

CHAPTER 20

 PROVERBS 20:1

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

Here is,

1. The mischief of drunkenness: *Wine is a mocker; strong drink is raging.* It is so to the sinner himself; it mocks him, makes a fool of him, promises him that satisfaction which it can never give him. It smiles upon him at first, but *at the last it bites.* In reflection upon it, it rages in his conscience. It is raging in the body, puts the humours into a ferment. *When the wine is in the wit is out,* and then the man, according as his natural temper is, either mocks like a fool or rages like a madman. Drunkenness, which pretends to be a sociable thing, renders men unfit for society, for it makes them abusive with their tongues and outrageous in their passions,
 Proverbs 23:29.

2. The folly of drunkards is easily inferred thence. He that *is deceived thereby,* that suffers himself to be drawn into this sin when he is so plainly warned of the consequences of it, *is not wise;* he shows that he has no right sense or consideration of things; and not only so, but he renders himself incapable of getting wisdom; for it is a sin that infatuates and besots men, and takes away their heart. A drunkard is a fool, and a fool he is likely to be.

 PROVERBS 20:2

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

See here,

1. How formidable kings are, and what a terror they strike upon those they are angry with. Their *fear,* with which (especially when they are absolute and their will is a law) they keep their subjects in awe, *is as the roaring of*

a lion, which is very dreadful to the creatures he preys upon, and makes them tremble so that they cannot escape from him. Those princes that rule by wisdom and love rule like God himself, and bear his image; but those that rule merely by terror, and with a high hand, do but rule like a lion in the forest, with a brutal power. *Oderint, dum metuant* — *Let them hate, provided they fear.*

2. How unwise therefore those are that quarrel with them, that are angry at them, and so *provoke them to anger.* They *sin against their own lives.* Much more do those do so that provoke the King of kings to anger. *Nemo me impune lacesset* — *No one shall provoke me with impunity.*

~~111~~ PROVERBS 20:3

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

This is designed to rectify men's mistakes concerning strife.

1. Men think it is their wisdom to engage in quarrels; whereas it is the greatest folly that can be. He thinks himself a wise man that is quick in resenting affronts, that stands upon every nicety of honour and right, and will not abate an ace of either, that prescribes, and imposes, and gives law, to every body; but he that thus meddles is a fool, and creates a great deal of needless vexation to himself.

2. Men think, when they are engaged in quarrels, that it would be a shame to them to go back and let fall the weapon; whereas really *it is an honour for a man to cease from strife*, an honour to withdraw an action, to drop a controversy, to forgive an injury, and to be friends with those that we have fallen out with. It is the honour of a man, a wise man, a man of spirit, to show the command he has of himself by *ceasing from strife*, yielding, and stooping, and receding from his just demands, for peace-sake, as Abraham, the better man, ~~111~~Genesis 13:8.

PROVERBS 20:4

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

See here the evil of slothfulness and the love of ease.

1. It keeps men from the most necessary business, from ploughing and sowing when the season is: *The sluggard* has ground to occupy, and has ability for it; he can plough, but he *will not*; some excuse or other he has to shift it off, but the true reason is that it is *cold* weather. Though ploughing time is not in the depth of winter, it is in the borders of winter, when he thinks it too cold for him to be abroad. Those are scandalously sluggish who, in the way of their business, cannot find in their hearts to undergo so little toil as that of ploughing and so little hardship as that of a cold blast. Thus careless are many in the affairs of their souls; a trifling difficulty will frighten them from the most important duty; but good soldiers must endure hardness.
2. Thereby it deprives them of the most necessary supports: Those that *will not plough* in seed-time cannot expect to reap in harvest; and therefore they must beg their bread with astonishment when the diligent are bringing home their sheaves with joy. He that will not submit to the labour of ploughing must submit to the shame of begging. They *shall beg in harvest, and yet have nothing*; no, not then when there is great plenty. Though it may be charity to relieve sluggards, yet a man may, in justice, not relieve them; they deserve to be left to starve. Those that would not provide oil in their vessels begged when the bridegroom came, and were denied.

PROVERBS 20:5

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

A man's wisdom is here said to be of use to him for the pumping of other people, and diving into them,

1. To get the knowledge of them. Though men's counsels and designs are ever so carefully concealed by them, so that they are as *deep water* which one cannot fathom, yet there are those who by sly insinuations, and questions that seem foreign, will get out of them both what they have done

and what they intend to do. Those therefore who would keep counsel must not only put on resolution, but stand upon their guard.

2. To get knowledge by them. Some are very able and fit to give counsel, having an excellent faculty of cleaving a hair, hitting the joint of a difficulty, and advising pertinently, but they are modest, and reserved, and not communicative; they have a great deal in them, but it is loth to come out. In such a case *a man of understanding will draw it out*, as wine out of a vessel. We lose the benefit we might have by the conversation of wise men for want of the art of being inquisitive.

PROVERBS 20:6

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

Note,

1. It is easy to find those that will pretend to be kind and liberal. Many a man will call himself a man of mercy, will boast what good he has done and what good he designs to do, or, at least, what an affection he has to well-doing. Most men will talk a great deal of their charity, generosity, hospitality, and piety, will sound a trumpet to themselves, as the Pharisees, and what little goodness they have will proclaim it and make a mighty matter of it.

2. But it is hard to find those that really are kind and liberal, that have done and will do more than either they speak of or care to hear spoken of, that will be true friends in a strait; such a one as one may trust to is like a black swan.

PROVERBS 20:7

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

It is here observed to the honour of a good man,

1. That he does well for himself. He has a certain rule, which with an even steady hand he governs himself by: He *walks in his integrity*; he keeps good conscience, and he has the comfort of it, for *it is his rejoicing*. He is

not liable to those uneasinesses, either in contriving what he shall do or reflecting on what he has done, which those are liable to that walk in deceit.

2. That he does well for his family: *His children are blessed after him*, and fare the better for his sake. God has mercy in store for the seed of the faithful.

~~100~~ PROVERBS 20:8

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

Here is,

1. The character of a good governor: He is *a king* that deserves to be called so who *sits in the throne*, not as a throne of honour, to take his ease, and take state upon him, and oblige men to keep their distance, but as a *throne of judgment*, that he may do justice, give redress to the injured and punish the injurious, who makes his business his delight and loves no pleasure comparably to it, who does not devolve the whole care and trouble upon others, but takes cognizance of affairs himself and sees with his own eyes as much as may be, ~~100~~ 1 Kings 10:9.

2. The happy effect of a good government. The presence of the prince goes far towards the putting of wickedness out of countenance; if he inspect his affairs himself, those that are employed under him will be kept in awe and restrained from doing wrong. If great men be good men, and will use their power as they may and ought, what good may they do and what evil may they prevent!

~~100~~ PROVERBS 20:9

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

This question is not only a challenge to any man in the world to prove himself sinless, whatever he pretends, but a lamentation of the corruption of mankind, even that which remains in the best. Alas! *Who can say*, “I am sinless?” Observe,

1. Who the persons are that are excluded from these pretensions — all, one as well as another. Here, in this imperfect state, no person whatsoever can pretend to be without sin. Adam could say so in innocency, and saints can say so in heaven, but none in this life. Those that think themselves as good as they should be cannot, nay, and those that are really good will not, dare not, say this.

2. What the pretension is that is excluded. We cannot say, *We have made our hearts clean*. Though we can say, through grace, “We are cleaner than we have been,” yet we cannot say, “We are clean and pure from all remainders of sin.” Or, though we are clean from the gross acts of sin, yet we cannot say, “Our hearts are clean.” Or, though we are washed and cleansed, yet we cannot say, “We ourselves made our own hearts clean;” it was the work of the Spirit. Or, though we are pure from the sins of many others, yet we cannot say, “We are *pure from our sin, the sin that easily besets us, the body of death* which Paul complained of,” ~~4024~~ Romans 7:24.

~~400~~ PROVERBS 20:10

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

See here,

1. The various arts of deceiving that men have, all which evils the *love of money* is the root of. In paying and receiving money, which was then commonly done by the scale, they had *divers weights*, an under-weight for what they paid and an over-weight for what they received; in delivering out and taking in goods they had *divers measures*, a scanty measure to sell by and a large measure to buy by. This was done wrong with plot and contrivance, and under colour of doing right. Under these is included all manner of fraud and deceit in commerce and trade.

2. The displeasure of God against them. Whether they be about the money or the goods, in the buyer or in the seller, they are all *alike an abomination to the Lord*. He will not prosper the trade that is thus driven, nor bless what is thus got. He hates those that thus break the common faith by which justice is maintained, and will be *the avenger of all such*.

III PROVERBS 20:11

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

The tree is known by its fruits, a man *by his doings*, even a young tree by its first fruits, *a child by his childish things*, *whether his work be clean* only, appearing good (the word is used III Proverbs 16:2), or *whether it be right*, that is, really good. This intimates,

1. That children will discover themselves. One may soon see what their temper is, and which way their inclination leads them, according as their constitution is. Children have not learned the art of dissembling and concealing their bent as grown people have.
2. That parents should observe their children, that they may discover their disposition and genius, and both manage and dispose of them accordingly, drive the nail that will go and draw out that which goes amiss. *Wisdom is herein profitable to direct.*

III PROVERBS 20:12

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

Note,

1. God is the God of nature, and all the powers and faculties of nature are derived from him and depend upon him, and therefore are to be employed for him. It was he that *formed the eye* and *planted the ear* (III Psalm 94:9), and the structure of both is admirable; and it is he that preserves to us the use of both; to his providence we owe it that our eyes are *seeing eyes* and our ears *hearing ears*. Hearing and seeing are the learning senses, and must particularly own God's goodness in them.
2. God is the God of grace. It is he that gives the ear that hears God's voice, they eye that sees his beauty, for it is he that opens the understanding.

~~20:13~~ PROVERBS 20:13

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

Note,

1. Those that indulge themselves in their ease may expect to want necessaries, which should have been gotten by honest labour. “Therefore, though thou must sleep (nature requires it), yet *love not sleep*, as those do that hate business. Love not sleep for its own sake, but only as it fits for further work. Love not much sleep, but rather grudge the time that is spent in it, and wish thou couldst live without it, that thou mightest always be employed in some good exercise.” We must allow it to our bodies as men allow it to their servants, because they cannot help it and otherwise they shall have no good of them. Those that love sleep are likely to *come to poverty*, not only because they lose the time they spend in excess of sleep, but because they contract a listless careless disposition, and are still half asleep, never well awake.

2. Those that stir up themselves to their business may expect to have conveniences: “*Open thy eyes*, awake and shake off sleep, see how far in the day it is, how thy work wants thee, and how busy others are about thee! And, when thou art awake, look up, look to thy advantages, and do not let slip thy opportunities; apply thy mind closely to thy business and be in care about it. It is the easy condition of a great advantage: *Open thy eyes and thou shalt be satisfied with bread*; if thou dost not grow rich, yet though shalt have enough, and that is as good as a feast.”

~~20:14~~ PROVERBS 20:14

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

See here

1. What arts men use to get a good bargain and to buy cheap. They not only cheapen carelessly, as if they had no need, no mind for the commodity, when perhaps they cannot go without it (there may be prudence in that), but they vilify and run down that which yet they know to be of value; they cry, “*It is naught, it is naught*; it has this and the other

fault, or perhaps may have; it is not good of the sort; and it is too dear; we can have better and cheaper elsewhere, or have bought better and cheaper.” This is the common way of dealing; and after all, it may be, they know the contrary of what they affirm; but the buyer, who may think he has no other way of being even with the seller, does as extravagantly commend his goods and justify the price he sets on them, and so there is a fault on both sides; whereas the bargain would be made every jot as well if both buyer and seller would be modest and speak as they think.

2. What pride and pleasure men take in a good bargain when they have got it, though therein they contradict themselves, and own they dissembled when they were driving the bargain. When the buyer has beaten down the seller, who was content to lower his price rather than lose a customer (as many poor tradesmen are forced to do — small profit is better than none), then he goes his way, and boasts what excellent goods he has got at his own price, and takes it as an affront and a reflection upon his judgment if any body disparages his bargain. Perhaps he knew the worth of the good better than the seller himself did and knows how to get a great deal by them. See how apt men are to be pleased with their gettings and proud of their tricks; whereas a fraud and a lie are what a man ought to be ashamed of, though he have gained ever so much by them.

PROVERBS 20:15

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

The *lips of knowledge* (a good understanding to guide the lips and a good elocution to diffuse the knowledge) are to be preferred far before gold, and pearl, and rubies; for,

1. They are more rare in themselves, more scarce and hard to be got. *There is gold* in many a man's pocket that has no grace in his heart. In Solomon's time there was plenty of gold (~~400~~1 Kings 10:21) and *abundance of rubies*; every body wore them; they were to be bought in every town. But wisdom is a rare thing, a precious jewel; few have it so as to do good with it, nor is it to be purchased of the merchants.

2. They are more enriching to us and more adorning. They make us rich towards God, rich in good works, ~~500~~1 Timothy 2:9, 10. Most people are

fond of gold, and a ruby or two will not serve, they must have a multitude of them, a cabinet of jewels; but he that has the lips of knowledge despises these, because he knows and possesses better things.

~~20:16~~ PROVERBS 20:16

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

Two sorts of persons are here spoken of that are ruining their own estates, and will be beggars shortly, and therefore are not to be trusted with any good security: —

1. Those that will be bound for any body that will ask them, that entangle themselves in rash suretiship to oblige their idle companions; they will break at last, nay, they cannot hold out long; these waste by wholesale.
2. Those that are in league with abandoned women, that treat them, and court them, and keep company with them. They will be beggars in a little time; never give them credit without good pledge. Strange women have strange ways of impoverishing men to enrich themselves.

~~20:17~~ PROVERBS 20:17

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

Note,

1. Sin may possibly be pleasant in the commission: *Bread of deceit*, wealth gotten by fraud, by lying and oppression, may be *sweet to a man*, and the more sweet for its being ill-gotten, such pleasure does the carnal mind take in the success of its wicked projects. All the pleasures and profits of sin are *bread of deceit*. They are stolen, for they are forbidden fruit; and they will deceive men, for they are not what they promise. For a time, however, they are *rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel*, and the sinner blesses himself in them. But,
2. It will be bitter in reflection. Afterwards the sinner's *mouth shall be filled with gravel*. When his conscience is awakened, when he sees himself cheated, and becomes apprehensive of the wrath of God against him for

his sin, how painful and uneasy then is the thought of it! The pleasures of sin are but for a season, and are succeeded with sorrow. Some nations have punished malefactors by mingling gravel with their bread.

~~<11>~~ PROVERBS 20:18

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

Note,

1. It is good in every thing to act with deliberation, and to consult with ourselves at least, and, in matters of moment, with our friends, too, before we determine, but especially to ask counsel of God, and beg direction from him, and observe the guidance of this eye. This is the way to have both our minds and our purposes established, and to succeed well in our affairs; whereas what is done hastily and with precipitation is repented of at leisure. Take time, and you will have done the sooner. *Deliberandum est diu, quod statuendum est semel* — *A final decision should be preceded by mature deliberation.*

2. It is especially our wisdom to be cautious in making war. Consider, and take advice, whether the war should be begun or no, whether it be just, whether it be prudent, whether we be a match for the enemy, and able to carry it on when it is too late to retreat (~~<11>~~ Luke 14:31); and, when it is begun, consider how and by what arts it may be prosecuted, for management is as necessary as courage. Going to law is a kind of going to war, and therefore must be done with good advice, ~~<11>~~ Proverbs 25:8. The rule among the Romans was *nec sequi bellum, nec fugere* — *neither to urge war nor yet to shun it.*

~~<11>~~ PROVERBS 20:19

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

Two sorts of people are dangerous to be conversed with: —

1. Tale-bearers, though they are commonly flatterers, and by fair speeches insinuate themselves into men's acquaintance. Those are unprincipled people that go about carrying stories, that make mischief among

neighbours and relations, that sow in the minds of people jealousies of their governors, of their ministers, and of one another, that reveal secrets which they are entrusted with or which by unfair means they come to the knowledge of, under pretence of guessing at men's thoughts and intentions, tell that of them which is really false. “Be not familiar with such; do not give them the hearing when they tell their tales and reveal secrets, for you may be sure that they will betray your secrets too and tell tales of you.”

2. Flatterers, for they are commonly tale-bearers. If a man fawn upon you, compliment and commend you, suspect him to have some design upon you, and stand upon your guard; he would pick that out of you which will serve him to make a story of to somebody else to your prejudice; therefore *meddle not with him that flatters with his lips*. Those too dearly love, and too dearly buy, their own praise, that will put confidence in a man and trust him with a secret or business because he flatters them.

~~311~~ PROVERBS 20:20

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

Here is,

1. An undutiful child become very wicked by degrees. He began with despising his father and mother, slighting their instructions, disobeying their commands, and raging at their rebukes, but at length he arrives at such a pitch of impudence and impiety as to curse them, to give them scurrilous and opprobrious language, and to wish mischief to those that were instruments of his being and have taken so much care and pains about him, and this in defiance of God and his law, which had made this a capital crime (~~0217~~ Exodus 21:17, ~~4156~~ Matthew 15:4), and in violation of all the bonds of duty, natural affection, and gratitude.

2. An undutiful child become very miserable at last: *His lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness*; all his honour shall be laid in the dust, and he shall for ever lose his reputation. Let him never expect any peace or comfort in his own mind, no, nor to prosper in this world. His days shall be shortened, and the lamp of his life extinguished, according to the reverse of the promise of the fifth commandment. His family shall be cut

off and his posterity be a curse to him. And it will be his eternal ruin; the lamp of his happiness shall be *put out in the blackness of darkness* (so the word is), even that which is *for ever*, ^{6113}Jude 1:13, ^{4213}Matthew 22:13.

^{3112}PROVERBS 20:21

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

Note,

1. It is possible that an estate may be suddenly raised. There are those that will be rich, by right or wrong, who make no conscience of what they say or do if they can but get money by it, who, when it is in their power, will cheat their own father, and who sordidly spare and hoard up what they get, grudging themselves and their families food convenient and thinking all lost but what they buy land with or put out to interest. By such ways as these a man may grow rich, may grow very rich, in a little time, at his first setting out.

2. An estate that is suddenly raised is often as suddenly ruined. It was raised hastily, but, not being raised honestly, it proves *soon ripe and soon rotten: The end thereof shall not be blessed* of God, and, if he do not bless it, it can neither be comfortable nor of any continuance; so that he who got it at the end will be a fool. He had better have taken time and built firmly.

^{3112}PROVERBS 20:22

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

Those that live in this world must expect to have injuries done them, affronts given them, and trouble wrongfully created them, for we dwell among briars. Now here we are told what to do when we have wrong done us.

1. We must not avenge ourselves, no, nor so much as think of revenge, or design it: “*Say not thou, no, not in thy heart, I will recompense evil for evil. Do not please thyself with the thought that some time or other thou shalt have an opportunity of being quits with him. Do not wish revenge, or*

hope for it, much less resolve upon it, no, not when the injury is fresh and the resentment of it most deep. Never say that thou wilt do a think which thou canst not in faith pray to God to assist thee in, and *that* thou canst not do in mediating revenge.”

2. We must refer ourselves to God, and leave it to him to plead our cause, to maintain our right, and reckon with those that do us wrong in such a way and manner as he thinks fit and in his own due time: “*Wait on the Lord*, and attend his pleasure, acquiesce in his will, and he does not say that he will punish him that has injured thee (instead of desiring that thou must forgive him and pray for him), but *he will save thee*, and that is enough. He will protect thee, so that thy passing by one injury shall not (as is commonly feared) expose thee to another; nay, he will recompense good to thee, to balance thy trouble and encourage thy patience,” as David hoped, when Shimei cursed him, ~~162~~ 2 Samuel 16:12.

~~318~~ PROVERBS 20:23

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

This is to the same purport with what was said v. 20.

1. It is here repeated, because it is a sin that God doubly hates (as lying, which is of the same nature with this sin, is mentioned twice among the seven things that God hates, ~~317~~ Proverbs 6:17, 19), and because it was probably a sin very much practised at that time in Israel, and therefore made light of as if there were no harm in it, under pretence that, being commonly used, there was no trading without it.

2. It is here added, *A false balance is not good*, to intimate that it is not only abominable to God, but unprofitable to the sinner himself; there is really no good to be got by it, no, not a good bargain, for a bargain made by fraud will prove a losing bargain in the end.

~~3115~~ PROVERBS 20:24

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

We are here taught that in all our affairs,

- 1.** We have a necessary and constant dependence upon God. All our natural actions depend upon his providence, all our spiritual actions upon his grace. The best man is no better than God makes him; and every creature is that to us which it is the will of God that it should be. Our enterprises succeed, not as we desire and design, but as God directs and disposes. The goings even of a strong man (so the word signifies) *are of the Lord*, for his strength is weakness without God, nor is the battle always to the strong.
- 2.** We have no foresight of future events, and therefore know not how to forecast for them: *How can a man understand his own way?* How can he tell what will befall him, since God's counsels concerning him are secret, and therefore how can he of himself contrive what to do without divine direction? We so little understand our own way that we know not what is good for ourselves, and therefore we must make a virtue of necessity, and commit our way unto the Lord, in whose hand it is, follow the guidance and submit to the disposal of Providence.

~~3115~~ PROVERBS 20:25

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

Two things, by which God is greatly affronted, men are here said to be ensnared by, and entangled not only in guilt, but in trouble and ruin at length: —

- 1.** Sacrilege, men's alienating holy things and converting them to their own use, which is here called *devouring* them. What is devoted in any way to the service and honour of God, for the support of religion and divine worship or the relief of the poor, ought to be conscientiously preserved to the purposes designed; and those that directly or indirectly embezzle it, or defeat the purpose for which it was given, will have a great deal to answer for. *Will a man rob God in tithes and offerings?* ~~3115~~ Malachi 3:8. Those

that hurry over religious offices (their praying and preaching) and huddle them up in haste, as being impatient to get done, may be said to *devour that which is holy*.

2. Covenant-breaking. *It is a snare to a man, after he has made vows to God, to enquire how he may evade them or get dispensed with, and to contrive excuses for the violating of them. If the matter of them was doubtful, and the expressions were ambiguous, that was his fault; he should have made them with more caution and consideration, for it will involve his conscience (if it be tender) in great perplexities, if he be to enquire concerning them afterwards (~~2006~~ Ecclesiastes 5:6); for, when we have opened our mouth to the Lord, it is too late to think of going back, ~~4804~~ Acts 5:4.*

~~2006~~ PROVERBS 20:26

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

See here,

1. What is the business of magistrates. They are to be a terror to evil-doers. They must *scatter the wicked*, who are linked in confederacies to assist and embolden one another in doing mischief; and there is no doing this but by *bringing the wheel over them*, that is, putting the laws in execution against them, crushing their power and quashing their projects. Severity must sometimes be used to rid the country of those that are openly vicious and mischievous, debauched and debauching.

2. What is the qualification of magistrates, which is necessary in order to do this. They have need to be both pious and prudent, for it is the wise king, who is both religious and discreet, that is likely to effect the suppression of vice and reformation of manners.

~~2007~~ PROVERBS 20:27

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

We have here the dignity of the soul, the great soul of man, that light which lighteth every man.

1. It is a divine light; it is the *candle of the Lord*, a candle of his lighting, for it is *the inspiration of the Almighty* that gives us understanding. He forms the spirit of man within him. It is after the image of God that man is created in knowledge. Conscience, that noble faculty, is God's deputy in the soul; it is a candle not only lighted by him, but lighted for him. The Father of spirits is therefore called the *Father of lights*.

2. It is a discovering light. By the help of reason we come to know men, to judge of their characters, and dive into their designs; by the help of conscience we come to know ourselves. The spirit of a man has a self-consciousness (~~421~~ 1 Corinthians 2:11); it searches into the dispositions and affections of the soul, praises what is good, condemns what is otherwise, and judges of the thoughts and intents of the heart. This is the office, this the power, of conscience, which we are therefore concerned to get rightly informed and to keep void of offence.

~~428~~ PROVERBS 20:28

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

Here we have,

1. The virtues of a good king. Those are *mercy and truth*, especially mercy, for that is mentioned twice here. He must be strictly faithful to his word, must be sincere, and abhor all dissimulation, must religiously discharge all the trusts reposed in him, must support and countenance truth. He must likewise rule with clemency, and by all acts of compassion gain the affections of his people. *Mercy and truth* are the glories of God's throne, and kings are called *gods*.

2. The advantages he gains thereby. These virtues will preserve his person and support his government, will make him easy and safe, beloved by his own people and feared by his enemies, if it be possible that he should have any.

~~III~~ PROVERBS 20:29

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

This shows that both young and old have their advantages, and therefore must each of them be, according to their capacities, serviceable to the public, and neither of them despise nor envy the other.

1. Let not old people despise the young, for they are strong and fit for action, able to go through business and break through difficulties, which the aged and weak cannot grapple with. The *glory of young men is their strength*, provided they use it well (in the service of God and their country, not of their lusts), and that they be not proud of it nor trust to it.

2. Let not young people despise the old, for they are grave, and fit for counsel, and, though they have not the strength that young men have, yet they have more wisdom and experience. *Juniores ad labores, seniores ad honores* — *Labour is for the young, honour for the aged*. God has put honour upon the old man; for his *gray head* is his beauty. See ~~IIII~~ Daniel 7:9.

~~III~~ PROVERBS 20:30

MISCELLANEOUS MAXIMS

Note,

1. Many need severe rebukes. Some children are so obstinate that their parents can do no good with them without sharp correction; some criminals must feel the rigour of the law and public justice; gentle methods will not work upon them; they must be beaten black and blue. And the wise God sees that his own children sometimes need very sharp afflictions.

2. Severe rebukes sometimes do a great deal of good, as corrosives contribute to the cure of a wound, eating out the proud flesh. The rod drives out even that foolishness which was bound up in the heart, and cleanses away the evil there.

3. Frequently those that most need severe rebukes can worse bear them. Such is the corruption of nature that men are as loth to be rebuked sharply for their sins as to be beaten till their bones ache. *Correction is grievous to him that forsakes the way*, and yet it is good for him, ^{<821>}Hebrews 12:11.