of the heart belong to man, but the utterance of the tongue is from Yahweh. Thoughts come and go, as it were, spontaneously; but true, well ordered speech is the gift of God. Compare <sup><D163></sup>Proverbs 16:9.

<sup><D164></sup>**Proverbs 16:2.** We are blind to our own faults, do not see ourselves as others see us. There is One who tries not the “ways” only, but the “spirits” (<sup><S042></sup>Hebrews 4:12): this is the true remedy against self-deceit.

<sup><D165></sup>**Proverbs 16:3.** *Commit* literally, as in the margin, as a man transfers a burden from his own back to one stronger and better able to bear it. Compare the margin reference.

*Thy thoughts* i.e., The plans or counsels out of which the works spring.

<sup><D166></sup>**Proverbs 16:4.** *For himself* Better, The Lord has done everything for its own end; and this includes the appointment of an “evil day” for “the wicked” who deserve it.

<sup><D167></sup>**Proverbs 16:5.** See the marginal reference note.

<sup><D168></sup>**Proverbs 16:6.** Compare <sup><D169></sup>Proverbs 15:8. “By mercy and truth,” not by sacrifices and burnt-offerings, “iniquity is purged, atoned for, expiated.” The teaching is the same as that of the prophets.

<sup><D170></sup>**Proverbs 16:7.** Goodness has power to charm and win even enemies to itself.

<sup><D171></sup>**Proverbs 16:9.** *Deviseth his way* i.e., Thinks it out with anxious care; yet it is the Lord and He only who directs the steps. Compare <sup><D172></sup>Proverbs 16:1.

<sup><D173></sup>**Proverbs 16:10.** *A divine sentence* See the margin, i.e., “soothsaying” in its darker aspect as contrasted with prophecy. The true

oracle is to be sought, not from soothsayers and diviners, but “at the lips of the king,” who is ideally the representative, the **προφήτης** <sup><4396></sup> of Yahweh, in His government of mankind.

<sup><2161></sup>**Proverbs 16:11.** See <sup><2100></sup>Proverbs 11:1 note. People are not to think that trade lies outside the divine law. God has commanded there also all that belongs to truth and right.

<sup><2164></sup>**Proverbs 16:14.** While <sup><2163></sup>Proverbs 16:13 depicts the king as he ought to be, this verse reminds us of the terrible rapidity with which, in the despotic monarchies of the East, punishment, even death, follows royal displeasure.

<sup><2165></sup>**Proverbs 16:15.** The “latter rain” is that which falls in March or April just before the harvest. The “cloud” which brings it, immediately screening people from the scorching sun, and bringing plenty and blessing, is a fit type of the highest favor.

<sup><2162></sup>**Proverbs 16:20.** Good as it is to “handle a matter wisely,” it is far better to “trust in the Lord.” The former is really impossible except through the latter.

<sup><2162></sup>**Proverbs 16:21.** The words point to the conditions of all true growth in wisdom; and he who has the gift of uttering it in winning speech increases it in himself and others.

<sup><2162></sup>**Proverbs 16:22.** *Wellspring of life* Compare <sup><2101></sup>Proverbs 10:11 note. “the instruction of fools” Not that which they give, but that which they receive. Compare <sup><2164></sup>Proverbs 14:24. “Folly” is its own all-sufficient punishment.

<sup><2164></sup>**Proverbs 16:24.** Honey took its place not only among the luxuries, but among the medicines of the Israelites. This two-fold use made it all the more suitable to be an emblem both of the true Wisdom which is also true obedience, and of the “pleasant words” in which that Wisdom speaks.

<sup><2165></sup>**Proverbs 16:26.** *He that laboreth* literally, as in the margin, i.e., “The desire of the laborer labors for him” (or, helps him in his work), “for his mouth urges him on.” Hunger of some kind is the spring of all hearty labor. Without that the man would sit down and take his ease. So also,

unless there is a hunger in the soul, craving to be fed, there can be no true labor after righteousness and wisdom (compare <sup><4186></sup>Matthew 5:6).

<sup><2167></sup>**Proverbs 16:27-30.** The four verses speak of the same thing, and the well-known opprobrious name, the “man of Belial,” stands at the head as stigmatizing the man who delights in causing the mischief of which they treat.

*Diggeth up evil* i.e., Digs an evil pit for others to fall into. Compare <sup><4975></sup>Psalm 7:15.

<sup><2163></sup>**Proverbs 16:30.** The physiognomy of the man of Belial, the half-closed eyes that never look you straight in the face, the restlessness or cunning of which biting the lips is the surest indication. Compare <sup><2163></sup>Proverbs 6:13.

<sup><2161></sup>**Proverbs 16:31.** Omit “if.” Literally, “it (i.e., the hoary head) is found in the way of righteousness,” comes as the reward of righteousness.

<sup><2163></sup>**Proverbs 16:33.** *Disposing* Better, the judgment or sentence which depends upon the lot. The lots were thrown into the gathered folds of a robe, and then drawn out. Where everything seemed the merest chance, there the faithful Israelite teacher recognized the guidance of a higher will. Compare the case of Achan (<sup><4178></sup>Joshua 7:18), and of Jonathan (<sup><4947></sup>1 Samuel 14:37-42). The process here described would seem to have been employed ordinarily in trials where the judges could not decide on the facts before them (compare <sup><2188></sup>Proverbs 18:18).

## NOTES ON PROVERBS 17

**Proverbs 17:1.** *Sacrifices* The feast accompanied the offerings (~~2074~~ Proverbs 7:14). Part of the victims were burned upon the altar, the rest was consumed by the worshipper and his friends. The “house full of sacrifices” was therefore one abounding in sumptuous feasts.

**Proverbs 17:2.** The “servant,” it must be remembered, was a slave, but (as in such cases as ~~4152~~ Genesis 15:2; ~~4104~~ 2 Samuel 16:4) might succeed to the inheritance.

**Proverbs 17:3.** Wonderful as is the separation of the pure metal from the dross with which it has mingled, there is something yet more wonderful in the divine discipline which purifies the good that lies hid, like a grain of gold, even in rough and common natures, and frees it from all admixture of evil. Compare ~~3022~~ Malachi 3:2; ~~4100~~ 1 Peter 1:7.

**Proverbs 17:4.** The two clauses describe two phases of the mutual affinities of evil. The evil-doer delights in lies, the liar in bad words.

**Proverbs 17:5.** *He that is glad at calamities* A temper common at all times as the most hateful form of evil; the Greek *επιχαίρεκακία*. The sins spoken of in both clauses occur also in Job’s vindication of his integrity (~~4813~~ Proverbs 31:13,29).

**Proverbs 17:6.** The reciprocity of good in sustained family relationships. A long line of children’s children is the glory of old age, a long line of ancestors the glory of their descendants.

**Proverbs 17:7.** The margin renderings are more literal and give greater emphasis. What is pointed out is not the unfitness of lying lips for the princely-hearted, but the necessity of harmony, in each case, between character and speech.

**Proverbs 17:8.** A half-satirical description of the power of bribery in palaces and among judges. The precious stone (literally as in the margin) is probably a gem, thought of as a talisman, which, “wherever it turns,” will ensure “prosperity” to him who, being the possessor, has the power to give it.

**Proverbs 17:9.** *Seeketh love* i.e., Takes the course which leads to his gaining it.

*He that repeateth a matter* The warning is directed against that which leads a man to dwell with irritating iteration on a past offence instead of burying it in oblivion.

*Separateth very friends* Better, alienateth his chief friend. The tale-bearer works injury to himself.

**Proverbs 17:11.** The proverb expresses the reverence of the East for the supreme authority of the king. The “cruel messenger” is probably the king’s officer despatched to subdue and punish. The Septuagint renders it: “The Lord will send a pitiless Angel.”

**Proverbs 17:12.** The large brown bear of Syria, in her rage at the loss of her whelps, was to the Israelites the strongest type of brute ferocity. Compare <sup><1718></sup>2 Samuel 17:8; <sup><1724></sup>2 Kings 2:24.

**Proverbs 17:14.** The figure is taken from the great tank or reservoir upon which Eastern cities often depended for their supply of water. The beginning of strife is compared to the first crack in the mound of such a reservoir. At first a few drops ooze out, but after a time the whole mass of waters pour themselves forth with fury, and it is hard to set limits to the destruction which they cause.

*Before it be meddled with* literally, “before it rolls, or rushes forward.”

**Proverbs 17:15.** People need to be warned against an unjust acquittal, no less than against unjust condemnation. The word “justifieth” has its forensic sense, “to declare righteous,” to acquit.

**Proverbs 17:16.** More literally: Why is there a price in the hand of a fool? Is it to get wisdom when he has no heart for it? No money will avail without the understanding heart.

**Proverbs 17:17.** Some take the proverb to describe (as in <sup><1824></sup>Proverbs 18:24) the “friend that sticketh closer than a brother:” and render: At all times, a friend loveth, but in adversity he is born (i.e., becomes) a brother.

<sup><31718></sup>**Proverbs 17:18.** Compare the marginal reference. Since nothing is nobler than the self-sacrifice of the true friend (<sup><31717></sup>Proverbs 17:17), so nothing is more contemptible than the weakness which allows itself to be sacrificed for the sake of worthless associates.

*In the presence of his friend* i.e., “On behalf of” or “to his friend for some third person.”

<sup><31719></sup>**Proverbs 17:19.** *He that exalteth his gate* i.e., Builds a stately house, indulges in arrogant ostentation.

<sup><31722></sup>**Proverbs 17:22.** *Doeth good like a medicine* Better, worketh a good healing. Omit “like.”

<sup><31723></sup>**Proverbs 17:23.** The words “out of the bosom,” from the fold of the garment, rather than from the bag or girdle in which money was usually carried, possibly point to the stealthiness with which the “gift” (or, bribe) is offered to the judge.

<sup><31724></sup>**Proverbs 17:24.** *Before him* Set straight before his eyes as the mark to which they look. Others, following the Septuagint and Vulgate, interpret the verse, Wisdom is seen in the clear, stedfast look of the wise man as contrasted with the wandering gaze of the fool.

<sup><31725></sup>**Proverbs 17:25.** Compare <sup><31721></sup>Proverbs 17:21. Here is added a reference to the sorrow which the folly of a child brings especially to the mother.

<sup><31726></sup>**Proverbs 17:26.** *Nor to strike ...* Better, and to strike the noble (in character rather than in rank) is against right. Compare <sup><61828></sup>John 18:28.

<sup><31727></sup>**Proverbs 17:27.** Better, A man of calm (or noble) spirit is a man of understanding.

<sup><31728></sup>**Proverbs 17:28.** *Is esteemed* Or, “is” (simply). The maxim would imply that silence is in any case good.

## NOTES ON PROVERBS 18

**Proverbs 18:1.** The text and the marginal readings indicate the two chief constructions of this somewhat difficult verse. Other renderings are

(1) He who separateth himself from others seeks his own desire, and rushes forward against all wise counsel: a warning against self-will and the self-assertion which exults in differing from the received customs and opinions of mankind.

(2) He who separates himself (from the foolish, unlearned multitude) seeks his own desire (that which is worthy to be desired), and minglenth himself with all wisdom. So the Jewish commentators generally.

Between (1) blaming and (2) commending the life of isolation, the decision must be that (1) is most in harmony with the temper of the Book of Proverbs; but it is not strange that Pharisaism, in its very name, separating and self-exalting, should have adopted (2).

**Proverbs 18:2.** Another form of egotism. In “understanding,” i.e., self-knowledge, the “fool” finds no pleasure; but self-assertion, talking about himself and his own opinions, is his highest joy.

**Proverbs 18:3.** *With ignominy* Better, “together with baseness comes reproach.” The outer shame follows close upon the inner.

**Proverbs 18:4.** The parallelism of the two clauses is probably one of contrast. If so, the proverb is a comparison between all teaching from without and that of the light within. “The words of a man’s mouth” are dark as the “deep waters” of a pool, or tank (“deep waters” being associated in the Old Testament with the thought of darkness and mystery; compare **Proverbs 20:5**; **Psalm 69:2**; **Ecclesiastes 7:24**); but “the wellspring of wisdom is as a flowing brook,” bright and clear. The verse presents a contrast like that of **Jeremiah 2:13**.

**Proverbs 18:6-8.** The first verse speaks of the immediate, the others of the remote, results of the “fool’s” temper. First, “contention,” then “strokes” or blows, then “destruction,” and last, “wounds.”

**Proverbs 18:8.** *Wounds* The word so rendered occurs here and in Proverbs 26:22 only. Others render it “dainties,” and take the verse to describe the avidity with which people swallow in tales of scandal. They find their way to the innermost recesses of man’s nature.

**Proverbs 18:10.** *Safe* literally, as in the margin i.e., is exalted. Compare Psalm 18:2,33.

**Proverbs 18:11.** What the name of the Lord is to the righteous (Proverbs 18:10), that wealth is to the rich. He flees to it for refuge as to a strong city; but it is so only “in his own conceit” or imagination.

*High* In the Hebrew the same word as “safe” (Proverbs 18:10), and manifestly used in reference to it.

**Proverbs 18:12.** *Before* In the sense of priority of time.

**Proverbs 18:14.** *Infirmity* Bodily pain or trouble. “Spirit” in the Hebrew text is masculine in the first clause, feminine in the second, as though used in the latter as having lost its strength.

**Proverbs 18:15.** With the wise and prudent there is no loss of time. “Heart” and “ear” — the mind working within, or gathering from without materials for its thought — are, through this channel or that, ever gaining knowledge.

**Proverbs 18:16.** The “gift” (or, bribe), by a bold personification, appears as the powerful “friend at court,” who introduces another, and makes him welcome in high places.

**Proverbs 18:17.** A protest against another fault in judging. Haste is hardly less evil than corruption. “Audi alteram partem” “should be the rule of every judge.

*His neighbor* The other party to the suit “searcheth,” i.e., scrutinizes and detects him.

**Proverbs 18:18.** Compare Proverbs 16:33 note. A tacit appeal to the Divine Judge gave a fairer prospect of a just decision than corruption (Proverbs 18:16) or hasty onesidedness (Proverbs 18:17).

~~21819~~ **Proverbs 18:19.** The meaning of the first clause is obtained in the King James Version by the insertion of the words in italics, and it seems on the whole to be the best. The Septuagint and Vulgate give an entirely different rendering, based, apparently, upon a different text.

~~21820~~ **Proverbs 18:20.** The general sense is plain. A man must for good or evil take the consequence of his words, as well as his deeds. Compare the marginal reference.

~~21822~~ **Proverbs 18:22.** The sense seems to require, “Whoso findeth a good wife,” as in some Chaldee manuscripts; but the proverb writer may be looking at marriage in its ideal aspect, and sees in every such union the hands of God joining together man and woman for their mutual good. The Septuagint adds “He who casts out a good wife, casts away that which is good: but he that keepeth an adulteress is foolish and ungodly.”

~~21823~~ **Proverbs 18:23.** Note the paradox. The poor man, of whom one might expect roughness, supplicates; the rich, well nurtured, from whom one might look for courtesy, answers harshly and brusquely.

~~21824~~ **Proverbs 18:24.** Better, “A man of many companions is so to his own destruction, but there is a friend (the true, loving friend) etc.” It is not the multitude of so called friends that helps us. They may only embarrass and perplex. What we prize is the one whose love is stronger and purer even than all ties of kindred.

## NOTES ON PROVERBS 19

<1901> **Proverbs 19:1.** The “perverse” man is the rich fool, as contrasted with the poor man who is upright.

<1901> Proverbs 19:1,2 are missing in the Septuagint.

<1903> **Proverbs 19:3.** The non-wisdom which, having brought about disasters by its own perverseness, then turns round and “fretteth,” i.e., angrily complains against the Providence of God.

*Perverteth* Rather, “overturneth,” “maketh to fail.”

<1906> **Proverbs 19:6.** *Intreat the favor ...* literally, “stroke the face” of the man of princely nature, who gives munificently.

<1907> **Proverbs 19:7.** It seems best to follow the Vulgate in taking the last clause as a separate maxim, He who pursues words, nought are they; i.e., the fair speeches and promises of help come to nothing. A various reading in the Hebrew gives, “he pursues after words, and these he shall have” — i.e., these, and nothing else.

This and other like maxims do not in reality cast scorn and shame on a state which Christ has pronounced “blessed.” Side by side with them is <1908> Proverbs 19:1, setting forth the honor of an upright poverty. But as there is an honorable poverty, so there is one which is altogether inglorious, caused by sloth and folly, leading to shame and ignominy, and it is well that the man who wishes to live rightly should avoid this. The teaching of Christ is, of course, higher than that of the Book of Proverbs, being based upon a fuller revelation of the divine will, pointing to a higher end and a nobler standard of duty, and transcending the common motives and common facts of life.

<1908> **Proverbs 19:8.** *Wisdom* literally, as in the margin, to gain a “heart,” i.e., the higher faculties both of reason and feeling, is identical with gaining wisdom, i.e., the faculty which seeks and finds.

<1910> **Proverbs 19:10.** “Delight,” high unrestrained enjoyment, is to the “fool” who lacks wisdom but a temptation and a snare. The second clause carries the thought on to what the despotism of Eastern monarchies often

presented, the objectionable rule of some favored slave, it might be, of alien birth, over the princes and nobles of the land.

<sup><1093></sup>**Proverbs 19:13.** *Calamity* The Hebrew word is plural (as in <sup><1094></sup>Psalm 57:1, 91:3), and seems to express the multiplied and manifold sorrow caused by the foolish son.

*Continual dropping* The irritating, unceasing, sound of the fall, drop after drop, of water through the chinks in the roof.

<sup><1095></sup>**Proverbs 19:15.** *Casteth into a deep sleep* Better, causeth deep sleep to fall.

<sup><1096></sup>**Proverbs 19:16.** *Keepeth his own soul* i.e., His life in the truest and highest sense.

<sup><1097></sup>**Proverbs 19:17.** Note the original greatness of the thought. We give to the poor. Have we lost our gift? No, what we gave, we have lent to One who will repay with usury. Compare the yet nobler truth of our Lord's teaching (<sup><1098></sup>Matthew 25:40).

<sup><1098></sup>**Proverbs 19:18.** *While there is hope* While he is still young, and capable of being reformed.

*Crying* Better, as in the margin, Do not set thy soul on his destruction; words which either counsel forbearance in the act of chastisement (compare <sup><1099></sup>Ephesians 6:4; <sup><1100></sup>Colossians 3:21); or urge that a false clemency is a real cruelty. The latter sense is preferable. The father is warned that to forbear from chastising is virtually to expose the son who needs it to a far worse penalty.

<sup><1101></sup>**Proverbs 19:19.** The sense of the last words seems to be that the connection between wrath and punishment is so invariable, that all efforts to save the passionate man from the disastrous consequences which he brings on his own head are made in vain.

<sup><1102></sup>**Proverbs 19:21.** Contrast the many purposes of man, shifting, changing, from good to better, from bad to worse, and the one unchanging righteous "counsel" of Yahweh.

<sup><1103></sup>**Proverbs 19:22.** The "liar" is probably the man, who makes false excuses for not giving, and so is inferior to the poor man, whose "desire,"

the wish to do good, is taken, in the absence of means to carry it into effect, for the act of kindness itself.

**Proverbs 19:23.** *Shall abide satisfied* Better, one that is satisfied hath a sure abiding-place. The word “abide” has, most probably, here as elsewhere, its original sense of “passing the night.” Even in the hour of darkness he shall be free from fear.

**Proverbs 19:24.** *Hideth his hand in his bosom* Better, dippeth his hand in the dish (compare <sup><2213></sup>2 Kings 21:13). The scene brought before us is that of an Eastern feast. There are no knives, or forks, or spoons. Every guest has to help himself, or be helped by the host. Compare <sup><4136></sup>John 13:26.

**Proverbs 19:25.** Words which embrace nearly the whole theory of punishment. If the man who offends is a “scorner,” hardened beyond all hope of reformation, then punish him by way of retribution and example, and let the penalty be sharp, that even the unwary and careless may beware. If the man be “understanding,” then let the punishment take the form of discipline. Admonish, reprove, educate.

**Proverbs 19:26.** Or, A son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach, is one that wasteth his father, and chaseth away his mother.

**Proverbs 19:27.** literally, Cease, my son, to hear instruction, that thou mayest err from the words of knowledge; advice given ironically to do that to which his weakness leads him, with a clear knowledge of the evil to which he is drifting.

**Proverbs 19:28.** *Ungodly witness* literally, “Witness of Belial,” “worthless,” “untruthful.”

*Devoureth iniquity* Seizes on it eagerly, as a dainty, lives on it.

## NOTES ON PROVERBS 20

**Proverbs 20:1.** “Wine” and “strong drink” are personified as themselves doing what they make men do. The latter (see **Leviticus 10:9** note) is here, probably, the “palm-wine” of Syria.

**Proverbs 20:2.** *Sinneth against his own soul* i.e., Against his own life (compare **Habakkuk 2:10**).

**Proverbs 20:3.** *Meddling* See **Proverbs 17:14** note.

**Proverbs 20:4.** Plowing time in Palestine is in November and December, when the wind blows commonly from the North.

**Proverbs 20:5.** The contest between reticence on the one side and pertinacity in search on the other is represented as by a parable. The well may be very deep (compare the marginal reference), but the man of understanding” has enough skill to draw up the water even to the last drop. Every question is, as it were, a turning of the windlass.

**Proverbs 20:6.** *Goodness* With the special sense of bounty, beneficence. Contrast promise and performance. People boast of their liberality, yet we look in vain for the fulfillment of actual obligations.

**Proverbs 20:9.** A warning voice against the spirit, which, ignorant of its own guilt, is forward to condemn others.

**Proverbs 20:10.** See **Proverbs 11:1**: Here perhaps, as a companion to **Proverbs 20:9**, with a wider application to all judging one man by rules which we do not apply to ourselves or to another.

**Proverbs 20:11.** The graces or the faults of children are not trifles. “The child is father of the man;” and the earliest actions are prophecies of the future, whether it will be pure and right, or unclean and evil.

**Proverbs 20:12.** Not only do we owe the gifts of sight and hearing to Yahweh, but He, being the giver, will also call us to account for them (compare **Psalm 94:9**).

**Proverbs 20:13.** *Open thine eyes* Be vigilant and active. That is the secret of prosperity.

**Proverbs 20:14.** *Naught* Bad, worthless (<sup>119</sup>2 Kings 2:19).

**Proverbs 20:15.** *A precious jewel* literally, “A vessel of preciousness,” i.e., most precious of all are “the lips of knowledge.”

**Proverbs 20:16.** The warning against suretiship and lust are here repeated and combined (compare <sup>173</sup>Proverbs 27:13). The judge tells the creditor to seize the goods of the surety who has been weak enough to pledge himself for those who are alien to him, instead of those of the actual debtor. The reading of the the King James Version recalls in the second clause the history of Tamar (<sup>187</sup>Genesis 38:17,18). The Hebrew text, however, gives “strangers” in the masculine plural, and is probably right, the feminine being the reading of the margin, probably adopted from <sup>173</sup>Proverbs 27:13.

**Proverbs 20:17.** “To eat gravel” was a Hebrew (<sup>186</sup>Lamentations 3:16), and is an Arabic, phrase for getting into trouble. So “bread,” got by deceit, tastes sweet at first, but ends by leaving the hunger of the soul unsatisfied. There is a pleasure in the sense of cleverness felt after a hard bargain or a successful fraud, which must be met by bidding men look on the after consequences.

**Proverbs 20:19.** *Flattereth* literally, “The man who opens his lips,” who has no reticence; such a man, with or without intending it, does the work of a talebearer.

**Proverbs 20:20.** A connecting link between <sup>119</sup>Leviticus 20:9 and <sup>154</sup>Matthew 15:4. The words, “his lamp shall be put out,” describe the failure of outward happiness.

**Proverbs 20:21.** Or, An inheritance gotten hastily (greedily sought after by unjust means) at the beginning, the end thereof shall not be blessed. Another reading gives, “an inheritance loathed, (compare <sup>118</sup>Zechariah 11:8), or with a curse upon it.” The King James Version agrees with the versions.

**Proverbs 20:22.** God’s awarding to everyone according to his works, is the true check to the spirit of vindictiveness (compare

<5127>Romans 12:17,19). Note that man is not told to wait on the Lord in expectation of seeing vengeance on his enemies, but “He shall save thee.” The difference of the two hopes, in their effect upon the man’s character, is incalculable.

<1115>**Proverbs 20:24.** The order of a man’s life is a mystery even to himself. He knows not where he is going, or for what God is educating him.

<1115>**Proverbs 20:25.** Better, It is a snare to a man to utter a vow (of consecration) rashly, and after vows to inquire whether he can fulfill them. Both clauses are a protest against the besetting sin of rash and hasty vows. Compare the marginal reference.

<1115>**Proverbs 20:26.** *The wheel* The threshing wheel (<2387>Isaiah 28:27,28), which passes over the grain and separates the grain from the chaff. The proverb involves therefore the idea of the division of the good from the evil, no less than that of the punishment of the latter.

<1115>**Proverbs 20:27.** *The spirit of man* The “breath” of <1115>Genesis 2:7, the higher life, above that which he has in common with lower animals, coming to him direct from God. Such a life, with all its powers of insight, consciousness, reflection, is as a lamp which God has lighted, throwing its rays into the darkest recesses of the heart. A still higher truth is proclaimed in the Prologue of John’s Gospel. The candle, or lamp of Yahweh, derives its light from “the Light that lighteth every man,” even the Eternal Word.

<1115>**Proverbs 20:30.** Better, The blueness of a wound is a cleansing of evil, so are the stripes that go down to the inward parts of the belly.

The open sores of wounds left by the scourge, unclean and foul as they seem, are yet a cleansing, purifying process for evil; so also are the stripes that reach the inward parts of the belly, i.e., the sharp reproofs, the stings of conscience, which penetrate where no scourge can reach, into the inner life of man. Chastisement, whatever be its nature, must be real; the scourge must leave its mark, the reproof must go deep.

## NOTES ON PROVERBS 21

**Proverbs 21:1.** *Rivers of water* See the Psalm 1:3 note. As the cultivator directs the stream into the channels where it is most wanted, so Yahweh directs the thoughts of the true king, that his favors may fall, not at random, but in harmony with a divine order.

**Proverbs 21:3.** Compare the marginal reference. The words have a special significance as coming from the king who had built the temple, and had offered sacrifices that could not be numbered for multitude” (1 Kings 8:5).

**Proverbs 21:4.** *The plowing* The Hebrew word, with a change in its vowel points, may signify either:

- (1) the “fallow field,” the “tillage” of Proverbs 13:23, or
- (2) the lamp.

According to: (1) the verse would mean, “The outward signs of pride, the proud heart, the broad lands of the wicked, all are evil.” (2) however, belongs, as it were, to the language of the time and of the book (Proverbs 13:9; 24:20). The “lamp of the wicked” is their outwardly bright prosperity.

**Proverbs 21:5.** Here diligence is opposed, not to sloth but to haste. Undue hurry is as fatal to success as undue procrastination.

**Proverbs 21:6.** *Vanity* Or, “a breath driven to and fro of those that are seeking death.” Another reading of the last words is: “of the snares of death” (compare 1 Timothy 6:9). Some commentators have suggested that the “vapor” or “mist” is the mirage of the desert, misleading those who follow it, and becoming a “net of death.”

**Proverbs 21:7.** *Robbery* Probably the “violence” which the wicked practice.

*Shall destroy them* More literally, carries them away.

**Proverbs 21:8.** Or, “Perverse is the way of a sin burdened man.”

<sup><1219></sup>**Proverbs 21:9.** *A wide house* literally, “a house of companionship,” i.e., a house shared with her. The flat roof of an Eastern house was often used for retirement by day, or in summer for sleep by night. The corner of such a roof was exposed to all changes of weather, and the point of the proverb lies in the thought that all winds and storms which a man might meet with there are more endurable than the tempest within.

<sup><1212></sup>**Proverbs 21:12.** Or, The Righteous One (Yahweh) regardeth well the house of the wicked, and maketh the wicked fall into mischief.

<sup><1216></sup>**Proverbs 21:16.** *congregation of the dead* The Rephaim (compare the <sup><1218></sup>Proverbs 2:18 note).

*Remain* i.e., “He shall find a resting place, but it shall be in Hades.”

<sup><1217></sup>**Proverbs 21:17.** *Wine and oil* i.e., The costly adjuncts of a princely banquet. The price of oil or precious unguent was about equal to the 300 days’ wages of a field laborer (<sup><1212></sup>Matthew 20:2). Indulgence in such a luxury would thus become the type of all extravagance and excess.

<sup><1218></sup>**Proverbs 21:18.** Compare the marginal reference. Evil doers seem to draw down the wrath of God upon their heads, and so become, as it were, the scapegoats of the comparatively righteous.

<sup><1221></sup>**Proverbs 21:20.** *Spended it up* literally, swalloweth it. The wise man keeps a store in reserve. He gains uprightly, spends moderately, never exhausts himself. But the proverb may have also a higher application. The wise man stores up all “treasure to be desired” of wisdom, all “oil” of divine influence, which strengthens and refreshes, and so is ready at all times for the work to which the Master calls him. Compare <sup><1221></sup>Matthew 25:1-13.

<sup><1221></sup>**Proverbs 21:21.** The man who keeps “righteousness” will assuredly find it, but he will find besides it the “life” and the “honor” which he was not seeking. Compare <sup><1213></sup>1 Kings 3:13; <sup><1213></sup>Matthew 6:33.

<sup><1222></sup>**Proverbs 21:22.** Even in war, counsel does more than brute strength. So of the warfare which is carried on in the inner battlefield of the soul. There also wisdom is mighty to the “pulling down of strongholds” (<sup><1204></sup>2 Corinthians 10:4, where Paul uses the very words of the Septuagint

Version of this passage), and the wise man scales and keeps the city which the strong man armed has seized and made his own.

~~1025~~ **Proverbs 21:25.** *Killeth him* He wastes his strength and life in unsatisfied longings for something which he has not energy to gain. The wish to do great or good things may sometimes be taken for the deed, but if the hindrance is from a man's own sloth, it does but add to his condemnation.

~~1025~~ **Proverbs 21:26.** *All the day long* Better, every day. The wish of the slothful man passes into restless, covetous, dissatisfied desire; the righteous, free from that desire, gives without grudging.

~~1027~~ **Proverbs 21:27.** A lower depth even than ~~1018~~ Proverbs 15:8. The wicked man may connect his devotion with his guilt, offer his sacrifice and vow his vow (as men have done under paganism or corrupted Christianity) for success in the perpetration of a crime.

~~1028~~ **Proverbs 21:28.** *Speaketh constantly* His testimony abides evermore who repeats simply what he has heard, whether from the lips of men or from the voice within, in contrast with "the false witness."

~~1029~~ **Proverbs 21:29.** *Directeth* i.e., Makes straight and firm. On one side it is the callousness of guilt; on the other side it is the confidence of integrity.

~~1031~~ **Proverbs 21:30,31.** Two companion proverbs. Nothing avails against, nothing without, God. The horse is the type of warlike strength, used chiefly or exclusively in battle. ~~1005~~ 1 Kings 4:26; 10:26-28, may be thought of as having given occasion to the latter of the two proverbs.

## NOTES ON PROVERBS 22

<sup><121></sup>**Proverbs 22:1.** Omit “good.” The word is an insertion. To the Hebrew, “name” by itself conveyed the idea of good repute, just as “men without a name” (compare <sup><1318></sup>Job 30:8 margin) are those sunk in ignominy. The margin gives a preferable rendering of the second clause of this verse.

<sup><122></sup>**Proverbs 22:2.** Compare the margin reference. Another recognition of the oneness of a common humanity, overriding all distinctions of rank.

<sup><124></sup>**Proverbs 22:4.** Better, (compare the margin) The reward of humility (is) the fear of the Lord, “riches, and honor, and life.

<sup><126></sup>**Proverbs 22:6.** *Train* Initiate, and so, educate.

*The way he should go* Or, according to the tenor of his way, i.e., the path especially belonging to, especially fitted for, the individual’s character. The proverb enjoins the closest possible study of each child’s temperament and the adaptation of “his way of life” to that.

<sup><128></sup>**Proverbs 22:8.** *The rod of his anger* That with which he smites others (compare <sup><346></sup>Isaiah 14:6). The King James Version describes the final impotence of the wrath of the wicked.

<sup><129></sup>**Proverbs 22:9.** *He that hath a bountiful eye* literally, as in the margin, contrasted with the “evil eye” of <sup><132></sup>Proverbs 28:22.

<sup><121></sup>**Proverbs 22:11.** More literally, “He that loveth pureness of heart, his lips are gracious, the king is his friend.”

<sup><123></sup>**Proverbs 22:13.** The point of the satire is the ingenuity with which the slothful man devises the most improbable alarms. He hears that “there is a lion without,” i.e., in the broad open country; he is afraid of being slain in the very streets of the city.

<sup><124></sup>**Proverbs 22:14.** The fall of the man into the snare of the harlot seems to be the consequence of the abhorrence or wrath of Yahweh. That abhorrence is, however, the result of previous evil. The man is left to himself, and sin becomes the penalty of sin.

**Proverbs 22:16.** Better, He who oppresses the poor for his own profit gives. (i.e., will, in the common course of things, be compelled to give) to a rich man, and that only to his own loss. Ill-gotten gains do not prosper, and only expose the oppressor to extortion and violence in his turn.

**Proverbs 22:17.** This is the commencement of a new and entirely distinct section, opening, after the fashion of Proverbs 3:1,21; 4:1; 7:1; with a general exhortation (Proverbs 22:17-21) and passing on to special precepts. The “words of the wise” may be a title to the section: compare Proverbs 24:23. The general characteristics of this section appear to be

- (1) a less close attention to the laws of parallelism, and
- (2) a tendency to longer and more complicated sentences. Compare the Introduction to Proverbs.

**Proverbs 22:18.** What is “pleasant” in the sight of God and man is the union of two things, belief passing into profession, profession resting on belief.

**Proverbs 22:19.** *Even to thee* The wide general character of the teaching does not hinder its being a personal message to every one who reads it.

**Proverbs 22:20.** *Excellent things* A meaning of the word derived from “the third,” i.e., “the chief of three warriors in a chariot” (compare Exodus 14:7 note). Another reading of the Hebrew text gives “Have I not written to thee long ago?” and this would form a natural antithesis to “this day” of Proverbs 22:19. The rendering of the Septuagint is: “write them for thyself three times;” that of the Vulgate, “I have written it (i.e., my counsel) In threefold form;” the “three times” or “threefold form” being referred either to the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Solomon, or to the division of the Old Testament into the Law, the prophets, and the Hagiographa.

**Proverbs 22:21.** *To them that send unto thee* Better as in the margin; compare Proverbs 10:26. The man who has learned the certainty of the words of truth will learn to observe it in all that men commit to him.

~~1222~~ **Proverbs 22:22.** i.e., “Do not be tempted by the helplessness of the poor man to do him wrong:” some prefer, “Refrain from doing him wrong through pity for his helplessness.”

*The gate* The place where the rulers of the city sit in judgment. The words point to the special form of oppression of which unjust judges are the instruments.

~~1222~~ **Proverbs 22:26.** *Strike hands* i.e., Bind themselves as surety for what another owes (compare the margin reference).

~~1222~~ **Proverbs 22:27.** *He* i.e., The man to whom the surety has been given. The practice of distraining for payment of a debt, seems, though prohibited (~~1222~~Exodus 22:27), to have become common.

~~1222~~ **Proverbs 22:28.** A protest against the grasping covetousness (~~2118~~Isaiah 5:8) which is regardless of the rights of the poor upon whose inheritance men encroach (compare the margin reference). The not uncommon reference of the words to the “landmarks” of thought or custom, however, natural and legitimate, is foreign to the mind of the writer.

~~1222~~ **Proverbs 22:29.** The gift of a quick and ready intellect is to lead to high office, it is not to be wasted on a work to which the obscure are adequate.

## NOTES ON PROVERBS 23

<sup><1212></sup>**Proverbs 23:1.** *What is before thee* Beware lest dainties tempt thee to excess. Or, “consider diligently who is before thee,” the character and temper of the ruler who invites thee.

<sup><1212></sup>**Proverbs 23:2.** i.e., “Restrain thy appetite, eat as if the knife were at thy throat.” Others render the words “thou wilt put a knife to thy throat” etc., i.e., “indulgence at such a time may endanger thy very life.”

<sup><1212></sup>**Proverbs 23:3.** *Dainties ... deceitful meat* Such as “savory meat,” venison (<sup><12704></sup>Genesis 27:4), offered not from genuine hospitality, but with some by-ends.

<sup><1212></sup>**Proverbs 23:4.** *Cease from thine own wisdom* i.e., “Cease from the use of what is in itself most excellent, if it only serves to seek after wealth, and so ministers to evil.” There is no special contrast between “thine own wisdom” and that given from above, though it is of course implied that in ceasing from his own prudence the man is on the way to attain a higher wisdom.

<sup><1212></sup>**Proverbs 23:5.** *Set thine eyes* literally, as in the margin, i.e., “gaze eagerly upon;” and then we get an emphatic parallelism with the words that follow, “they fly away as an eagle toward heaven;” “certainly make themselves wings.”

<sup><1212></sup>**Proverbs 23:6.** A different danger from that of <sup><1210></sup>Proverbs 23:1. The hazard here is the hospitality of the purse-proud rich, avaricious or grudging even in his banquets.

*Evil eye* Not with the later associations of a mysterious power for mischief, but simply, as in the margin ref. and in <sup><1215></sup>Matthew 20:15.

<sup><1212></sup>**Proverbs 23:7.** *Thinketh* The Hebrew verb is found here only, and probably means, “as he is all along in his heart, so is he (at last) in act.”

<sup><1212></sup>**Proverbs 23:9.** The “fool” here is one willfully and persistently deaf to it, almost identical with the scorner.

**Proverbs 23:11.** The reason is given for the precept (<sup><1230></sup>Proverbs 23:10).

*Their redeemer* See <sup><1825></sup>Job 19:25 note. It was the duty of the *Goel*<sup><11350></sup>, the next of kin, to take on himself, in case of murder, the office of avenger of blood (<sup><0659></sup>Numbers 35:19). By a slight extension the word was applied to one who took on himself a like office in cases short of this. Here, therefore, the thought is that, destitute as the fatherless may seem, there is One who claims them as His next of kin, and will avenge them. Yahweh Himself is in this sense their God, their Redeemer.

**Proverbs 23:13,14.** i.e., “You will not kill your son by scourging him, you may kill him by withholding the scourge.”

**Proverbs 23:14.** *Hell* Sheol, the world of the dead.

**Proverbs 23:15-35.** Another continuous exhortation rather than a collection of maxims.

**Proverbs 23:16.** The teacher rejoices when the disciple’s heart (<sup><1215></sup>Proverbs 23:15) receives wisdom, and yet more when his lips can utter it.

*Reins* See <sup><1827></sup>Job 19:27 note.

**Proverbs 23:17.** *Envy sinners* Compare in <sup><1801></sup>Psalm 37:1; 73:3; the feeling which looks half-longingly at the prosperity of evil doers. Some connect the verb “envy” with the second clause, “envy not sinners, but envy, emulate, the fear of the Lord.”

**Proverbs 23:18.** Or, For if there is an end (hereafter), thine expectations shall not be cut off. There is an implied confidence in immortality.

**Proverbs 23:20.** *Riotous eaters of flesh* The word is the same as “glutton” in <sup><1221></sup>Proverbs 23:21 and <sup><0621></sup>Deuteronomy 21:20.

**Proverbs 23:21.** The three forms of evil that destroy reputation and tempt to waste are brought together.

*Drowsiness* Specially the drunken sleep, heavy and confused.

**Proverbs 23:26.** *Observe* Another reading gives, “let thine eyes delight in my ways.”

**Proverbs 23:28.** *As for a prey* Better as in the margin.

*The transgressors* Better, the treacherous,” those that attack men treacherously.

**Proverbs 23:29.** *Woe ... sorrow* The words in the original are interjections, probably expressing distress. The sharp touch of the satirist reproduces the actual inarticulate utterances of drunkenness.

**Proverbs 23:30.** *Mixed wine* Wine flavored with aromatic spices, that increase its stimulating properties (**Isaiah 5:22**). There is a touch of sarcasm in “go to seek.” The word, elsewhere used of diligent search after knowledge (**Proverbs 25:2**; **Job 11:7**; **Psalm 139:1**), is used here of the investigations of connoisseurs in wine meeting to test its qualities.

**Proverbs 23:31.** *His color* literally, “its eye,” the clear brightness, or the beaded bubbles on which the wine drinker looks with complacency.

*It moveth itself aright* The Hebrew word describes the pellucid stream flowing pleasantly from the wineskin or jug into the goblet or the throat (compare **Song of Solomon 7:9**), rather than a sparkling wine.

**Proverbs 23:32.** *Adder* Said to be the Cerastes, or horned snake.

**Proverbs 23:34.** The passage is interesting, as showing the increased familiarity of Israelites with the experiences of sea life (compare **Psalm 104:25,26; 107:23-30**).

*In the midst of the sea* i.e., When the ship is in the trough of the sea and the man is on the deck. The second clause varies the form of danger, the man is in the “cradle” at the top of the mast, and sleeps there, regardless of the danger.

**Proverbs 23:35.** The picture ends with the words of the drunkard on waking from his sleep. Unconscious of the excesses of the night, his first thought is to return to his old habit.

*When shall I awake ...* Better, when I shall awake I will seek it yet again.

## NOTES ON PROVERBS 24

<sup><121></sup>**Proverbs 24:1.** A lesson given before, now combined with another. True followers after wisdom will admit neither envy of evil on the one hand, nor admiration or fellowship with it on the other.

<sup><121></sup>**Proverbs 24:3,4.** The “house” is figurative of the whole life, the “chambers” of all regions, inward and outward, of it.

<sup><121></sup>**Proverbs 24:5.** *Is strong* literally, as in the margin; i.e., rooted and established in strength.

<sup><121></sup>**Proverbs 24:7.** *In the gate* Compare the <sup><122></sup>Proverbs 22:22 note.

<sup><121></sup>**Proverbs 24:11.** Literally:

*“Deliver those that are drawn unto death,  
And those who totter to the slaughter —  
if thou withdraw ...”*

i.e., “O withdraw them,” save them from their doom; in contrast to <sup><121></sup>Proverbs 24:10. The structure and meaning are both somewhat obscure; but the sentence is complete in itself, and is not a mere hypothesis concluded in the following verses.

<sup><121></sup>**Proverbs 24:12.** As <sup><121></sup>Proverbs 24:11 warned men against acquiescing in an unrighteous tyranny, so this denounces the tendency to hush up a wrong with the false plea of ignorance. Compare <sup><121></sup>Ecclesiastes 5:8. <sup><121></sup>Proverbs 24:10-12 thus forms a complete and connected whole.

<sup><121></sup>**Proverbs 24:13.** Honey entered largely into the diet of Hebrew children (<sup><121></sup>Isaiah 7:15), so that it was as natural an emblem for the purest and simplest wisdom, as the “sincere milk of the word” was to the New Testament writers. The learner hears what seems to be a rule of diet — then (<sup><121></sup>Proverbs 24:14) the parable is explained.

<sup><121></sup>**Proverbs 24:14.** *The knowledge of wisdom* Better, Know that thus (like the honey) is wisdom to thy soul.

<sup><121></sup>**Proverbs 24:15,16.** The teaching of the proverb warns men not to attack or plot against the righteous. They will lose their labor, “Though the

just man fall (not into sin, but into calamities), yet he riseth up.” The point of the teaching is not the liability of good men to err, but God’s providential care over them (compare the margin reference). “Seven times” is a certain for an uncertain number (compare <sup><38519></sup>Job 5:19). In contrast with this is the fate of the evildoers, who fall utterly even in a single distress.

<sup><1048></sup>**Proverbs 24:18.** See the margin. The meaning is “Thy joy will be suicidal, the wrath of the righteous Judge will be turned upon thee, as the greater offender, and thou wilt have to bear a worse evil than that which thou exultest in.”

<sup><1049></sup>**Proverbs 24:20.** *No reward* literally, “no future,” no life worthy to be called life, no blessing.

<sup><1050></sup>**Proverbs 24:21.** *Them that are given to change* Those that seek to set aside the worship of the true God, or the authority of the true king, who represents Him.

<sup><1051></sup>**Proverbs 24:22.** *Both* Those who fear not God, and those who fear not the king.

<sup><1052></sup>**Proverbs 24:23.** *Belong to the wise* Either “are fitting for the wise, addressed to them,” or (as in the superscriptions of many of the Psalms) “are written by the wise.” Most recent commentators take it in the latter sense, and look on it as indicating the beginning of a fresh section, containing proverbs not ascribed to Solomon’s authorship. Compare the introduction to Proverbs.

<sup><1053></sup>**Proverbs 24:25.** There is no surer path to popularity than a righteous severity in punishing guilt.

<sup><1054></sup>**Proverbs 24:26.** Better, He shall kiss lips that giveth a right answer, i.e., he shall gain the hearts of men as much as by all outward signs of sympathy and favor. Compare <sup><1055></sup>2 Samuel 15:1-6.

<sup><1056></sup>**Proverbs 24:27.** i.e., Get an estate into good order before erecting a house on it. To “build a house” may, however, be equivalent (compare <sup><1057></sup>Exodus 1:21; <sup><1058></sup>Deuteronomy 25:9; <sup><1059></sup>Ruth 4:11) to “founding a family;” and the words a warning against a hasty and imprudent marriage. The young man is taught to cultivate his land before he has to bear the

burdens of a family. Further, in a spiritual sense, the “field” may be the man’s outer common work, the “house” the dwelling-place of his higher life. He must do the former faithfully in order to attain the latter. Neglect in one is fatal to the other. Compare <sup><2160></sup>Luke 16:10,11.

<sup><1213></sup>**Proverbs 24:28.** *Deceive not with thy lips* Better, wilt thou deceive with thy lips?

<sup><1213></sup>**Proverbs 24:29.** A protest against vindictiveness in every form. Compare marginal reference.

<sup><1213></sup>**Proverbs 24:30.** The chapter ends with an apologue, which may be taken as a parable of something yet deeper. The field and the vineyard are more than the man’s earthly possessions. His neglect brings barrenness or desolation to the garden of the soul. The “thorns” are evil habits that choke the good seed, and the “nettles” are those that are actually hurtful and offensive to others. The “wall” is the defense which laws and rules give to the inward life, and which the sluggard learns to disregard, and the “poverty” is the loss of the true riches of the soul, tranquility, and peace, and righteousness.

<sup><1213></sup>**Proverbs 24:33,34.** See the <sup><1061></sup>Proverbs 6:11 note.

## NOTES ON PROVERBS 25

**Proverbs 25:1.** A new section.

*Copied out* In the sense of a transfer from oral tradition to writing.

**Proverbs 25:2.** The earthly monarch might be, in some respects, the type of the heavenly, but here there is a marked contrast. The king presses further and further into all knowledge; God surrounds Himself as in “thick darkness,” and there are secrets unrevealed even after the fullest revelation.

**Proverbs 25:3.** The other side of the thought of **Proverbs 25:2**. What the mind of God is to the searchers after knowledge, that the heart of the true and wise king is to those who try to guess its counsels.

**Proverbs 25:5.** The interpretation of the proverb of **Proverbs 25:4**. The king himself, like the Lord whom he represents, is to sit as “a refiner of silver” (**Malachi 3:3**).

**Proverbs 25:6,7.** The pushing, boastful temper is, in the long run, suicidal. It is wiser as well as nobler to take the lower place at first in humility, than to take it afterward with shame. Compare **Luke 14:8-10**, which is one of the few instances in which our Lord’s teaching was fashioned, as to its outward form, upon that of this book.

**Proverbs 25:8.** The general meaning is: It is dangerous to plunge into litigation. At all times, there is the risk of failure, and, if we fail, of being at the mercy of an irritated adversary. Without the italics, the clause may be rendered, “lest thou do something (i.e., something humiliating and vexatious) at the end thereof.”

**Proverbs 25:9.** An anticipation of the highest standard of ethical refinement (**Matthew 18:15**), but with a difference. Here the motive is prudential, the risk of shame, the fear of the irretrievable infamy of the betrayer of secrets. In the teaching of Christ the precept rests upon the divine authority and the perfect example.

**Proverbs 25:11.** *Apples of gold* Probably the golden colored fruit set in baskets (i.e., chased vessels of open worked silver); so is a word spoken upon its wheels (i.e., moving quickly and quietly on its way). The

proverb may have had its origin in some kingly gift to the son of David, the work of Tyrian artists, like Hiram and his fellows. Others gazed on the cunning work and admired, but the wise king saw in the costly rarity a parable of something higher. “A word well set upon the wheels of speech” excelled it. Ornamentation of this kind in the precious metals was known, even as late as in the middle ages, as oeuvre de Salomon.

<sup><1052></sup>**Proverbs 25:12.** The theme of this proverb being the same as that of <sup><1051></sup>Proverbs 25:11, its occurrence suggests the thought that rings used as ornaments for ears, or nose, or forehead, and other trinkets formed part of the works of art spoken of in the foregoing note, and that the king had something at once pointed and wise to say of each of them.

<sup><1053></sup>**Proverbs 25:13.** A picture of the growing luxury of the Solomonic period. The “snow in harvest” is not a shower of snow or hail, which would be terrifying and harmful rather than refreshing (compare <sup><1027></sup>1 Samuel 12:17,18); but, rather, the snow of Lebanon or Hermon put into wine or other drink to make it more refreshing in the scorching heat of May or June at the king’s summer palace on Lebanon (<sup><1009></sup>1 Kings 9:19; Cant. 7:4 notes). More reviving even than the iced wine cup was the faithful messenger. Contrast <sup><1005></sup>Proverbs 10:26.

<sup><1054></sup>**Proverbs 25:14.** The disappointment caused by him who promises much and performs little or nothing, is likened to the phenomena of an eastern climate; the drought of summer, the eager expectation of men who watch the rising clouds and the freshening breeze, the bitter disappointment when the breeze dies off, and the clouds pass away, and the wished for rain does not come.

<sup><1055></sup>**Proverbs 25:15.** *A soft tongue* Winning and gentle speech does what it seems at first least capable of doing; it overcomes obstacles which are as bones that the strongest jaws would fail to crush.

<sup><1056></sup>**Proverbs 25:16.** *Hast thou found honey?* Compare <sup><0748></sup>Judges 14:8; <sup><0427></sup>1 Samuel 14:27. The precept extends to the pleasure of which honey is the symbol.

<sup><1057></sup>**Proverbs 25:17.** Let thy foot be seldom in the house of thy friend, etc. Though thy visits were sweet as honey, he may soon learn to loathe them.

**Proverbs 25:18.** *Maul* A heavy sledge hammer. The word is connected with “malleus:” its diminutive “mallet” is still in use.

**Proverbs 25:19.** Stress is to be laid on the uselessness of the “broken tooth” and the “foot out of joint,” or tottering, rather than on the pain connected with them. The King James Version loses the emphasis and point of the Hebrew by inverting the original order, which is “a broken ... joint is confidence” etc.

**Proverbs 25:20.** Examples of unwisdom and incongruity sharpen the point of the proverb. Pouring vinegar upon nitre or potash utterly spoils it. The effervescence caused by the mixture is perhaps taken as a type of the irritation produced by the “songs” sung out of season to a heavy heart.

The verb rendered “taketh away” may have the sense (as in **Ezekiel 16:11**) of “adorning oneself,” and the illustration would then be, “as to put on a fine garment in time of cold is unseasonable, so is singing to a heavy heart.”

**Proverbs 25:21,22.** A precept reproduced by Paul (**Romans 12:20**); the second clause of which seems at first sight to suggest a motive incompatible with a true charity. **Leviticus 16:12** suggests an explanation. The high priest on the Day of Atonement was to take his censer, to fill it with “coals of fire,” and then to put the incense thereon for a sweet-smelling savor. So it is here. The first emotion in another caused by the good done to him may be one of burning shame, but the shame will do its work and the heart also will burn, and prayer and confession and thanksgiving will rise as incense to the throne of God. Thus, “we shall overcome evil with good.”

**Proverbs 25:23.** The marginal reading is far more accurate and gives a better sense. The northwest wind in Palestine commonly brings rain, and this was probably in the thought of the writer.

**Proverbs 25:24.** Compare the **Proverbs 21:9** note.

**Proverbs 25:25.** The craving of wanderers for news from the home that they have left is as a consuming thirst, the news that quenches it as a refreshing fountain.

~~1516~~ **Proverbs 25:26.** *Falling down before* i.e., Yielding and cringing. To see this instead of steadfastness, is as grievous as for the traveler to find the spring at which he hoped to quench his thirst turbid and defiled.

~~1517~~ **Proverbs 25:27.** *So for men ...* A difficult sentence, the text of which is probably defective. The words are not in the original. Many commentators render: so to search into weighty matters is itself a weight, i.e., people soon become satiated with it as with honey. Possibly a warning against an over-curious searching into the mysteries of God's word or works.

## NOTES ON PROVERBS 26

**Proverbs 26:1.** In Palestine there is commonly hardly any rain from the early showers of spring to October. Hence, “rain in harvest” became sometimes (see the marginal reference) a supernatural sign, sometimes, as here, a proverb for whatever was strange and incongruous.

**Proverbs 26:2.** i.e., “Vague as the flight of the sparrow, aimless as the wheelings of the swallow, is the causeless curse. It will never reach its goal.” The marginal reading in the Hebrew, however, gives “to him” instead of “not” or “never;” i.e., “The causeless curse, though it may pass out of our ken, like a bird’s track in the air, will come on the man who utters it.” Compare the English proverb, “Curses, like young chickens, always come home to roost.”

**Proverbs 26:4,5.** Two sides of a truth. To “answer a fool according to his folly” is in **Proverbs 26:4** to bandy words with him, to descend to his level of coarse anger and vile abuse; in **Proverbs 26:5** it is to say the right word at the right time, to expose his unwisdom and untruth to others and to himself, not by a teaching beyond his reach, but by words that he is just able to apprehend. The apparent contradiction between the two verses led some of the rabbis to question the canonical authority of this book. The Pythagoreans had maxims expressing a truth in precepts seemingly contradictory.

**Proverbs 26:6.** *Cutteth off the feet* Mutilates him, spoils the work which the messenger ought to fulfill.

*drinketh damage* i.e., “has to drink full draughts of shame and loss” (compare **Job 15:16**).

**Proverbs 26:7.** Or, Take away the legs of the lame man, and the parable that is in the mouth of fools: both are alike useless to their possessors. Other meanings are:

(1) “The legs of the lame man are feeble, so is parable in the mouth of fools.”

(2) “The lifting up of the legs of a lame man, i.e., his attempts at dancing, are as the parable in the mouth of fools.”

**Proverbs 26:8.** i.e., “To give honor to the fool is like binding a stone in a sling; you cannot throw it.” In each case you misapply and so waste. Others render in the sense of the margin: To use a precious stone where a pebble would be sufficient, is not less foolish than to give honor to a fool.

**Proverbs 26:9.** Better: “As a thorn which is lifted up in the hand of the drunkard” etc. As such a weapon so used may do mischief to the man himself or to others, so may the sharp, keen-edged proverb when used by one who does not understand it.

**Proverbs 26:10.** The word “God” is not in the original, and the adjective translated “great” is never used elsewhere absolutely in that sense. The simplest and best interpretation is: As the archer that woundeth everyone, so is he who hireth the fool, and he who hireth every passerby. Acting at random, entrusting matters of grave moment to men of bad repute, is as likely to do mischief as to shoot arrows at everyone.

**Proverbs 26:13.** Compare the marginal reference note. Here there is greater dramatic vividness in the two words used:

- (1) A roaring one,
- (2) a lion, more specifically.

**Proverbs 26:15.** *Grieveth him* Better, wearieth him.

**Proverbs 26:16.** *Seven* The definite number used for the indefinite (compare **Proverbs 24:16**).

*Reason* Better, a right judgment.

**Proverbs 26:18,19.** The teacher cuts off the plea which people make when they have hurt their neighbor by lies, that they “did not mean mischief,” that they were “only in fun.” Such jesting is like that of the madman flinging firebrands or arrows.

**Proverbs 26:21.** *Coals* Charcoal.

**Proverbs 26:22.** Compare the marginal reference note.

**Proverbs 26:23.** *Burning lips* i.e., “Lips glowing with affection, uttering warm words of love,” joined with a malignant heart, are like a

piece of broken earthenware from the furnace, which glitters with the silver drops at stick to it, but is itself worthless.

**Proverbs 26:25.** *Seven abominations* Compare Proverbs 26:16 note. Here “seven” retains, perhaps, its significance as the symbol of completeness. Evil has, as it were, gone through all its work, and holds its accursed Sabbath in the heart in which all things are “very evil.”

**Proverbs 26:26.** Better, “Hatred is covered by deceit, but in the midst of the congregation his wickedness will be made manifest,” i.e., then, in the time of need, the feigned friendship will pass into open enmity.

**Proverbs 26:27.** *Rolleth a stone* The illustration refers, probably, to the use made of stones in the rough warfare of an earlier age. Compare Judges 9:53; 2 Samuel 11:21. The man is supposed to be rolling the stone up to the heights.

**Proverbs 26:28.** The lying tongue hates its victims.

## NOTES ON PROVERBS 27

<sup>27:2</sup>**Proverbs 27:2.** *Another* An “alienus” rather than “alius.” Praise to be worth anything must be altogether independent.

<sup>27:3</sup>**Proverbs 27:3.** Compare Eccclus. 22:15; a like comparison between the heaviest material burdens and the more intolerable load of unreasoning passion.

<sup>27:4</sup>**Proverbs 27:4.** *Envy* Better, as in the margin, the violence of passion in the husband who thinks himself wronged (compare <sup>6:34</sup>Proverbs 6:34).

<sup>27:5</sup>**Proverbs 27:5.** *Secret love* Better, love that is hidden; i.e., love which never shows itself in this one way of rebuking faults. Rebuke, whether from friend or foe, is better than such love.

<sup>27:6</sup>**Proverbs 27:6.** *Deceitful* Better, abundant. Very lavish is the enemy of the kisses that cover perfidy, but lavish of them only. His courtesy goes no deeper.

<sup>27:7</sup>**Proverbs 27:7.** The special instance covers the general law, that indulgence in pleasure of any kind brings on satiety and weariness, but self-restraint multiplies the sources of enjoyment.

<sup>27:8</sup>**Proverbs 27:8.** Change of place is thought of as in itself an evil. It is not easy for the man to find another home or the bird another nest. The maxim is characteristic of the earlier stages of Hebrew history, before exile and travel had made change of country a more familiar thing. Compare the feeling which made the thought of being “a fugitive and a vagabond” (<sup>4:12,13</sup>Genesis 4:12,13) the most terrible of all punishments.

<sup>27:10</sup>**Proverbs 27:10.** “Better is a neighbor” who is really “near” in heart and spirit, than a brother who though closer by blood, is “far off” in feeling.

<sup>27:11</sup>**Proverbs 27:11.** The voice of the teacher to his true disciple. He pleads with him that the uprightness of the scholar will be the truest answer to all attacks on the character or teaching of the master.

<sup>27:12,13</sup>**Proverbs 27:12,13.** Compare the marginal reference.

<sup><1714></sup>**Proverbs 27:14.** The picture of the ostentatious flatterer going at daybreak to pour out blessings on his patron. For any good that he does, for any thanks he gets, he might as well utter curses.

<sup><1715></sup>**Proverbs 27:15.** *Continual dropping* Here, as in the marginal reference, the flat, earthen roof of Eastern houses, always liable to cracks and leakage, supplies the groundwork of the similitude.

<sup><1716></sup>**Proverbs 27:16.** The point is the impossibility of concealment or restraint. A person cannot hide the wind, or clasp it in his hands. If he takes an unguent in his right hand, the odor betrays him, or it slips out. So, in like manner, the “contentious woman” is one whose faults it is impossible either to hide or check. The difficulty of the proverb led to a different reading, adopted by the versions, “The north wind is rough, and yet it is called propitious”; it clears off the clouds and brings fine weather.

<sup><1717></sup>**Proverbs 27:17.** The proverb expresses the gain of mutual counsel as found in clear, well-defined thoughts. Two minds, thus acting on each other, become more acute. This is better than to see in “sharpening” the idea of provoking, and the point of the maxim in the fact that the quarrels of those who have been friends are bitter in proportion to their previous intimacy.

<sup><1718></sup>**Proverbs 27:18.** *Waiteth* literally, “keepeth,” “observeth.” As the fig tree requires constant care but yields abundant crops, so the ministrations of a faithful servant will not be without their due reward. Compare <sup><1716></sup>2 Timothy 2:6.

<sup><1719></sup>**Proverbs 27:19.** As we see our own face when we look on the mirror-like surface of the water, so in every heart of man we may see our own likeness. In spite of all diversities we come upon the common human nature in which we all alike share. Others see in the reference to the reflection in the water the thought that we judge of others by ourselves, find them faithful or the reverse, as we ourselves are.

<sup><1721></sup>**Proverbs 27:20.** Hades, the world of the dead, and Destruction (Death, the destroying power, personified) have been at all times and in all countries thought of as all-devouring, insatiable (compare the marginal reference). Yet one thing is equally so, the lust of the eye, the restless craving which grows with what it feeds on (<sup><1708></sup>Ecclesiastes 1:8).

**Proverbs 27:21.** *So is ...* Better, So let a man be to his praise, let him purify it from all the alloy of flattery and baseness with which it is too probably mixed up.

**Proverbs 27:22.** *Bray* To pound wheat in a mortar with a pestle, in order to free the wheat from its husks and impurities, is to go through a far more elaborate process than threshing. But the folly of the fool is not thus to be got rid of. It sticks to him to the last; all discipline, teaching, experience seem to be wasted on him.

**Proverbs 27:23-27.** The verses sing the praises of the earlier patriarchal life, with its flocks and herds, and tillage of the ground, as compared with the commerce of a later time, with money as its chief or only wealth.

**Proverbs 27:23.** *The state* literally, face. The verse is an illustration of **John 10:3,14.**

**Proverbs 27:24.** *Riches* The money which men may steal, or waste, is contrasted with the land of which the owner is not so easily deprived. Nor will the crown (both the “crown of pure gold” worn on the mitre of the high priest, **Exodus 29:6; 39:30;** and the kingly diadem, the symbol of power generally) be transmitted (as flocks and herds had been) “from one generation to another.”

**Proverbs 27:25.** *Appareth* Better, When the grass disappeareth, the “tender grass showeth itself.” Stress is laid on the regular succession of the products of the earth. The “grass” (“hay”) of the first clause is (compare **Psalm 37:2; 90:5; 103:15;** **2 Kings 19:26**) the proverbial type of what is perishable and fleeting. The verse gives a picture of the pleasantness of the farmer’s calling; compared with this what can wealth or rank offer? With this there mingles (compare **Proverbs 27:23**) the thought that each stage of that life in its season requires care and watchfulness.

## NOTES ON PROVERBS 28

~~28B~~ **Proverbs 28:2.** *Transgression* Better, rebellion. A revolt against a ruler leads to rapid changes of dynasty (the whole history of the kingdom of Israel was a proof of this), but “with men of understanding and knowledge thus shall he (the prince) continue.” True wisdom will lead people to maintain an existing order. The King James Version implies that political disorders may come as the punishment of any national sin.

*The state* Better, it (the land) shall surely prolong its days in stability.

~~28B~~ **Proverbs 28:3.** People raise a man of the people, poor like themselves, to power. They find him the worst oppressor of all, plundering them to their last morsels, like the storm-rain which sweeps off the seed-corn instead of bringing fertility.

~~28B~~ **Proverbs 28:5.** The deep interdependence of morality and intellect. We have a right judgment in all things in proportion as our hearts seek to know God. Compare ~~30D3~~ James 1:23,24.

~~28B~~ **Proverbs 28:6.** *Perverse in his ways* literally, “Perverse in his double ways.” Compare Ecclesiasticus 2:12 and ~~30D3~~ James 1:8.

~~28B~~ **Proverbs 28:8.** *Unjust gain* Omit “unjust.” “usury and gain” make up the notion of “gain derived from usury.” Ill-gotten gains do not prosper, after a time they pass into hands that know how to use them better.

~~28B~~ **Proverbs 28:10.** When the wicked succeed in tempting the righteous, Vice seems to win a triumph. But the triumph is suicidal. The tempter will suffer the punishment he deserves, and the blameless, if true to themselves, will be strengthened and ennobled by the temptation.

~~28B~~ **Proverbs 28:11.** Wealth blunts, poverty sharpens, the critical power of intellect.

~~28B~~ **Proverbs 28:12.** *There is great glory* Men array themselves in festive apparel, and show their joy conspicuously.

*A man is hidden* Better, men hide themselves, they shrink and cower for fear, and yet are hunted out.

**Proverbs 28:13.** The conditions of freedom are confession and amendment, confession to God of sins against Him, to men of sins against them. The teaching of ethical wisdom on this point is identical with that of psalmist, prophet, apostles, and our Lord Himself.

**Proverbs 28:14.** The “fear” here is not so much reverential awe, as anxious, or “nervous” sensitiveness of conscience. To most men this temperament seems that of the self-tormentor. To him who looks deeper it is a condition of blessedness, and the callousness which is opposed to it ends in misery.

**Proverbs 28:15.** The form of political wretchedness, when the poverty of the oppressed subjects not only embitters their sufferings, but exasperates the brutal ferocity of the ruler.

**Proverbs 28:17.** The case of willful murder, not the lesser crime of manslaughter for which the cities of refuge were appointed. One, with that guilt on his soul, is simply hastening on to his own destruction. Those who see him must simply stand aloof, and let God’s judgments fulfill themselves.

**Proverbs 28:18.** *In his ways* Rather “in his double ways” (as in Proverbs 28:6). The evil of vacillation rather than that of craft, the want of the one guiding principle of right, is contrasted with the straightforwardness of the man that “walketh uprightly.”

*Shall fall at once* Better, shall fall in one of them (his ways). The attempt to combine incompatibilities is sure to fail. Men cannot serve God and Mammon.

**Proverbs 28:20.** Not the possession of wealth, nor even the acquisition of it, is evil, but the eager haste of covetousness.

*Shall not be innocent* Better, as in the margin, in contrast with the many “blessings” of the “faithful.”

**Proverbs 28:21.** Dishonest partiality leads men who have enslaved themselves to it to transgress, even when the inducement is altogether disproportionate. A “piece of bread” was proverbial at all times as the most extreme point of poverty (compare the marginal reference).

<sup><1822></sup>**Proverbs 28:22.** The covetous temper leads not only to dishonesty, but to the “evil eye” of envy; and the temper of grudging, carking care, leads him to poverty.

<sup><1824></sup>**Proverbs 28:24.** *Is the companion of a destroyer* i.e., he stands on the same footing as the open, lawless robber. Compare this with our Lord’s teaching as to Corban (<sup><1870></sup>Mark 7:10-13).

<sup><1825></sup>**Proverbs 28:25.** *Shall be made fat* He shall enjoy the two-fold blessing of abundance and tranquility (compare <sup><1125></sup>Proverbs 11:25).

<sup><1826></sup>**Proverbs 28:26.** The contrast between the wisdom of him who trusts in the Lord, and the folly of self-trust.

<sup><1827></sup>**Proverbs 28:27.** *Hideth his eyes* i.e., Turns away from, disregards, the poor. Compare <sup><2115></sup>Isaiah 1:15.

## NOTES ON PROVERBS 29

**Proverbs 29:1.** *Shall be destroyed* literally, “shall be broken” (<sup><1915></sup>Proverbs 6:15). Stress is laid on the suddenness in such a case of the long-delayed retribution.

**Proverbs 29:3.** *Spendeth ...* The laws of parallelism would lead us to expect “troubleth his father,” but that is passed over as a thing about which the profligate would not care, and he is reminded of what comes home to him, that he is on the road to ruin.

*The king* The ruler, as the supreme fountain of all justice, and as the ideal judge, is contrasted with the taker of bribers.

**Proverbs 29:6.** While the offence of the wicked, rising out of a confirmed habit of evil, becomes snare for his destruction; the righteous, even if he offend, is forgiven and can still rejoice in his freedom from condemnation. The second clause is taken by some as entirely contrasted with the first; it expresses the joy of one whose conscience is void of offence, and who is in no danger of falling into the snare.

**Proverbs 29:8.** *Scornful men* The men who head political or religious revolutions, who inflame (literally as in the margin) the minds of the people against the powers that be.

**Proverbs 29:9.** All modes of teaching — the stern rebuke or the smiling speech — are alike useless with the “foolish” man; there is “no rest.” The ceaseless cavilling goes on still.

**Proverbs 29:10.** *Seek his soul* i.e., “Care for, watch over, his life” (compare <sup><1914></sup>Psalm 142:4).

**Proverbs 29:11.** *Mind* The Hebrew word is used sometimes for “mind” or “reason,” sometimes for “passion,” or “wrath.” The reticence commended would include both; but the verb “keepeth it in” (rendered “stilleth,” in <sup><1917></sup>Psalm 65:7) is slightly in favor of the second of the two senses.

**Proverbs 29:12.** *All his servants are wicked* They know what will please, and they become informers and backbiters.

**Proverbs 29:13.** Better, The poor and the oppressor. “Usurer,” as in the margin expresses the special form of oppression from which the poor suffer most at the hands of the rich. God has made them both and bestows His light equally on both.

**Proverbs 29:15.** *Left to himself* The condition of one who has been pampered and indulged. The mother who yields weakly is as guilty of abandoning the child she spoils, as if she cast him forth; and for her evil neglect, there shall fall upon her the righteous punishment of shame and ignominy.

**Proverbs 29:18.** *Vision* The word commonly used of the revelation of God’s will made to prophets. Compare <sup><2300></sup>Isaiah 1:1; <sup><3000></sup>Nahum 1:1.

When prophetic vision fails, obedience to the Law is the best or only substitute for it, both being forms through which divine wisdom is revealed. Very striking in the midst of ethical precepts is this recognition of the need of a yet higher teaching, without which morality passes into worldly prudence or degenerates into casuistry. The “wise man,” the son of David, has seen in the prophets and in their work the condition of true national blessedness. The darkest time in the history of Israel had been when there “was no open vision (<sup><0000></sup>1 Samuel 3:1); at such a time the people “perish,” are let loose, “are left to run wild.”

**Proverbs 29:19.** *Servant* i.e., A slave, whose obedience is reluctant. He may “understand” the words, but they produce no good effect. There is still lacking the true “answer” of obedience.

**Proverbs 29:21.** *Son* The Hebrew word occurs here only and is therefore of doubtful meaning. The favored slave, petted and pampered from boyhood, will claim at last the privilege, perhaps the inheritance, of sonship.

**Proverbs 29:23.** *Honour shall uphold the humble in spirit* Better: The lowly in spirit shall lay hold on honor.

**Proverbs 29:24.** On the first discovery of the theft, the person wronged (<sup><0770></sup>Judges 17:2), or the judge of the city (marginal reference), pronounced a solemn curse on the thief and on all who, knowing the offender, were unwilling to give evidence against him. The accomplice of

the thief hears that curse, and yet is silent, and so falls under it, and “destroys his own soul.”

~~1225~~ **Proverbs 29:25.** The confusion and wretchedness in which the fear of what men can do entangles us, is contrasted with the security of one, who not only “fears” the Lord, so as to avoid offending Him, but trusts in Him as his protector and guide.

~~1226~~ **Proverbs 29:26.** To trust in the favor of princes is to build upon the sands. The judgment which will set right all wrong will come from the Lord. It is better to wait for that than to run here and there, canvassing, bribing, flattering.

~~1227~~ **Proverbs 29:27.** The words point out not only the antagonism between the doers of good and evil, but the instinctive antipathy which the one feels toward the other.

## NOTES ON PROVERBS 30

**Proverbs 30:1.** See the introduction to Proverbs. According to the different reading, there noted, the inscription ends with: “the man spake,” and the words that follow, are the beginning of the confession, “I have wearied myself after God and have fainted.”

*Spake* The Hebrew word is that commonly used of the utterance of a divine oracle.

**Proverbs 30:2.** A confession of ignorance, with which compare the saying of Socrates that he was wise only so far as he knew that he knew nothing, or that of Asaph (**Psalm 73:22**).

**Proverbs 30:3.** He found, when he looked within, that all his learning was as nothing. He had heard of God only “by the hearing of the ear” (**Job 42:5**), and now he discovered how little that availed.

*The holy* The Holy One. Compare **Proverbs 9:10**.

**Proverbs 30:4.** Man is to be humbled to the dust by the thought of the glory of God as seen in the visible creation.

*Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended?* The thought is obviously that of the all-embracing Providence of God, taking in at once the greatest and the least, the highest and the lowest. The mysteries of the winds and of the waters baffle men’s researches.

*What is his son’s name* The primary thought is that man knows so little of the divine nature that he cannot tell whether he may transfer to it the human relationships with which he is familiar, or must rest in the thought of a unity indivisible and incommunicable. If there is such an Only-begotten of the Father (compare **Proverbs 8:30**), then His nature, until revealed, must be as incomprehensible by us as that of the Father Himself.

**Proverbs 30:5.** Out of this consciousness of the impotence of all man’s efforts after the knowledge of God rises the sense of the preciousness of every living word that God has Himself revealed, whether through “the Law and the prophets” or through “wise men and scribes.”

**Proverbs 30:6.** Men are not to mingle revealed truth with their own imaginations and traditions. In speculating on the unseen, the risk of error is indefinitely great, and that error God reproves by manifesting its falsehoods.

**Proverbs 30:7.** *Two things* The limitation of man's desires follows naturally upon his consciousness of the limits of his knowledge.

**Proverbs 30:8.** The order of the two requests is significant. The wise man's prayer is first and chiefly, "truth in the inward parts," the removal of all forms of falsehood, hollowness, hypocrisy.

*Neither poverty ...* The evil of the opposite extremes of social life is that in different ways they lead men to a false standard of duty, and so to that forgetfulness of God which passes into an absolute denial.

*Food convenient for me* literally, "give me for food the bread of my appointed portion." The prayer foreshadows that which we have been taught by the Divine Wisdom: "Give us, day by day, our daily bread."

**Proverbs 30:9.** The special dangers of the two extremes. Wealth tempts to pride, unbelief, and a scorn like that of Pharaoh (<sup>Exodus 5:2</sup>); poverty to, dishonesty, and then to perjury, or to the hypocritical profession of religion which is practically identical with it.

**Proverbs 30:10.** *Accuse not a servant* The prayer in <sup>Proverbs 30:8</sup> does not shut out, sympathy with those who are less favored. Even the slave has a right to protection against frivolous or needless accusation. Others, however, render the words Make not a slave to accuse his master, i.e., Do not make him discontented with his lot, lest he afterward curse thee for having made it worse than it was.

**Proverbs 30:11.** As the teacher had uttered what he most desired, so now he tells what he most abhorred; and in true-harmony with the teaching of the Ten Commandments places in the foremost rank those who rise against the Fifth.

**Proverbs 30:12.** The Pharisee temper (compare the marginal reference).

**Proverbs 30:15,16.** Note the numeration mounting to a climax, the two, the three, the four (Amos 1:3 etc.). The word rendered "horseleach"

is found nowhere else, and its etymology is doubtful; but there are good grounds for taking the word in its literal sense, as giving an example, in the natural world, of the insatiable greed of which the next verse gives other instances. Its voracious appetite is here represented, to express its intensity, as two daughters, uttering the same ceaseless cry for more.

<1816> **Proverbs 30:16.** *The grave* Hebrew *Sheol*<sup><47585></sup>. The “Hell” or Hades of <1721>Proverbs 27:20, all-consuming yet never full.

<1818> **Proverbs 30:18-20.** Another enigma. The four things of <1816>Proverbs 30:16 agreed in the common point of insatiableness; the four now mentioned agree in this, that they leave no trace behind them.

<1819> **Proverbs 30:19.** *The way of a man with a maid* The act of sin leaves no outward mark upon the sinners.

<1821> **Proverbs 30:21.** *For four which it cannot bear* Better: four it cannot bear. Here the common element is that of being intolerable, and the four examples are divided equally between the two sexes. Each has its examples of power and prosperity misused because they fall to the lot of those who have no training for them, and are therefore in the wrong place.

<1823> **Proverbs 30:23.** *Odious woman* One in whom there is nothing loveable. Marriage, which to most women is the state in which they find scope for their highest qualities, becomes to her only a sphere in which to make herself and others miserable.

<1824> **Proverbs 30:24.** *Exceeding wise* Some prefer the reading of the Septuagint and Vulgate: “wiser than the wise.” The thought, in either case, turns upon the marvels of instinct, which, in their own province, transcend the more elaborate results of human wisdom.

<1825> **Proverbs 30:25.** See the marginal reference note. Note the word “people” applied here to ants, as to locusts in <2006>Joel 1:6. The marvel lies in their collective, and, as it were, organized action.

<1826> **Proverbs 30:26.** *Conies* See the marginal reference note.

<1827> **Proverbs 30:27.** Compare <2007>Joel 2:7,8; the most striking fact in the flight of the locust-swarms was their apparent order and discipline, sweeping over the land like the invasion of a great army.

~~<HR>~~ **Proverbs 30:28.** *Spider* Rather, the Gecko (or Stellio), a genus of the lizard tribe, many species of which haunt houses, make their way through crevices in the walls, and with feet that secrete a venomous exudation catch the spiders or the flies they find there.

~~<HR>~~ **Proverbs 30:31.** *A greyhound* The Hebrew word occurs nowhere else in the Old Testament. The literal meaning is: “one with loins girded;” and some have referred this to the stripes of the zebra, others to the “war-horse” (compare ~~<HR>~~ Job 39:19,25), as he is represented in the sculptures of Persepolis, with rich and stately trappings.

*A king, against whom there is no rising up* i.e., A king irresistible. Others prefer, “a king in the midst of his people,” and the sense, as giving a more vivid picture, is certainly more satisfactory.

~~<HR>~~ **Proverbs 30:32.** *Lay thine hand upon thy mouth* The act expresses the silence of humiliation and repentance after the sin has been committed, and that of self-restraint, which checks the haughty or malignant thought before it has passed even into words.

~~<HR>~~ **Proverbs 30:33.** *Churning ... wringing ... forcing* In the Hebrew text it is one and the same word. “The pressure of milk produces curds, the pressure of the nose produces blood, the pressure of wrath (i.e., brooding over and, as it were, condensing it) produces strife.”

## NOTES ON PROVERBS 31

See the introduction to Proverbs.

**Proverbs 31:1.** *That his mother taught him* Compare Proverbs 1:8; 6:20. If we refer the chapter to Israelite authorship, we may remember the honor paid to the wisdom of Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah; if it was the honor paid to an Edomite or an Arabian, we may think of the Queen of Sheba, whose love of Wisdom led her to sit at the feet of the son of David.

**Proverbs 31:2.** The repetitions are emphatic; expressive of anxious love.

*Son of my vows* Like Samuel, and Samson, the child often asked for in prayer, the prayer ratified by a vow of dedication. The name Lemuel (literally “for God,” consecrated to Him) may be the expression of that dedication; and the warning against indulging in wine (Proverbs 31:4) shows that it had something of the Nazarite or Rechabite idea in it.

**Proverbs 31:3.** *To that which destroyeth* The temptations of the harem were then, as now, the curse of all Eastern kingdoms.

**Proverbs 31:4.** Some read: “nor for princes to say, Where is strong drink?” The “strong drink” (Proverbs 20:1) was distilled from barley, or honey, or dates.

**Proverbs 31:6.** The true purpose of the power of wine over man’s mind and body, as a restorative and remedial agent. Compare the margin reference. The same thought showed itself in the Jewish practice of giving a cup of wine to mourners, and (as in the history of the crucifixion) to criminals at their execution.

**Proverbs 31:8.** In contrast with the two besetting sins of Eastern monarchs stands their one great duty, to give help to those who had no other helper.

*Such as are appointed to destruction* literally, “children of bereavement,” with the sense, either, as in the text, of those “destined to be bereaved of life or goods,” or of “bereaved or fatherless children.”

<sup><B10></sup>**Proverbs 31:10.** See the introduction to Proverbs.

*Rubies* Better, pearls. See the <sup><B15></sup>Proverbs 3:15 note.

<sup><B11></sup>**Proverbs 31:11.** *No need of spoil* Better, no lack of gain, lack of honest gain.

<sup><B13></sup>**Proverbs 31:13.** *Worketh willingly with her hands* Or, worketh with willing hands. The stress laid upon the industrial habits of Israelite matrons may perhaps belong to a time when, as under the monarchy of Judah, those habits were passing away.

<sup><B14></sup>**Proverbs 31:14.** The comparison points to the enlarged commerce of the Israelites consequent on their contact with the Phoenicians under David and Solomon; compare <sup><B24></sup>Proverbs 31:24.

<sup><B15></sup>**Proverbs 31:15.** *A portion to her maidens* The daily task assigned to each at the same time as the daily food. Compare <sup><B18></sup>Proverbs 30:8; <sup><B14></sup>Exodus 5:14.

<sup><B16></sup>**Proverbs 31:16.** The verse points to a large sphere of feminine activity, strikingly in contrast with the degradation to which woman in the East has now fallen.

<sup><B21></sup>**Proverbs 31:20.** The industry is not selfish, but bears the fruit of an open-handed charity.

<sup><B21></sup>**Proverbs 31:21.** *Scarlet* Probably some well-known articles of dress, at once conspicuous for their color, or, as some think, for their double texture and warmth.

<sup><B22></sup>**Proverbs 31:22.** *Silk* Better, fine linen, the byssus of Egypt.

<sup><B23></sup>**Proverbs 31:23.** The industry of the wife leaves the husband free to take his place among the elders that sit in councils.

<sup><B24></sup>**Proverbs 31:24.** *Fine linen* Not the same word as in <sup><B22></sup>Proverbs 31:22 note; it describes a made-up garment (<sup><B23></sup>Isaiah 3:23).

*Merchant* literally, "Canaanite," i.e., the Phoenician merchant.

**Proverbs 31:25.** *Shall rejoice in time to come* Better, rejoiceth over the time to come; i.e., looks forward to the future, not with anxious care, but with confident gladness.

**Proverbs 31:26.** *Law of kindness* The words which come from the lips of the true wife are as a law giving guidance and instruction to those that hear them; but the law is not proclaimed in its sterner aspects, but as one in which “mercy tempers justice,” and love, the fulfilling of the law, is seen to be the source from which it springs.

**Proverbs 31:29.** The words of praise which the husband (**Proverbs 31:28**) is supposed to have addressed to the ideal wife.

*Virtuously* The Hebrew word has primarily (like “virtus”) the idea of “strength,” but is used with various shades of meaning. Here (as in **Proverbs 12:4**; **Ruth 3:11**) the strength is that of character steadfast in goodness. In other passages (e.g., **Genesis 34:29**; **Psalm 49:10**) it has the sense of “riches,” and is so taken here by the Septuagint and Vulgate, see also the marginal rendering.

**Proverbs 31:30.** The last lesson of the book is the same as the first. The fear of the Lord is the condition of all womanly, as well as of all manly, excellence.