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FROM

Mabel M. Watson





PROVERBS FOR THE PEOPLE.

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PROVERBS FOR THE PEOPLE

TRANSLATIONS OF PRACTICAL CHINESE PROVERBS  
FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS.

**PROVERBS FOR THE PEOPLE.**

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BOSTON.

GOULD, KENDALL, AND SINGLER,

25, WASHINGTON STREET.

1878.

PROVERBS FOR THE PEOPLE

ILLUSTRATIONS OF PRACTICAL GOLDEN RULES  
FROM THE BOOK OF WISDOM

PROVERBS FOR THE PEOPLE

E. L. MAGDOON,

AUTHOR OF "THE HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN RELIGION"

BOSTON:

GOULD, KENDALL AND LINCOLN,

27 WASHINGTON STREET,

1848.



PROVERBS FOR THE PEOPLE:

OR

ILLUSTRATIONS OF PRACTICAL GODLINESS DRAWN  
FROM THE BOOK OF WISDOM.

BY

E. L. MAGOON,

AUTHOR OF "THE ORATORS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION."

BOSTON:

GOULD, KENDALL AND LINCOLN,

59, WASHINGTON STREET.

1849.

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Miss Mabel M. Watson

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TO  
STRANGERS  
WHO SINCERELY SEEK,  
AND PROFESSORS WHO HABITUALLY EXEMPLIFY  
RELIGION,  
THIS WORK IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.

PREFACE

24

In the work herewith submitted to the public an attempt is made to illustrate the various principles of Christian morality in a language adapted to the comprehension of the great mass of mankind. It is the author's hope that it will be useful to some of the readers of the "Lectures on the Principles of Morality" published in 1825. The author is sensible that it is a small work, and that it may be considered as a mere introduction to the study of the subject. It is, however, the author's belief that it will be useful to some of the readers of the "Lectures on the Principles of Morality" published in 1825. The author is sensible that it is a small work, and that it may be considered as a mere introduction to the study of the subject. It is, however, the author's belief that it will be useful to some of the readers of the "Lectures on the Principles of Morality" published in 1825.

## P R E F A C E .

In the work herewith submitted to the public, an attempt is made to discuss the exalted principles of Christian morality in a manner adapted to the comprehension of the great mass of mankind. Each topic is designed to be complete in itself, and to bear directly on the practical duties of life. The author considers that it is essential for one to be orthodox in belief, and that it is of some importance at least that the professed Christian should demonstrate in his ordinary conduct the excellence of his religious creed. It is supposed that we contend for abstract dogmas with full as much zeal as we emulate each other in good deeds. If there is a deficiency in this respect, religious teachers may not be entirely exempt from blame. Should they rightly divide the word of God, and give each man his portion in due season, wisely discriminated and discreetly enforced, perhaps we might have an increased amount of enduring piety

coupled with sound morals in the pew, the shop, and counting-room.

Said John Foster, "In the department of Christian morality, I think many of those who are distinguished as evangelical preachers greatly and culpably deficient. They rarely, if ever, take some one topic of moral duty, as honesty, veracity, impartiality, Christian temper, forgiveness of injuries, temperance—in any of its branches,—the improvement of time—and investigate specifically its principles, rules, discriminations, adaptations. There is none of the *casuistry* found in many of the old divines. Such discussions would have cost far more labor of thought than dwelling and expatiating on the general evangelical doctrines; but would have been eminently useful; and it is very necessary, in order to set the people's judgment and consciences to rights. It is partly in consequence of this neglect (very general, I believe,) that many religious kind of people have unfixed and ill-fated apprehensions of moral discriminations." The testimony of Robert Hall is equally in point: "Be not afraid of devoting whole sermons to particular parts of moral conduct and religious duties. It is impossible to give right views of them, unless you dissect characters, and describe particular virtues and vices. 'The fruits of the flesh,' and 'the fruits of the

Spirit,' must be distinctly pointed out. To preach against sin in general, without descending to particulars, may lead many to complain of the evil of their hearts, while, at the same time, they are wholly inattentive to the evil of their CONDUCT."

In constructing the following chapters, the author has relied mainly on the teachings of the Holy Scriptures, but not exclusively. Ethical writers, ancient sages and modern poets have recorded striking thoughts on the themes herein discussed, and their affirmations are regarded as none the less pertinent and valuable because they did not enslave themselves to a sect, nor serve limited circles as bigoted dogmatists. The best impressions of the best minds in every age and clime can be, and ought to be, subordinated to the illustration and enforcement of the great doctrines which relate to man's temporal and eternal weal.

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# CONTENTS.

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	PAGE.
CHAP. I. INTRODUCTORY ; or, The Wise Preacher, . . . .	13
CHAP. II. CAPTIOUSNESS ; or, The Censorious Man, . . . .	25
CHAP. III. KINDNESS ; or, The Hero who best Conquers, . . . .	39
CHAP. IV. SOBRIETY ; or, The Glory of Young Men, . . . .	51
CHAP. V. FRUGALITY ; or, The Beauty of Old Age, . . . .	63
CHAP. VI. TEMPTATION ; or, The Simpleton Snared, . . . .	77
CHAP. VII. INTEGRITY ; or, The Tradesman Prospered, . . . .	90
CHAP. VIII. EXTRAVAGANCE ; or, The Spendthrift Disgraced, . . . .	108
CHAP. IX. VANITY ; or, The Decorated Fool, . . . .	123

CHAP. X.	PRIDE ;	
	or, The Scorned Scorned, . . . . .	139
CHAP. XI.	IDLENESS ;	
	or, The Slothful Self-Murdered, . . . . .	155
CHAP. XII.	INDUSTRY ;	
	or, The Diligent made Rich, . . . . .	167
CHAP. XIII.	PERSEVERANCE ;	
	or, The Invincible Champion, . . . . .	182
CHAP. XIV.	PERSEVERANCE,	
	(Continued), . . . . .	195
CHAP. XV.	SINCERITY ;	
	or, The Irresistible Persuader, . . . . .	210
CHAP. XVI.	FALSEHOOD ;	
	or, The Dissembler Accursed, . . . . .	225
CHAP. XVII.	DECEIT ;	
	or, The Knave Unmasked, . . . . .	241
CHAP. XVIII.	FLATTERY ;	
	or, The Lurking Foe, . . . . .	256

# PROVERBS FOR THE PEOPLE.

## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

#### THE WISE PREACHER.

"THE preacher set in order many proverbs," Eccl. 12: 9. Solomon wrote this text at the close of his mission as an inspired teacher, and while under the greatest solicitude to do good. He had profited by critical and comprehensive observation, as well as by profound reflection, and had learned much from experience good and bad. Feeling the vanity of earthly enjoyments, and the inefficiency of human wisdom, he devoutly seeks to draw his readers to heavenly sources, and would imprint on their mind divine precepts.

In subsequent chapters, it will be our purpose to expound a number of the wise preacher's proverbs; at present, as introductory to the series, we will consider their general character, as being pleasing, practical, ennobling, and salutary.

First, the Proverbs of Solomon are *pleasing to refined taste*. The wise man himself gave the happiest definition of the sententious aphorisms and parables of wisdom he had sought out and set in order, when he said they were like apples of gold in pictures of silver,—substantial worth symmetrically embodied and elegantly adorned. He was a preacher accustomed to employ acceptable words full of pungent and profitable instruction. No man ever excelled him in the happy

combination of exalted principle and exact detail of practice, —admonition that is faithful, conveyed in language the most fascinating and kind. Like the prince of apostles under a later dispensation, he exhorts, comforts, and reproves, as a father doth his children. The benevolence of his heart equals the sagacity of his mind; he is severe, without being repulsive, and eminently instructive, without being either frigid or dry.

An eminent modern student and translator of Solomon's works, speaks of them as follows: "The great object in each of the Proverbs is, to enforce a moral principle in words so few, that they may be easily learned, and so curiously selected and arranged, that they may strike and fix the attention instantaneously; while, to prevent the mind from becoming fatigued by a long series of detached sentences, they are perpetually diversified by the changes of style and figure. Sometimes the style is rendered striking by its peculiar simplicity, or the familiarity of its illustration; sometimes by the grandeur or loftiness of the simile employed on the occasion; sometimes by an enigmatical obscurity, which rouses the curiosity; very frequently by a strong and catching antithesis; occasionally by a playful iteration of the same word; and in numerous instances by the elegant pleonasm or the expansion of a single or common idea by a luxuriance of agreeable words."

Every intelligent reader of that portion of the Bible here referred to, will certify to the justness of the critical judgment just quoted. Of the universal attractiveness and utility of such sententious forms of instruction, no other testimony need be added to what is contained in the following judicious words by Cardan: "Brevity of language is of excellent service to persons of competent ability and knowledge, though to stupid and ignorant persons it may be useless. To those who have the power of understanding many things comprised in few words, this style impresses the mind with more force,

brings light and prevents things from vanishing through oblivion; does not produce weariness; and while it increases the authority of the speaker, augments also in the hearer the desire of being gratified."

In the second place, proverbs are *practical in their use*. True religion is not of the head only, nor of the heart only; it is the cultivator and nourisher of all our faculties, and acts upon our whole person, in its legitimate development, as the God of nature forms a tree or flower, unfolding all parts at the same time, breathing life and beauty on every leaf. The proverbs of Solomon teem with wisdom the most august, the most comprehensive, and the most practical. They are condensed maxims, fitted to every region and adapted to all ages. Their author was inspired with superhuman wisdom, and this gives dignity to his instructions; he was wonderfully skilled in the knowledge of mankind, and this renders his teaching always pertinent, since the constituent elements of our race never change.

The portion of sacred record now under consideration is of especial importance to young persons. "It is," says Dr. Good, "chiefly confined to the conduct of early life. All the most formidable dangers to which this season is exposed, and the sins which most easily beset it, are painted with the hand of a master. And while the progress and issues of vice are exhibited under a variety of the most striking delineations and metaphors in their utmost deformity and horror; all the beauties of language, and all the force of eloquence are poured forth in the diversified form of earnest expostulation, insinuating tenderness, captivating argument and sublime allegory, to win the ingenuous youth to virtue and piety, and to fix him in a steady pursuit of his duties towards God and man. Virtue is pronounced in the very outset to be essential wisdom, and vice or wickedness essential folly. The only wise man, therefore, is declared to be the truly good and virtuous, or he that fears God, and reverences his law; while the man of vice

and wickedness is a fool, a stubborn or perverse wretch, and an abomination to Jehovah."

In dealing with the writings of Solomon, as with all other inspired penmen, it should be our main endeavor to attach to each sentence its own literal and specific meaning, as it is under this rule that we most directly arrive at its spiritual signification—the mind of the Spirit. We are bound to draw practical instruction from the literal meaning of each proverb. It is designed that in this way we should find the greatest variety and the richest abundance. Lord Bacon, in his "Advancement of Learning," viewing the Proverbs in this light, speaks of them in the highest strain of praise. "Beside a code of laws directly religious, a variety of admirable rules stream forth from the deep recesses of wisdom, and spread over the whole field." It is this diversity and wealth of admirable rules, adapted to all classes and pursuits, that we propose to consider in subsequent chapters.

It is practical religion in the pulpit and in the pew, in the common walks of life and in all the pursuits of business, that we most need. The inculcation of duty is no less essential than the defence of doctrine. The hypocritical professor of godliness may not relish the preaching that exacts consistency; but they who sincerely desire to glorify God in their profession, will not complain when told how exalted are the preceptive laws of that religion they are pledged to exemplify. Some portions of Scripture are designed to show us the glory of our high calling; while other parts, of equal importance, minutely and with infinite solicitude detail to us how we are to walk worthy of it. From the writings of Paul, we learn our ultimate completeness in Christ; but a careful observance of Solomon's precepts will effectually teach us how that completeness is obtained. We may reasonably glory in our high exaltation, as joint heirs with our Lord, made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; but it would be unwise to do this without remembering that the first law of the

Messiah's kingdom requires that we should deal justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before God.

It is the symptom of a diseased condition, when a patient desires intoxicating draughts, rather than wholesome aliment. When a religionist is more voracious of excitement than instruction, and is much more prompt to fight for a dogma than to illustrate his infallibility by a noble demeanor, he would do well to search into the divinity of a faith which is so barren of heavenly deeds. Sir Mathew Hale esteemed it the most conducive to spiritual health, "to be impressed and affected, and to have old and known truths reduced to experience and practice." It will not answer that the mighty things of the Gospel—the realities of eternity—should have a place in denominational hand-books and not in our hearts. What is shut up in human creeds will probably be resorted to on sacred days; but that only which is divinely breathed into the soul will mould it into the image of God and be reduced to practice at every step of our earthly pilgrimage.

Thirdly, sacred Proverbs are *ennobling in their tendency*.

In the first place, they present the most concise forms of wisdom. Proverbial teaching is one of the most ancient and efficient modes of instruction. The sayings of the seven sages of Greece, and the choice maxims of other renowned teachers of antiquity, are preserved with great care and deemed of the greatest value.

But undoubtedly the best specimens in form and substance are the Proverbs of the Bible, and these are of the very earliest date. "As saith the proverb of the ancients," is an expression in the first book of Samuel, which indicates that this form of teaching was recognized long before Solomon. But it was the wisdom of that monarch that gave to aphoristic sayings their greatest renown. In the first book of Kings we are told that "he spake three thousand proverbs." The most regal thing about Solomon was his intellect, and this he seems to have exercised with the greatest diligence. Classic ages

and more recent times have produced distinguished men who have imitated his style, but none have ever emulated with success the depth and force of his thought; he was "the disciple of none, but the instructor of them all."

It is to this author alone that the apostrophe of the son of Sirach can justly be applied: "How wise wast thou in thy youth, and as a flood filled with understanding! Thy soul covered the whole earth, and thou fillest it with dark parables." Eusebius, referring to this last expression, remarks of Solomon, that while "inspired by divine wisdom, he consecrated all his writings to the profit and salvation of souls; yet he used these 'dark parables' for the exercise of the mind."

In the second place, in proverbs we have the most profitable type of wisdom. Their statements of doctrine may not be so explicit as in some later portions of Scripture, but what they do assert is of the very highest importance. In particular are we here taught to combine reflection with action—nourishing a mind that ponders over a heart that prays. If we would soar above the sickly regions of effeminate sentimentalism, we must search for novelty and excitement with less avidity than for the rugged and enduring elements of solid instruction. As saith the author of the Book of Wisdom, "Set your affection upon my words. Desire them, and ye shall be instructed. Wisdom is glorious, and never fadeth away; yea, she is easily seen of those that love her, and found of such as seek her. She preventeth those that desire her, in making herself first known unto them. Whoso seeketh her early shall have no great travail; for he shall find her sitting at his doors. Whoso watcheth for her shall quickly be without care. For she goeth about seeking such as are worthy of her, showeth herself favorably unto them in the ways, and meeteth them in every thought."

Religion, to be permanently influential, must be intelligent. Nothing can be foreign to the welfare of the soul that is productive of light and vigor to the mind. A discrimination of



this sort—a divorcing of the heart and intellect at the shrine of highest worship—is a distinction without a difference. Christ instituted the sacrament commemorative of his mission and triumph with elements the most substantial and exhilarating, and such should all religious instruction be.

Theoretic Christianity must necessarily become practical, before it can either benefit man or glorify Immanuel. He who loves his creed more than he loves the happiness of mankind,—the fanatic who abounds more in passions than in reasons,—and the censorious zealot who vituperates all Christians not of his own sect, would do well to indicate in their own exalted character what they mean by arrogating to themselves superlative excellence, and why they obtrude their claims before the world as especial saints.

Religion is not so much an arbitrary assemblage of dogmatic rules printed in a book or stored in the memory, as a living principle which always signalizes its presence in its power to inspire active magnanimity and stamp grandeur on beneficent deeds. The highest truths are imprinted on the devout in order to be reflected in perpetual enterprise for God. Sacred principles are not designed to minister solace to selfishness nor sanctification to indolence, but are placed at our disposal to be humbly contemplated and perpetually employed. In the support of human indigence and the renovation of a depraved world, beneficence infinite and finite are always conjoined. When the multitudes of famishing wanderers were fed in the desert of Arabia with daily showers of angel's food, the hand of God alone could bestow the gift, but the common mercy of man must gather it. Power and goodness from on high are never bestowed on our race but through the power of goodness here below.

The proverbs of Solomon are invaluable, because they most clearly teach the importance of correct and immovable principles in the heart; conduct full of nobleness and integrity in every walk of life; the necessity and usefulness of self-

discipline; and the importance of bringing every purpose as well as every act to the test of God's holy word. It is such broad and practical views of religious obligation that we need to have constantly before us. The sophist in Plato who thinks he can be pious while he persecutes his own father, and affirms that holiness being only a part of justice, is confined to the worship of God in temples, and that the ordinary conduct of life belongs to another sphere, reasons strangely, it is true, but in exact accordance with the apparent belief of many modern Christians.

The man of doctrine should exhibit the holiness of doctrine; and his good example will be the divinest memorial he can place before his fellow-men, or leave behind him on the earth. But people much rather hear about their privileges than their duties. Prove to a man that he is elected to be self-willed, bigoted and lazy, a drone who is at ease in Zion and a scandal to those without, and he will be mightily edified. "O, that is sound doctrine," says he, "my soul will never starve on that."

When professors of religion are saints in their prayers and dishonest worldlings in their conduct, it is not strange if some sagacious observer should be reminded of Paul's exhortation to the Philippians, and say to such, "whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report—think on these things."

Fourthly, the scriptural maxims, the merits of which we are discussing, are not only pleasing to the taste, practical in their use, and ennobling in their tendency, but they are *saving in their design*.

We are told by the highest authority, that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." This is the design of the Bible—not to teach science, but religion; not to make polemics, but men of

profound and practical godliness. That this was especially designed in the book of Proverbs is indicated by the fact, that, of all portions of the Old Testament, none is more frequently quoted in the New than this. Here, we not only have the minutest and most accurate observation of human nature, and the very best rules of common life, but everywhere shines out the most ravishing views of God and godliness. So that, as Scott well remarks, "we shall perceive the meaning and utility of the Proverbs, in proportion to our experience in true religion, our acquaintance with our own hearts, and with human nature, and the extent and accuracy of our observation on the character and affairs of men." Jerome's advice to one of his friends respecting the education of his daughter is: "Let her have first of all the book of Psalms for holiness of heart, and be instructed in the Proverbs of Solomon for her godly life." In the description which Mathew Henry gave of his admirable mother, he said she was "one who was well versed in Solomon's Proverbs, and the rules of wisdom, which may be fetched from thence for the conduct of human life, and knew how to apply them, and to use knowledge aright."

No one can place too high an estimate on these sacred words of counsel. Their author well defined their power to produce pungent and enduring impressions, when he compared them to "goads, and nails fastened by the Master of assemblies," closely driven home to the heart and conscience, where they enstamp themselves in permanent effects.

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" inquired the royal bard of Israel; and his wise son has responded correctly, "By taking heed thereto according to thy word." Both father and son indited parts of the divine volume which Paul, writing to the Colossians, called "the Word of Christ." All parts, in order to be efficaciously studied, must be brought around the cross and read in the same supernatural light.

The wise preacher will set these Proverbs in order before

his people. The true ambassador is faithful. He shuns not to declare the whole counsel of God; not giving unnatural prominence to particular truths, but displaying all in a scriptural proportion and with judicious zeal. It is his business not to handle the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth to commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. The grand aim of the gospel ministry is, to deliver the jeopardized from the snares of the devil, who taketh men captive at his will. This can never be accomplished by pointless generalities. Particular sins must be specifically described; the perils to be avoided must be made known; then will instruction be the law of the wise to keep them in the divine path securely. When the tongue of a religious teacher is wise it is health, both to himself and to his people.

"God hath made everything beautiful in his time," says his word; every duty he has imposed is acceptable in its proportion and appropriate place. Religion is a matter as much of order as of grace. One table of the divine law is for heaven, the other for earth. Our relations to God will be most clearly discerned and best discharged, when we love mercy, deal justly, and walk humbly among men. If we are not Christians relatively and universally, then are we not *really*; if dishonest in our dealings with men, it is blasphemy to talk of communion with God. Where is our title to the skies, so long as we pollute earth with sins of heart, hand, or tongue? Have we a money transaction, a personal depreciation, or a secret sin of any kind, that we should be ashamed to have proclaimed upon the housetops? If so, then are the pretensions we make to superior sanctity the most aggravated crimes we commit. "What a God must he be," said a poor Asiatic of the Spaniards, "who has such bloody men for his servants and children." "Ye cannot serve God and mammon," said Jesus. It is impossible to make your religion one thing and your business another.

Those persons who have the highest notions in theology, often have the lowest and most contracted feelings. He who stickles most for his tithe of mint, annise, or cummin, will be most facile to omit the weightier matters of the law in every sense which seems to him to conflict with his avowed and furiously defended creed. In all such instances, a vulgar familiarity, or morbid gloom, takes the place of Christian simplicity; they engender strife by their dogmatic disputations, and create prolific discord and heart-burnings where the innoxious quietude of a wise faith would diffuse perpetual charity and peace. "Thou, O man of God, flee these things." Remember that it is only while we exercise our mental endowments and spiritual graces without affectation and without wrath, that we are gratified to impart, while we receive delight.

Everywhere in the Gospel are we warned against dangers of this kind. According to what we are told in the seventh of Matthew, the orthodox professor who takes up his opinion, and puts on appearances,—only to keep the spirit of charity out of his heart, and to quiet his conscience without striving after a holy life,—enters a way which seemeth right to him and pursues it not only to the grave, but even to the throne of God, where, alas! before heaven shut and hell opened, he learns the truth too late.

The conclusion of the whole matter is, that a religion entirely of notions is no religion. The absence of beneficent action attests the absence of everything valuable in life,—the heart has no pulse of affection, and the hands create nothing good. It is only as notions melt into charity and flow out in noble principles, warm and beneficent, that existence becomes a blessing, and God is honored. When a human heart dissolves in penitence and devotion under the mild look of Him who said, "let your light so shine," then does it indeed become a well-spring of life to him that hath it, refreshing to himself and a blessing to all mankind.

The most potent and persuasive harbingers of the Gospel are benevolent deeds, and the best commentary on Christianity is a consistent life. How is that man prepared to exemplify holiness or teach it, who has a false measure, an unequal balance, an intentional error in his cash account, or a malignant purpose in his heart? Let us ever bear in mind that all religious worth consists in doing God's will, and not merely in professing it. Be ye warmed, be ye clothed, be ye fed, be ye kindly treated, are words, not Christian graces;—cold things of indifferent lips, not the holy faith that emanates from the cross.

They who are most like heaven, and appear to be travelling thither with firmest step, with a pure conscience and sincere prayer seek for holy light upon their narrow path; so that, as said old bishop Hall, "we are not scrupulous and nice in small matters, negligent in the main; we are still curious in substantial points, and not careless in things of an inferior nature; accounting no duty so small as to be neglected, and no care great enough for principal duties; not so tithing mint and cummin, that we should forget justice and judgment; nor yet regarding judgment and justice, that we should contemn mint and cummin." Our adorable Saviour, in asserting for our guidance the relative value of fundamental doctrines and decorative graces, rendered the matter clear and the duties of all imperative, in the remarkable words to the scribes and pharisees: "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

## CHAPTER II.

### CAPTIIOUSNESS;

#### OR, THE CENSORIOUS MAN.

"GRIEVOUS words stir up anger," Prov. 15: 1. We infer from this language, and from general observation, that the acrimonious words of censorious persons kindle no light in the world except that which gleams from angry flames powerful only to destroy. Of this truth there are but too many sad instances recorded in the word of God, and illustrated within the scope of every observant mind. But in order to render the subject plain and practical to all, we will proceed to show that the censorious man is always ready to find fault; that he complains without sufficient cause; criticises without just discrimination; and, since he is never impelled by generosity, his bickerings can do no permanent good.

In the first place, the censorious man is prompt to complain. It has been said that an Irishman is at peace, only when he is in a quarrel; a Scotchman is at home, only when he is abroad; an Englishman is contented, only while finding fault with something or somebody; and, let us add, that a captious, busy, blustering, impetuous American is at the height of felicity, only while he is in all these tumultuous conditions at the same time. Place of birth and peculiarity of dialect matters not; wherever the graceless cynic throws around him "the rhinoceros skin of impudence," the identity of his character is fixed, and is very likely to remain unchanged. His misanthropic heart is a fountain of bitterness, whose incessant flow indicates a disposition perpetually perverse. By a few

masterly outlines, the great bard has presented a vivid portraiture of the censorious man. "Thou wilt quarrel with a man that hath a hair more, or a hair less, in his beard, than thou hast. Thou wilt quarrel with a man for cracking nuts, having no other reason but because thou hast hazel eyes: What eye, but such an eye, would spy out such a quarrel? Thy head is as full of quarrels, as an egg is full of meat."

Says Solomon, "An ungodly man diggeth up evil; and in his lips there is a burning fire. A froward man soweth strife; and a whisperer separateth chief friends." Instead of "covering all" in the spirit of the gospel, the captious are most busy in digging up evil; they "search for hid treasure," black and foul as their own loathsome spirit, and take the greatest delight in reviving what had been long buried, only to invest it with aggravating circumstances and a more envenomed life. Such a perturbed and wretched anarchist goes forth with diligent hand to sow the seed of strife in every furrow of society,—seed that spring up only in tempests, and generate the worst pestilence from the rotten fruits they produce.

It is not uncommon for this class of persons to assign good motives for their bad deeds. A divine proverb says, "An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbor." Haman, under a pretence of loyalty, attempted to destroy a whole nation. Ziba, under the same false garb, would have destroyed his neighbor. Ahab, the lying prophet, from mere wilfulness, ruined his brother. The hypocrite's mouth is "a world of iniquity;" it contains "a little member" always armed and active against true greatness, a weapon fearfully destructive since, as the apostle James declares, it is "set on fire of hell."

To conciliate the censorious is almost impossible. They are usually the most obdurate, because most prejudiced; therefore they are the last to appreciate kindness, and least susceptible to conviction.

"All seems infected that the infected spy,  
And all seems yellow to the jaundiced eye."



The influence of such individuals is well stated in the following Scripture: "The north wind bringeth forth rain: so doth a backbiting tongue an angry countenance." To suppress rage is undoubtedly a duty, but it is a task the hardest to perform in the presence of those who are constantly finding fault. The evil is aggravated by the fact that those who are most tantalizing are always the most unworthy of regard. The most contemptible foes are the most annoying; as Southey has said,

"Quick am I to feel

Light ills,—perhaps o'erhasty; summer gnats,  
Finding my cheek unguarded, may infix  
Their skin-deep stings, to vex and irritate;  
But if the wolf or forest boar be nigh,  
I am awake to danger. Even so  
Bear I a mind of steel and adamant  
Against all greater wrongs."

Grievous words are the oil which augments the flame of passion and intensifies its heat; for this reason they should be studiously repelled and repressed. Says an old and wise counsellor, "When men are provoked, speak gently to them, and they will be pacified; as the Ephraimites were by Gideon's mildness: whereas, on a like occasion, by Jephtha's roughness they were exasperated, and the consequences were bad. Reason will be better spoken, and a righteous cause better pleaded, with meekness, than with passion; hard arguments do best with soft words."

In the second place, the censorious man usually complains without sufficient cause. In all waters there are some fish that love to swim against the stream; and in every community persons are to be found who delight in being opposed to everybody else. Demand a reason for their obstinate dissent, and you will probably obtain a reply about as intelligent and magnanimous as the one recorded in the following lines:

"I do not like you Doctor Fell,  
The reason why, I cannot tell,  
But—I do not like you Doctor Fell."

It is painful to see persons thus "fretting in their own grease," as anger without reason is like fire under an empty kettle, it burns the vessel to no purpose. Such a frantic member of society is a furious beast in his demeanor towards more worthy associates, because the native impulse is grovelling and bestial which sways himself. It was with a vain hope of correcting this fatal eccentricity, that Burke wrote as follows to his captious friend Barry, while studying his art at Rome, "That you have just subjects of indignation always, and of anger often, I do noways doubt; who can live in the world without some trial of his patience? But believe me, my dear Barry, that the arms with which the ill-dispositions of the world are to be combated, and the qualities by which it is to be reconciled to us, and we reconciled to it, are moderation, gentleness, a little indulgence to others, and a great deal of distrust of ourselves; which are not qualities of a mean spirit, as some may possibly think them, but virtues of a great and noble kind, and such as dignify our nature, as much as they contribute to our repose and fortune; for nothing can be so unworthy of a well-composed soul as to pass away life in bickerings and litigations; in snarling and scuffling with every one about us. Again and again, my dear Barry, we must be at peace with our species, if not for their sakes, yet very much for our own."

Stiff necks are always diseased ones, and trees that are hollow are the most unbending; but their inflexibility is the product and proof of unsoundness rather than of strength. A delicate and flexile demeanor is a prominent trait in polished life. The hostility of the truly great is always marked by courteous generosity; while mediocrity is perpetually envious towards original minds and magnanimous thoughts. The undisciplined harshness and furious invective of such is the exponent of their native meanness and the badge of predestined contempt. Says Schiller, "How should they, who know no other measure of worth than the toil of acquisition and its pal-

pable results, be capable of estimating the calm operation of taste upon the outward and inward man, while they regard the fortuitous disadvantages of polite literature, without its essential benefits. The man without perception of form despises all grace in eloquence as corruption, all elegance in conversation as hypocrisy, all delicacy and loftiness of demeanor as exaggeration and affectation. He can never forgive it in the favorite of the graces, that, as a companion, he adorns all circles, as a man of business, moulds all heads to his designs, as an author, imprints, perhaps, his spirit on the whole of his century, while *he*, the victim of drudgery, with all his knowledge can command no attention, nor move so much as a stone from its place."

The emotion most profoundly experienced by ambitious mediocrity is envy at the success of industrious merit; every word of praise he hears bestowed on the deserving is bewailed as a leaf torn from his own scanty garland. Therefore is he

"Ready in gibes, quick-answer'd, saucy, and  
As quarrellous as the weasel."

Jeffry, the most sagacious of modern critics, has said, "There is nothing so certain, we take it, as that those who are the most alert in discovering the faults of a work of genius, are the least touched with its beauties." This is an important thought, and, to generalize it as a fitting close of this part of our subject, let us add, that those who most admire and appreciate excellence of all kinds, are a much nobler class of persons than those who are the keenest to detect flaws and the most boisterous in exaggerating defects.

Thirdly, the censorious man criticises without discrimination, and therefore is certain to condemn without justice. Censoriousness is a compound of many of the worst passions; latent pride, which discovers the mote in our brother's eye, but hides the beam in our own; malignant envy, which, wounded at the

noble talents and superior prosperity of others, transforms them into the objects and food of its malice, if possible obscuring the splendor it is too base to emulate; disguised hatred, which diffuses, in its perpetual mutterings, the irritable venom of the heart; servile duplicity, which fulsomely praises to the face, and blackens behind the back; shameless levity, which sacrifices the peace and reputation of the absent, merely to give barbarous stings to a jocular conversation; all together forming an aggregate the most desolating on earth, and nearest in character to the malice of hell. "The tongue of the slanderer," says Massillon, "is a devouring fire, which tarnishes whatever it touches; which exercises its fury on the good grain, equally as on the chaff; on the profane, as, on the sacred; which wherever it passes, leaves only desolation and ruin; digs even into the bowels of the earth, and fixes itself on things the most hidden; turns into vile ashes, what, only a moment before, had appeared to us so precious and brilliant; acts with more violence and danger than ever, in the time when it was apparently smothered up and almost extinct; which blackens what it cannot consume, and sometimes sparkles and delights before it destroys."

For many years past, the habitual tone of British critics in regard to this country, has been of the most unmanly and ungenerous character. The true occasion of all this detraction, falsehood and abuse is well understood by observing and sagacious citizens. Our nation, by the act of God and the virtuous zeal of our fathers, without any merit or demerit of our own, has been placed in such a situation, political, geographical, and statistical, as to make us more likely than any other power to rival or surpass Great Britain in commercial pursuits, population, wealth and national greatness. It will not help the matter to deny the facts in the case, nor will the destiny of our republic be arrested by the malignity of her foes. A distinguished writer in the *North American Review*, touching this matter, inquires, "Is the petulant and

peevish spirit, which they regularly show in regard to this subject, such a one as we should naturally expect from a great and gallant nation, that still maintains, though in the wane of her fortunes, a lofty standing among the leading powers of the world? Is it not more like the petty spite of a faded beauty, who would gladly if she dared, tear out the eyes of a younger rival, because that she feels that their lustre eclipses that of her own?"

But unjustifiable detraction always proves the weakness as well as meanness of the party that employs it. To be constantly carping at, and exaggerating petty blemishes in the characters of others, putting an unfavorable construction on their language, or "damning with faint praise" their deeds, betrays on the part of the detractor a conscious inability to maintain a reputable standing on legitimate and honorable grounds. The course pursued proves him to be a sour, surly, mean-spirited creature, and we may at once conclude that he is a man disappointed and broken-down. He belongs to the miserable race whose special vocation it is to "murder fame,"—loathsome leeches on the body politic, or ferocious vampire-bats, that mutilate all the pure things they can reach, and corrode with their poisonous slime everything they do not speedily destroy. In every social organization, it may be expected that there will be at least one of these, who, to use the expressive language of the poet—

"Devotes to scandal his congenial mind,  
Himself a living libel on mankind."

Says the wise man, "It is as sport to a fool to do mischief." It is not uncommon to find persons so wanton in heart and judgment as to be willing to indulge in mischievous jokes which inflict on a neighbor the severest pain. They will perpetrate a bitter jest, though by it they sacrifice a friend and create a foe. Like the anxious wife in the poet's story, the censorious person will pertinaciously "nurse his wrath to

keep it warm," and seek a place in all companies only to exasperate ill feelings and augment the tide of vituperation. They are the stubborn sort,

"Who, if they once grow fond of an opinion,  
They call it honor, honesty, and faith,  
And sooner part with life than let it go."

The perpetual complaints of such, to use the simile of an old writer, "are like unto a new cart, which screams and cries, even whilst it had no burden but its own wheels, whereas that which is long used, and well liquored, goes silently away with an heavy load."

Canting bigotry and carping criticism are usually the product of obtuse sensibilities and a pusillanimous will. Plutarch tells us of an idle and effeminate Etrurian, who found fault with the manner in which Themistocles had conducted a recent campaign. "What," said the hero in reply, "have you, too, something to say about war, who are like the fish that has a sword, but no heart." He is always the severest censor on the merits of others, who has the least worth of his own. For the want of deep and sincere emotion, hypocrites are necessarily poor orators, and they are always ready to accuse successful speakers of employing more art than themselves, whereas those whom they malign have only a more exalted and active soul within them. The lethargic calumniator, too stupid to coin refined and enthusiastic sentiment, is powerful only in the exercise of brutal force. But once invade the contracted sphere wherein his belligerent passions lie ambushed ever ready to spring upon the unguarded victim, and you are attacked with a fury as sudden and boisterous as it is undeserved.

"He speaks plain cannon, fire and smoke, and bounce,  
He gives the bastinado with his tongue;  
Our ears are cudgel'd; not a word of his,  
But buffets better than a fist of France;

Zounds! I was never so bethump'd with words,  
 Since I first call'd my brother's father, dad."

But "affronts are innocent, when men are worthless," and inveterate fault-finders are the objects not so much of hate as of commiseration, on the ground that he who can please nobody, is not so much to be pitied, as he whom nobody can please.

The Sandwich Islanders murdered Captain Cook, but adored his bones. It is after the same manner that the censorious treat deserving men. They first immolate them in the most savage mode of sacrifice, and then declare the relics of their victim to be sacred. Crabbed members of churches and other societies will quarrel a pastor or leading member away, and then with snappish tone will complain of his absence, invidiously comparing him with his successor, and making the change they have caused the occasion of a still keener fight, simply to indulge the unslumbering malice of their unfeeling heart. The rancor with which they would silence one, the envy with which they hurry another into seclusion, and the inexorable bitterness under the corrosion of which a third is brought prematurely to the grave, proves how indiscriminate are their carping comments, and how identical towards all degrees of merit is their infernal hate.

A moral being of the highest and purest cast will forfeit none of his dignity by occasionally forging the shafts of satire; but he will be studious to increase the polish of his weapon in exact proportion to the keenness of its point and the velocity of its flight. Men who find fault on grounds of good taste and just principle are not such as are described in the following extract from the *Course of Time*:

"The critics—some, but few,  
 Were worthy men: and earned renown which had  
 Immortal roots; but most were weak and vile:  
 And as a cloudy swarm of summer flies,  
 With angry hum and slender lance, beset

The sides of some huge animal; so did  
 They buzz about the illustrious man, and fain  
 With his immortal honor, down the stream  
 Of fame would have descended; but alas!  
 The hand of Time drove them away: they were,  
 Indeed a simple race of men, who had  
 One only art, which taught them still to say—  
 Whate'er was done, might have been better done—  
 And with this art, not ill to learn, they made  
 A shift to live: but sometimes too, beneath  
 The dust they raised, was worth awhile obscured:  
 And then did Envy prophesy and laugh.  
 O Envy! hide thy bosom! hide it deep:  
 A thousand snakes, with black envenomed mouths,  
 Nest there, and hiss, and feed thro' all thy heart!"

The manner in which cynical censors of artistic and moral worth proceed is the same in every place and age. In Pope's time, "coxcombs" attempted to "vanquish Berkely with a grin," and they would fain do the same to-day. "Is not this common?" exclaimed a renowned musician, "The least little critic, in reviewing some work of art, will say, 'Pity this, and pity that; this should have been altered, that omitted.' Yea, with his wiry fiddle-string will he creak out his accursed variations. But let him sit down and compose himself. He sees no improvement in variations *then!*"

The industrious honey-bee is armed with a sting as well as the wasp; but the former delights in collecting rich treasures from every field, and wounds only in self-defence, while the useless and malignant wasp buzzes about perpetually but to no profit, and darts at the most delicious fruits only to pierce them to the core. "It was not only in the Roman customs," said Burke, kindled to indignation under the wrongs that had been heaped upon him, "it was not only in the Roman customs, but it is in the nature and constitution of things, that calumny and abuse are essential parts of triumph." But however disagreeable such inflictions may be to a rugged and noble sufferer, he will never succumb to them. Ungenerous



detraction serves only to exasperate the passionate, and substantiate the energies of the intrinsically strong. It renders the firm firmer, and prompts him to yet higher deeds. A true man is not to be intimidated by hyper-criticism, as if, in the words of Byron,

"The sublime ethereal particle  
Could be extinguished by an article."

Let us learn, under all circumstances of irritating abuse to be mercifully and calmly self-possessed. An old proverb says truly, "If thou art vexed, thou wilt have two troubles." Cheerful looks, kind words and a speedy pardon are the best revenge we can inflict on the ungenerous and unjust.

"What's honor?  
Not to be captious; ner unjustly fight;  
'Tis to confess what's wrong and do what's right."

In the fourth place, we remark that, since the censorious man is never impelled by generosity, his bickerings can do no permanent good. Voltaire said that "the character of the Frenchman is made up of the tiger and the ape;" but even such a composition may be turned to some useful account, while the inveterate fault-finder neutralizes, as far as possible, every attempt made by others to do good. To perform any task perfectly to his liking, would be as impossible as to "make a portrait of Proteus, or fix the figure of the fleeting air." To speak favorably of any body or any thing is a trait of generosity entirely foreign to his nature; from temperament and confirmed habit, he "must be cruel only to be kind." The only benefit he occasions, is achieved contrary to his intent; in his efforts to impede rising merit, he fortifies the energies he would destroy. Said Haydon, "Look down upon genius and he will rise to a giant—attempt to crush him and he will soar to a god."

While the censorious man is most severe in judging others,

he is invariably the most ready to repel any animadversions made upon himself; upon the principle well understood in medical circles, that the feeblest bodies are always the most sensitive. No man will so speedily and violently resent a supposed wrong, as he who is most accustomed to inflict injuries upon his associates. Not unfrequently is a fool as dangerous to deal with as a knave, and forever is he more incorrigible. "When Christian saw that the man was wise in his own conceit, he said to Hopeful, whisperingly, 'there is more hope of a fool than of him;' and said, moreover, 'When he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth him, and he saith to every one that he is a fool.'"

The Pilgrim might have quoted further from Proverbs, to wit, "There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health." Many know well enough how to speak daggers, though they are too cowardly in character to use any weapon more dignified than a slanderous tongue. It is indeed a great calamity, one almost incredible, that man, created in the likeness of the Infinite, and lord of all lesser things, should have become so corrupted, that no savage beast can exceed him in malignant ferocity. But "The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips." On this Scripture, Henry says, "Many have felt the lash upon their backs for the want of a bridle upon their tongues." Solomon tells us that "A fool's wrath is presently known." You may easily learn how soon it was revealed in Saul's violent attacks upon David and Jonathan; Jezebel's fury against Elijah; and Nebuchadnezzar's passionate decree to kill the wise men, because they could not interpret his vision. Such men are always as unreasonable in their demands, as they are unrelenting in their prejudice. But the most painful exhibition of the fool's wrath is seen in those who profess to be the children of God. Nothing so much excites the contempt of the undevout, as those gross ebullitions of hatred and crimination, which it would seem divine grace ought to restrain.

"To wilful men,  
The injuries, that they themselves procure,  
Must be their schoolmasters."

But, unfortunately, experience is lost upon the confirmed fault-finder; he is not to be corrected by the blunders he has committed, and the lessons he has been taught. We learn from the highest source that "A reproof entereth more into a wise man, than an hundred stripes into a fool." A single word was sufficient to correct David. A look entered more into Peter's heart than an hundred stripes into Pharaoh. But the censorious man is, in his own estimation, above being taught, and therefore remains stubbornly a fool in spite of every kind of instruction. "Though thou shouldst bray him in a mortar among wheat in a pestle, yet shall not his foolishness depart from him."

Illustrious examples teach us how to demean ourselves while suffering under oppressive wrongs. When Demosthenes was unjustly accused, he replied, "I will not strive with thee in this kind of fighting, in which he that is overcome is the better man." Xenophon, under like circumstances, said to his ungenerous foe, "You have learned how to reproach, and I have learned how to bear reproach." But the most pertinent and valuable lesson for us on this subject, is presented in the conduct and instruction of Jesus Christ. The Pharisees, who had just been poisoning the minds of the people with bitter animosity against the Redeemer, had now come to profess themselves his disciples. "But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men." He knew that the censorious hypocrite is the most treacherous creature one can deal with, since under the mask of professed esteem, he conceals the most envenomed weapons, and is ready to conduct his victim to the most cruel death.

One of the finest expressions in the world, is in the seventeenth chapter of Proverbs. "He that covereth a transgression *seeketh love*; but he that repeateth a matter separateth

very friends." In what a delightful communion with God does that man live who habitually seeketh love! With the same mantle thrown over him from the cross—with the same act of amnesty, by which he hopes to be saved—injuries the most unprovoked, and transgressions the most aggravated, are covered in eternal forgetfulness.

On the contrary, the censorious man often separates intimate friends by repeating a matter and digging up forgotten quarrels. The charity which is most divine is that which hides a multitude of faults. It is pure in itself, and labors to promote the peace and happiness of all. If one would be noble, he must be habitual in the cultivation of lofty principle and generous love. Instead of perpetually satirizing, let him sometimes deign to inquire; in the place of sardonic derision, let the pusillanimous blockhead have the magnanimity, for once at least, to examine. This, it is true, would not be in keeping with his character; for the moment the cynical fault-finder performs a dignified and beneficent deed of his own, he thereby elevates himself above his native degradation and destroys his moral identity. Such persons always seek more to baffle the good, than to adore the truth; they can never consent to exemplify the divinity of peaceful virtue, but, like salamanders, are in a congenial element only while they are in the fire.