

THE
BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

ARTICLE I.

A CHAPTER ON PROVERBS.

BY REV. J. I. MOMBERT, D.D., PASSAIC, NEW JERSEY.

A GOOD definition is a very precious thing, and the following of a proverb, one of the best I have met, may appropriately introduce the subject. "A proverb," says Eiselein, "is a sentence coined with the public stamp, current, and of acknowledged value among the people," of which we have this old English metrical form :

"The people's voice the voice of God we call,
And what are proverbs but the people's voice ?
Coined first, and current made by public choice,
Then sure they must have weight and truth withal."

In brief, a proverb is a household word of the people. Using the term "people" in a very wide sense, a glance at the subject of proverbs of acknowledged currency among the people in different ages, different climes, and different tongues may prove an instructive entertainment.

A very old proverb, in familiar use in most modern languages, is the homely phrase, "Hunger is the best sauce,"¹ which owes its celebrity to a Spartan cook. Dionysius, the tyrant of Sicily, having heard a certain Spartan dish highly praised, secured the services of a Lacedemonian cook, and desired him to prepare it. The dish, made after the Spartan

¹ Hunger ist der beste Koch.—*German*. Il n'est sauce que d'appetit.—*French*.
Optimum condimentum fames.—*Latin*.

recipe, was set before the king, who tasted it with tokens of unmistakable disgust. The cook remarked, "King, I am not surprised at your feelings, for you have taken the dish without the Spartan sauce." "And what is that?" rejoined the king. "Work, exercise, hunger, and thirst is the delicious sauce with which they season their food at Sparta," was the cook's reply. But the very form in which we use the proverb now was employed by Socrates, who said, "Hunger is the best sauce, for it makes all food palatable, and costs nothing." A friend, seeing him one day walk rapidly in front of his house, asked the philosopher what he was about. "I prepare," he said, "the sauce for my supper."

The origin of "No shoemaker beyond his last," or "Cobbler, stick to your shoes,"¹ is ascribed to Apelles, who was in the habit, while exhibiting his pictures to the public, to hide behind them in order to hear the criticisms of the people. A cobbler's practised eye one day detected a fault in the shoes of a figure in the painting of the "Trojan Shepherd," one of his master-pieces. The artist forthwith corrected the blemish. Elated with vanity, the cobbler now passed from the sandal to the leg, and made it the theme of his censure. Apelles then stepped forth, and indignantly bade him stop, in the words of the proverb, "Cobbler, stick to your last," which is applied to persons that criticise things of which they understand nothing. Though Pliny narrates this anecdote of Apelles, Lucian tells it of Phidias; it may be true of both, and as the latter flourished one hundred and fifty years before the former, it proves the great antiquity of the proverb.

It is probably not generally known that the famous proverbial rule, "Allow no day to pass without a line,"² for all who would excel in their calling, is likewise referred to Apelles, who throughout his whole life labored to improve himself, and never spent a day without practising the art of drawing.

¹ Schuster, bleib' bei deinem Leisten. — *German*. Cordonnier ne vous mêlez que de votre pantoufle. — *French*. Ne sutor ultra crepidem. — *Latin*.

² Nulla dies sine linea.

Speaking of cobblers suggests another familiar saying: "None of you knows where the shoe pinches."¹ It is generally used to show that appearances deceive, that each man knows best the secret of his own troubles, or as the Bible puts it, "The heart knoweth his own bitterness." This is a very old proverb; the first authentic use of it occurs in Plutarch, who, commenting on the inexplicable repudiation of Papiria, the mother of Scipio Aemilianus and Fabius Maximus, by her husband, Paulus Aemilius, narrates the following anecdote: A Roman had obtained a divorce from his wife, and when his friends remonstrated with him, saying, "Is your wife not virtuous? Is she not fair? Has she not borne you handsome children?" he replied, showing them his shoe, "Is this not a new shoe? Is it not handsome? Yet none of you knows where it pinches."² In this connection I remember several divorces obtained on the continent of Europe, not for causes mentioned in the Bible or in codes founded on Christian principles, but for "incompatibility." That cause seems to rest on the authority of Plutarch (see *Paulus Aemilius* in his *Lives*), and has the striking feature that the benefit of its operation is very expensive, and therefore only available to the wealthy. There is a homely phrase, "What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander"; but there are some sauces that should not be used with either.

The transition from shoes to leather is natural, and may serve to introduce the following proverb, thoroughly naturalized in many countries: "Men cut broad thongs from other people's leather."³ The Latin version seems to be the original. It is applied not only to the wastefulness with which another's property is used, but more frequently to the ease with which large-handed generosity is shown at another

¹ Man weiss nicht wo der Schuh drückt. — *German*. On ne sait pas où le soulier blesse. — *French*.

² At nemo vestrum novit qua pedem meum torqueat?

³ Aus anderer Leute Leder ist gut Riemen schneiden. — *German*. Faire du cuir d'autrui large courroie. — *French*. Ex alieno tergore lata secantur lora. — *Latin*.

man's expense by those who are by no means given to similar liberality if they have to draw on their own exchequer.

A singular coincidence of sentiment between a very old proverb and a much misunderstood passage of Scripture is worthy of mention here. The ancient Greek¹ saying, "The net of the sleeping [fisherman] takes," placed side by side with "He giveth his beloved sleep," or as the verse should be rendered, "He giveth his beloved in their sleep," or "sleeping" (Ps. cxxvii. 2). The only place where I have seen the juxtaposition noted, as might be expected, is in Archbishop Trench's *Lessons in Proverbs*. In the classical forms we have undoubted reference to favoring Fortune, to benefits enjoyed not as the result of toil, but as gracious gifts of the propitious deity, and Plutarch (*Sulla*) furnishes an instructive illustration of the sense in which they should be understood. Timotheus, the son of Conon, felt incensed that his enemies and detractors ascribed all his great successes to Fortune, and caricatured him asleep, while the goddess at his feet was engaged in taking cities for him in open nets. The insult rankled in his bosom, and when one day he returned from a successful expedition he concluded a report of all he had done with the words, "Now, Athenians, remember that Fortune had no part in this." Then Fortune in revenge, says Plutarch, and to punish the ingrate for his unbounded vanity, took good care that thenceforth all his enterprises failed, and that at last, the butt of the hatred and scorn of his fellow-citizens, he was driven into exile. The idea embodied in the classical phrase has a more sublime parallel in the words of the wise king, whose object was to portray the fruitlessness of all toil and ceaseless vigilance without the fear of God. He would teach that by far the greatest blessings men enjoy are those which seemingly come overnight, when, held fast locked in the embrace of sleep (itself the boon of heaven), the Sleepless One above pours upon his beloved ones the overflowing fulness of his gifts. In recognition of this beautiful thought, and in token

¹ Ἐσθάρτι κίπρος αλπεῖ. Dormienti rete trahit. — Latin.

of deep-seated piety in the land of Luther, the traveller may read at almost every turn he takes, on the walls of houses, over doors and gateways, and often in halls and rooms, the good old legend, "An Gottes Segen ist Alles gelegen," viz. success, peace, joy, happiness, in fact everything, depends on the blessing of God. And I have seen the account of an incident related by a traveller, that at Cairo he heard a watchman cry out at night in clarion notes, "I proclaim the glory of the living King, who sleepeth not, nor dieth."

We have thus far attended to rather old proverbs, without any particular order in their choice, but propose now to glance at others illustrative of the manners, opinions, beliefs, prejudices, customs, or even the history of the different nations among whom they either originated, or assumed a peculiar complexion and physiognomy, although the greater number will be more or less of the latter sort.

So brief and pithy a phrase as an "Iliad of woes,"¹ i.e. an endless string of woes, could have originated only in Greece, where the great Homeric poem was universally known, and its length as well as the diversity of ills it narrates made the two words as familiar and suggestive to the ears of the Greeks as "the patience of Job" or "Job's messenger" or "a Jeremiad" would be to readers of Holy Scripture.

"Owls to Athens,"² proverbially applied, like the English "coals to Newcastle," conveyed a sense that could not be missed, for not only was Attica renowned for those birds, but the owl was sacred to the tutelary goddess of the city, emblematic of the city itself, and the very coins of Athens, stamped with the bird, were known as "Laurian owls," with reference to Mount Laurion in Attica, famed for its silver mines.

"As by machinery,"³ a brief proverb, alluding to the theatrical contrivances by which gods, etc., were made to appear in the air, denotes any sudden and unexpected occurrence; it was the logical outcome of the habits of a people so familiar with the stage as were the ancient Greeks.

¹ Ἰλιάς κακῶν.

² Γλαῦκας εἰς Ἀθήνας.

³ Ὡσπερ ἀπὸ μηχανῆς.

A proverbial expression for disgusting one with a thing was to "Anoint with gall," and originated in the custom of mothers to put gall to the nipple when the child was to be weaned.

"To see a wolf," in the sense of being struck dumb, had proverbial currency from the vulgar belief concerning any one at whom a wolf got the first look, while the "gaping wolf" denoted vain expectation, and "a wolf's wings," like the English "pigeon's milk," meant things that are not.

The good nature of Homer, at once an example and a consolation to suffering Jerseymen, appears in the seemingly proverbial adage that "the blood of man is sweet to the gnat," and, by way of digression, and in proof of Solomon's saying that "there is nothing new under the sun," we may add that mosquito-bars¹ were the luxurious appendages of beds in ancient Egypt.

If the Greeks wished to describe a simpleton or a poltroon they called him an Abderite, from Abdera in Thrace, the Gotham of antiquity. From the way in which the words "Gotham" and "Gothamite" are used in New York it would seem that the real import of the terms is fast sinking into oblivion. To revive their true meaning, it is simply needful to state that Gotham lies in the southwest angle of Nottinghamshire in England, and is chiefly famed for the attempt of its wise men to hedge in the cuckoo. According to Grose, they still show at Court Hill, in the parish of Gotham, the veritable cuckoo bush, and there exists an ancient volume which celebrates the famous doings of the Solomons of Gotham.

A singular illustration of the ubiquity of certain customs is furnished in the Greek phrase "well hit,"² derived from a simple love game which doubtless took its rise in the hoary past. The word "platagon"³ signifies the petal of the poppy; lovers were wont to lay it on the left hand or arm, and strike it with the right. If it burst with a loud crash⁴ it was a good omen, and all doubt in the matter removed.

¹ κωνωπαίον.² καλὰ δὴ παταγίς.³ πλατάγον.⁴ παταγῶν.

I have often seen it played in precisely the same form in different parts of Germany.¹

The old Roman character, the military spirit of an aggressive and cautious despotism, is graphically portrayed in the Latin of "Forewarned, forearmed," and reaches the climax of daring ambition in the famous exclamation, "Either Caesar or nothing,"² or in more familiar idiom: "Either a man or a mouse." A curious misapplication of the Latin, and direct illustration of the latter part of the last-named English proverb used to be, and possibly still continues to be, seen on the sign-board of a flash London barber, who not only tried his own hand at immortalizing himself in this daring motto, but obtained great notoriety for his wonderful confusion of vowels and aspirates, having one day irritated a rather bald customer with the remark, "Very bad hair, Sir," and being requested by the latter in rather expressive terms to confine himself to the work he had in hand, tried to set things right by the exclamation, "Oh, I meant not the *air* of your *ead*, but the *hair* of the *hatmosphere*."

"There is no unmingled delight,"³ was the Latin form of the more poetical English and German versions, "No rose without a thorn"; while "Old birds are not caught with chaff" has the Latin equivalent, "You cannot trap an old fox."⁴ The pithy, "Wine in, wits out," and the more stately, "What soberness conceals, drunkenness reveals," ran in Latin more elegantly, "What is in the heart of the sober is in the mouth of the drunkard."⁵ Elegance and stateliness characterize many Latin proverbs, e.g. the following, which alludes to the different garments worn at Rome and is of genuine Roman origin, "I cannot hope for the toga when I see so mean a garment,"⁶ signifies "A bad beginning

¹ See Göthe's *Faust*, Part i, Garden Scene, where Margaret pursues a similar course.

² *Aut Caesar, aut nullus.*

³ *Nulla est sincera voluptas.*

⁴ *Annosa vulpes non capitur laqueo.*

⁵ *Quod est in corde sobrii, est in ore ebrii (cf. In vino veritas).*

⁶ *Non possum togam praetextam sperare, quum exordium pullum videam.*

cannot make a good ending"; the point of contrast being the *toga praetexta*, the outer garment with purple borders, worn by the higher magistrates and freeborn children and the *exordium pullum*, a coarse garment of undyed wool used by the lower orders, while the circumstance that *exordium* denotes also the beginning of a thing renders the point still more pointed. "The pot boils badly"¹ conveyed a similar thought in a more homely garb, and intimated that an affair was poorly progressing, or had a "bad look-out."

The table furnishes the following Latin proverbs illustrative of Roman manners. "From eggs to the fruit"² denoted "from the beginning to the end," in allusion to the Roman meals, at which eggs were served first and fruit last. "The bones for those who are late,"³ from which the French have, with a wider range of application, "Les os sont pour les absents," bore upon the case of late comers at a meal, for it was customary at Rome not to wait for invited guests if the hour fixed for the entertainment had expired, to treat want of punctuality as an offence, and to assign the leavings to the laggards. "To raise waves in a ladle"⁴ is the Latin original of two excellent English proverbs, "To raise a tempest in a teapot," and "Much ado about nothing." In "You sing the same song"⁵ or "Ever the old song" it is not difficult to recognize the familiar saying, "To harp on the same string." Keen sarcasm lurked in the adage, "To strip the naked of their clothes,"⁶ in the sense of getting something out of one who has nothing, like the English "To draw blood from a stone," the more pithy "skin-flint," and the very expressive, but not over elegant Hibernian "To skin a louse, and send the hide and fat to market." Humor and truthfulness mark this proverb: "He that cannot hit the donkey strikes the housing,"⁷ used where persons, unable to find the real offender, visit his friends or acquaintance with their hatred.

¹ Olla male fervet.

² Tarde venientibus ossa.

³ Cantilenam eandem canis.

⁷ Qui asinum non potest, stratum caedit.

² Ab ovo usque ad mala.

⁴ Excitare fluctus in simpulo.

⁶ Vestimenta detrahere nudo.

A curious instance of an absolute change in the application of a proverbial phrase is found in the Latin "To be pointed out with the finger,"¹ which used to denote "to become distinguished" in a good sense, the person referred to being pointed out with the finger. Translated into French, and of current use, the same phrase² signifies to obtain unenvious notoriety, to be held up or pointed at in disgrace.

Passing from the ancient Romans to the modern occupants of Italy, who possess a vast treasury of proverbs, not a few of which reflect the degeneracy which for centuries has stamped its impress on the people. We may in a general way characterize them as marked by shrewdness, selfishness, suspicion, and cowardice, although the nobler impulses of our nature, tender feelings and the milk of human kindness, couched in beautiful, poetical language, are exhaled by quite a number. As a specimen of the former may be instanced the peculiar qualities essential for the successful journey through life, as enumerated in this proverb: "To travel safely through the world a man must have a falcon's eye, an ass's ears, an ape's face, a merchant's words, a camel's back, a hog's mouth, and a hart's legs." The thoughtful reader may picture a state of society in which such a compound of villainous accomplishments is esteemed the necessary outfit for a prosperous career.

"A deed done has an end"³ is one of the mischievous sort which became the signal of the fatal enmities of the Guelphs and Ghibellins. Some further interesting details may be found in D'Israeli's *Curiosities of Literature*.

"An old man has the almanac in his body" is the Italian way to describe the ailings of old age; and of an incoherent speaker the same idiom says that "He gives one knock on the hoop, another on the barrel."

Here are some of their shrewd saws: "Time is a file that wears and makes no noise." "There is never enough where nought leaves." "The eyes are the deaf man's ears." Archbishop Trench gives some of their very worst: "Re-

¹ *Digito monstrari.*² *Se faire montrer au doigt.*³ *Cosa fatta capo ha.*

venge is a morsel for God";¹ and "Revenge of a hundred years has still its sucking teeth."² He also comments on this to show that the papacy and Holy Scripture are not on the best of terms: "With the gospel one becomes a heretic;"³ which may be compared with this: "Near the church, far from God."⁴ On the other hand these which follow are surely worthy of all acceptation: "Good preachers give fruits, not flowers." "He distrusts his own faith who often swears." "Humility often gains more than pride." "The pen of the tongue should be dipped in the ink of the heart." "There is honor where there is no shame." "Truth may languish, but can never perish." "Who thinks often of death does things worthy of life."

The sad experience of the people lives in the strong language of these three: "Who knows not how to dissemble knows not how to reign." "When war begins, hell opens." "Who serves at court dies on straw." It is instructive to add that the same nation which declares that "Peace would be general if there were neither mine nor thine"⁵ glorifies true friendship in the beautiful saying, "Friends tie their purses with a spider's thread."⁶ To the force of extraneous pressure we must probably ascribe, "The countenance open, the thoughts close";⁷ "A kiss of the mouth often touches not the heart."⁸ And with this amusing one, warning against the dangers of gossip, we take leave of Italy: "Women and heirs are lost by too much gadding."⁹

The proverbs of Spain are famed for pith, humor, and stateliness, and quite a number marred by very low views of woman. Quantitatively they seem to take the lead, for they are computed to range between twenty and thirty thousand. The high estimate in which they are held by the people is expressed by Cervantes through the mouth of his celebrated

¹ Vendetta, boccone di Dio. ² Vendetta di cent' anni ha ancor d i lattaiuoli.

³ Con l'evangelo si diventa eretico; or, 'Col Vangelo si può diventare eretici.

⁴ Vicino alla chiesa, lontan da Dio.

⁵ Gran pace savrebbe in terra, se non vi fosse il mio, e il tuo.

⁶ Gli amici legano la borsa con un filo di ragnatelo.

⁷ Il viso sciolto, gli pensieri stretti. ⁸ Bacio di bocca, spesso cuor non tocca.

⁹ Femmine e galline per troppo andar si perdono.

knight, where he tells the squire, "Sancho, I think there is no proverb which is not true, because they are all sentences drawn from experience itself, the mother of all sciences."

The being all things to all men, not in the apostolic sense, but from want of principle, which often makes one's heart sick, is tersely put in Spanish guise: "A friend to everybody is a friend to nobody"; and admirable humor marks this piece of advice tendered to many in search of callings for which they lack the necessary ability: "Be not a baker if your head be of butter."¹ The annoyance given by hobby-riders is well expressed in the quaint petition, "God deliver me from the man of one book,"² and those who are apt to carry jokes too far receive this caution: "Leave a jest when it pleases you best";³ and will do well to ponder Bacon's remark: "He that hath a satirical vein, as he maketh others afraid of his wit, so he had need be afraid of others' memory." The disposition sometimes witnessed in dishonest men to make a show of charity is quaintly put in "Steal a pig, and give the trotters for God's sake,"⁴ and the ill reward which services rendered to the people often meet is echoed in "He who gives to the public gives to no one."⁵ The dishonest practices of trade are denounced in "After having cried up their wine, they sell us vinegar."⁶ In a world where real worth is often unrecognized, and the mere accidents of birth, rank, or wealth as frequently over-estimated, it is pleasant to hear the maxim, "Seek not for a good man's pedigree."⁷ The consistency of a good life is praised in "He preaches well who lives well."⁸ A long chapter of Spanish history may be read in the following: "He who would thrive must follow the church, the sea, or the king's service";⁹ and this,

¹ No seais hornera si teneis la cabeza de manteca.

² Dios me libre de hombre de un libro.

³ A la burla, dejarla quando mas agrada.

⁴ Hurtar el puerco, y dar los pies por Dios.

⁵ Quien hace por comun, hace por ningun.

⁶ Habiendoregonado vino vender vinagre; or, Pregonar vino, y vender vinagre.

⁷ Al hombre bueno no le busques abolengo.

⁸ Bien predica quien bien vive.

⁹ Quien quiere medrar, iglesia, o mar, o casa real.

which is employed to describe a man's useless efforts and unprofitable toil, "To work for the bishop,"¹ is by no means complimentary to the Spanish bench. The feelings of the diner-out find humorous utterance in "It is a great pleasure to eat, and to have nothing to pay";² and many a man has learned to his cost the disregard of the advice which bids us "Sign no paper without reading it, and drink no water without looking into it."³

We have already referred to many ungracious sayings of the Spanish concerning woman. Specimens of the *better* sort are these: "Advise no man to go to the wars or to marry." "He that marries a widow will often have a dead man's head thrown in his dish." "Beware of a bad woman, and do not trust a good one." "He who marries does well, but he who marries not does better."

Before leaving the Peninsula we draw from the Portuguese treasury of proverbs the following specimens. "A good table, a bad will"⁴ is applied to improvident extravagance, followed by the sufferings of the innocent, and "Michael, Michael, you keep nobles, and sell honey"⁵ to extravagance that cannot be honestly accounted for. Grumblers and employers that are hard to please are, not in over-civil language, addressed in "Better have a bad ass than be your own ass."⁶ That the popular mind of Portugal entertains no very exalted opinion of the medical profession is clear from this couple: "The blunders of physicians are covered by the earth,"⁷ and "Bleed him, purge him, or, if he die, bury him."⁸

French proverbs and proverbial phrases are very numerous, and in many instances exhibit a striking resemblance in spirit and diction to English ones, mostly, however, with the national character very distinctly impressed, e.g. the English "The receiver is as bad as the thief" runs in the French

¹ Trabajar para el obispo.

² Gran placer, no escotar y comer.

³ Ni firmes carta que no leas, ni beb as aqua que no veas.

⁴ Boa meza, máo testamento.

⁵ Miguel, Miguel, não tens abelhas, e vendes mel ?

⁶ Mais val ruim asno, que ser asno. ⁷ Os erros dos medicos a terra os cobre.

⁸ Sangrai-o, purgai-o, e se morrer, enterrai-o.

idiom, "He that holds the sack is as guilty as he who fills it;"¹ and the homely phrase, "One shoulder of mutton draws down another," appears in the French, "Eating gives appetite."²

Although the French are proverbially polite and uncommonly skilful in the confectionery of words, many of their speeches do not give us a very exalted idea of the position they assign to the fair sex. Here are some that are sugar-coated: "Take a woman's first advice, not the second,"³ which may be construed as a tribute to their intuitive sagacity, while this which follows may be taken as a compliment to their discretion: "A good woman has neither ears nor eyes."⁴ The fondness of our French sisters for dress and their skill in husbanding niggard nature is somewhat bitterly expressed in "She looks beautiful by candle-light, but the day spoils it all,"⁵ and the expedient of Parisian and other hotel keepers to make their customers liberal in their potations and generous in their expenditure is with a touch of melancholic expression alluded to in "A handsome hostess is bad for the purse,"⁶ of which we have the more homely English form, "The fairer the hostess the fouler the reckoning." But as decidedly bad and yet illustrative of the social status of women in France we pronounce this: "The hen must not cackle before the cock crows."⁷ It seems rather disagreeably to emphasize the muscular superiority of the sterner sex; still that is tenderness compared with the cynical "A man of straw is worth a woman of gold."⁸

It is doubtful whether France or Scotland be the original home of "Fools make feasts, and wise men eat them."⁹

¹ Autant pêché celui qui tient le sac, que celui qui met dedans.

² L'appetit vient en mangeant.

³ Prends le premier conseil d'une femme, et non le second. This proverb, almost verbatim, I have found in an old collection of Chinese proverbs.

⁴ La femme de bien n'a ni yeux ni oreilles.

⁵ Elle est belle à la chandelle, mais le jour gâte tout.

⁶ Belle hôtesse est un mal pour la bourse.

⁷ La poule ne doit pas chanter avant le coq.

⁸ Un homme de paille vaut une femme d'or.

⁹ Les fous font la fête, et les sages la mangent.

Kelly, who gives it in his collection, adds that this proverb was once injudiciously repeated to a hospitable Scotchman on the occasion of an entertainment, who resented the impertinence with the stinging reply, "True; but wise men make proverbs, and fools repeat them."

There are a large number of proverbial phrases and similes the use and application of which appear to be well understood, although their origin is very perplexing. The three which follow belong to that class. "To return to one's wethers," or "sheep,"¹ applied to the resumption of an interrupted theme, is a phrase not traceable, so far as I have been able to discover, to a source prior to the farce of Pierre Patelin, where a merchant, in a suit brought against a shepherd for sheep-stealing, repeatedly wandered from the subject by referring to some cloth of which a lawyer had robbed him. His discursiveness was very annoying to the judge, who at every new departure impatiently exclaimed, "Return to your sheep!"

The phrase, "He is as malicious as a *red* ass,"² at the first hearing an incredible and seemingly inexplicable statement of natural history, reveals its meaning and solves the mystery when we learn that in old French *rouge* "red" signifies "malicious."

This peculiar use of the word "red" reminds me of a similar employment of the word "black" by an ignorant class-leader, who in the excitement of an extempore prayer offered the petition, "O Lord, convert the biggest black here present."

"To lie like a tooth-puller,"³ used of prodigious storytellers, will doubtless be repudiated by modern dentists, and especially by our matchless American dentists, as a vile slander of their calling, yet it originated in the habit of their French predecessors of assuring their patients that the extraction of a tooth (at a time when the inhalation of gas was unknown) was a painless operation. The old race is

¹ Revenir à ses moutons.

² Il est méchant comme un âne rouge.

³ Mentir comme un arracheur de dents.

probably somewhat maligned in the simile, if all they meant to convey was that it was painless to them; but the apology, though ingenious and charitable, can hardly acquit them of a *suppressio veri* or a *suggestio falsi*.

An essentially maritime proverb is, "To embark without biscuit,"¹ used of improvident people that rush into ventures without attending to the most essential conditions necessary to their success.

"Empty barrels make most noise"² denotes that ignorant people talk most and loudest, which reads in Spanish, "To talk without thought is to fire without an aim."

A very beautiful and truly Christian sentiment is hidden in this apparently homely garb: "The light that goes before is better than that which follows after";³ the good works done during a man's life-time light his path to heaven more effectually than the legacies he may leave in his will. Nor is this one inferior in truthfulness: "Misfortune is good for something";⁴ signifying that it is a good man's part to turn his troubles to profitable account. Far different in ethical value, though illustrative of the selfishness of the race, is this: "We all have strength enough to bear the woes of others."⁵

The French call a man who breaks his word a Norman, and say proverbially, "A Norman's word is not binding."⁶ This reproach owes its origin to an old usage of Normandy that contracts, though signed, are not valid until twenty-four hours after their signature, during which time it is lawful for either party to retract. In connection with this proverb I have seen the following anecdote: A man offered his prayer, and said, "O Lord, thou hast promised to help us in our troubles; thou wilt keep thy promise, for thou art not a Norman."

¹ S'embarquer sans biscuit.

² Les tonneaux vides sont ceux qui font le plus de bruit.

³ La chandelle qui va devant, vaut mieux que celle qui va derrière.

⁴ A quelque chose malheur est bon.

⁵ Nous avons tous assez de force pour supporter les malheurs d'autrui.

⁶ Un Norman a son dit et son dédit.

Much shrewdness marks these, with which we bid adieu to French proverbs: "After-wit is everybody's wit."¹ "A golden key opens all kinds of locks."² "Drop by drop fills the cellar."³ "When everybody minds well his own business the cows are well taken care of."⁴ "To-day a king, to-morrow nothing."⁵ "The longest day must have an end."⁶ "A stingy man is always poor."⁷

The store of proverbs and proverbial phrases in German is inexhaustible. Let the reader judge from the changes rung on the word "apple." "The apple does not fall far from the stem,"⁸ denoting that like produces like, that children partake of the nature of their parents. "Red apples also do rot,"⁹ i.e. appearances deceive, things are not what they seem. "One bad apple spoils a hundred,"¹⁰ to mark the influence of a bad example. "Apples with wrinkles do not rot soon,"¹¹ to indicate that weakness or delicacy are often preventives of decay. "Sweet apples are apt to be overlooked by the keeper,"¹² to denote the selfishness or dishonesty that reserves the best for its own use. "To eat a sour apple with a smile"¹³ is the German for the French "To put a good face on foul play,"¹⁴ and the English "To swallow a bitter pill." "To look like an apple"¹⁵ describes a healthy appearance, and "To sit behind the stove, and roast apples"¹⁶ is certainly a graphic picture of an idle, unprofitable life. The first two letters furnish two capital proverbs: "He that says A should also say B,"¹⁷ importing that as we begin so should we continue a matter, not recede from it if it

¹ Tout le monde est sage après coup.

² La clef d'or ouvre toutes sortes de serrures.

³ Goutte à goutte on remplit la cave.

⁴ Quand chacun se mêle de son métier, les vaches sont bien gardées.

⁵ Aujourd'hui roi, demain rien.

⁶ Il n'est si grand jour, qui ne vienne à vèpre. ⁷ Homme chiche, jamais riche.

⁸ Der Apfel fällt nicht weit vom Stamme. ⁹ Rothe Aepfel sind auch faul.

¹⁰ Ein fauler Apfel steckt hundert an.

¹¹ Ein Apfel der runzelt, fault nicht bald.

¹² Es sind süsse Aepfel die der Hüter übersieht.

¹³ Zum sauern Apfel ein süsses Gesichtchen machen.

¹⁴ Faire bonne mine au mauvais jeu.

¹⁵ Wie ein Apfel aussehen.

¹⁶ Hinterm Ofen sitzen und Aepfel braten. ¹⁷ Wer A sagt, muss auch B sagen.

involve unforeseen difficulties; and "He knows neither the A nor the B of a thing,"¹ i.e. he has not the least knowledge of it. "To have a board before one's mouth"² is said of persons who remain silent when they ought to speak, and "To fall with the door into the house"³ significantly describes want of tact, and clumsiness, especially in communications that require caution and judgment. "Large and empty, like the Heidleberg tun,"⁴ is a strictly local proverb which refers to the monster tun shown in the castle of that city, made in 1751, with a capacity of 4,900 gallons, and is by no means complimentary to the massive dunces to whom it is applied. "Dr. Luther's shoes do not fit every village parson"⁵ is sarcastically said of those preachers who parade very poor thought in strong language, or attempt flights beyond their reach. "Where nothing is found the emperor has lost his right"⁶ is used to show the uselessness of pressing claims against those who lack all means to honor them. "Who courts the company of the good grows good himself"⁷ asserts in positive form a scriptural maxim,⁸ and a Greek proverb quoted in Scripture,⁹ which cannot be too strongly urged upon the notice of all men, but chiefly on that of the young. "Do not spur a free horse"¹⁰ is a golden rule for masters, warning them against overtaking willing and useful workmen. "He that walks backward carries water into the devil's kitchen"¹¹ is a proverb originating in an old popular superstition that walking backward is unlucky, but founded after all on common sense, for one that walks backward cannot see what is in the way, and therefore is apt to come to grief. The saying affirms a still loftier truth when applied

¹ Er weiss weder A noch B davon zu sagen.

² Ein Brett vor dem Mund haben.

³ Mit der Thüre in's Haus fallen.

⁴ Gross und leer wie das Heidelberger Fass.

⁵ Doctor Luther's Schuhe sind nicht allen Dorfpredigern recht.

⁶ Wo Nichts ist, hat der Kaiser sein Recht verloren; cf. the Latin: "Ad impossibile nemo obligatur."

⁷ Wer mit guten Leuten umgeht, wird gut.

⁸ Proverbs xiii. 20.

⁹ Evil communications corrupt good manners.

¹⁰ Ein willig Pferd darf man nicht anspornen.

¹¹ Wer hinter sich geht, trägt dem Teufel Wasser in die Küche.

to the realm of ethics and culture. "The master's eye makes the horses sleek"¹ (found in Plutarch) denotes that a matter is apt to succeed if we look after it ourselves. "Every fool is pleased with his own cap"² is applied to persons who are unduly elated by their belongings or conceited with their merits. "One donkey calls another 'long-ears'" or "One donkey calls another 'sack-carrier'"³ illustrates the frequent foible of people detecting and denouncing in others the blemishes and shortcomings which to an equal, if not a greater, extent belong to themselves.

Of the wide range of German proverbial lore the following, sufficiently clear without further comment, will give a fair idea. "To postpone is not to annul."⁴ "A broken link spoils the chain."⁵ "Haste does seldom profit."⁶ "One crow does not pick another's eye."⁷ "Build a bridge to a flying foe."⁸ "A lean agreement is better than a fat lawsuit."⁹ "Straight forward is the nearest road."¹⁰ "The higher the tree the heavier the fall."¹¹ "Sweep first your own floor."¹² "No reply is a reply."¹³ "Praise not the fairest day before it is night."¹⁴ "Doing right is doing much."¹⁵ "Unthanks is the world's reward."¹⁶ "Do right, and fear naught."¹⁷ "Sell not the skin before you have caught the bear."¹⁸ "If a donkey is too well off he goes to dance on the ice."¹⁹ The last named proverb is a sarcastic description of those who, discontented with a reasonable prosperity, rush

¹ Des Herren Auge macht die Pferde fett. ² Jedem Narren gefällt seine Kappe.

³ Ein Esel heisst den andern Langohr, or Sackträger.

⁴ Aufgehoben ist nicht aufgeschoben.

⁵ Bricht ein Ring so reisst die ganze Kette.

⁶ Eile thut selten gut.

⁷ Eine Krähe kratzt der Andern die augen nicht aus.

⁸ Einem fliehenden Feinde muss man eine Brücke bauen.

⁹ Ein magerer Vergleich ist besser als ein fetter Process.

¹⁰ Geradezu ist der nächste Weg.

¹¹ Je grösser der Baum desto schwerer der Fall.

¹² Kehre erst vor deiner Thür.

¹³ Keine Antwort ist auch eine Antwort.

¹⁴ Man muss den schönsten Tag nicht vor dem Abend loben.

¹⁵ Recht gethan ist viel gethan.

¹⁶ Undank ist der Welt Lohn.

¹⁷ Thue recht, scheue Niemand.

¹⁸ Verkaufe das Fell nicht, ehe du den Bären hast.

¹⁹ Wenn es dem Esel zu wohl wird, geht er auf's Eis tansen.

into ventures of doubtful issue. "He that comes last makes all fast"¹ is applied to the selfishness which in unconcern leaves the ultimate settlement of a difficulty to those that come after, a very common occurrence in the management of municipal or corporate affairs. The rhymed proverb, "Two cats and one mouse, two women in one house, two dogs and one bone, are seldom at one,"² appears to be peculiar to Germany.

Before we take leave of German proverbs it may be interesting to note as to the curious way in which proverbs gain currency, that the composition of proverbial phrases, maxims, sentences, etc., on a vast variety of subjects, engaged for many years the attention of Göthe, and yet of the thousands found in his works only very few have become household words.

It is not necessary to say much of English proverbs, as we may suppose them to be familiar to most of the readers of this paper. They are very numerous, and in force, wit, and humor, as well as moral worth, will hold their own against those of any other nation. Quite a number of them we have already considered in the way of comparison and illustration, but those which follow may serve as samples as to range and spirit. And this seems the place to say that I have been guided in my choice of the proverbs given by the maxim to select only good ones, and the absence (except in the way of censure) of positively immoral, wicked, vulgar, coarse, and bad ones in this paper must not be construed as importing their non-existence; they are altogether too bountiful in all the collections that I have examined, but I did not think it right or expedient to circulate base coin.

Something has already been said concerning the great difficulty in tracing proverbs to their origin; the ground is almost unbroken, and in comparatively only few instances may it be done with any degree of certainty. Archbishop

¹ Der Letzte macht die Thüre zu.

² Zwei Katzen und eine Maus, zwei Weiber in einem Haus, zwei Hunde an einem Bein, kommen selten überein.

Trench, e.g. has no doubt that "Make hay while the sun shines" is truly English, on the ground that it could have been born only under such variable skies as those of England. He qualifies his statement afterwards, but he was possibly not aware that the German version of this proverb is couched in the identical words, and it becomes of course a question whether England or Germany be the land of its birth.¹ There is certainly the genuine English ring in "Out of sight, out of mind," but it is German for all that,² as it is found in Thomas à Kempis (A.D. 1380-1471), the older English form being, "Seldom seen, soon forgotten," and I doubt the English character of that. "Many a slip between the cup and the lip" sounds Saxon enough, but it is a Greek proverb; while "Love me, love my dog" is an importation from France, though of Latin origin. "The wish is father to the thought" may be traced back to Aeschylus (B.C. 500). "One swallow does not make a spring" is found in Aristotle (B.C. 350), and "Silence gives consent" in Euripides (B.C. 450). The popular expression, "There is but a step from the sublime to the ridiculous," was a favorite with Napoleon I., but occurs in Longinus (A.D. 250). The Shakespearian phrase, "Conscience does make cowards of us all," may be read in Menander (B.C. 342-291). The translation from Horace (Ep. i. 18),³ "A word once spoken flies, never to be recalled," was taken from the same Greek author. "Better late than never" was used by Dionysius Halicarn (B.C. 7). "Jack of all trades and master of none" is found in Plato. The phrase, "Few men are heroes to their valets," though credited to Madame de Cornuel and Madame de Sévigné, is found in Montaigne, who might have seen it either in Plutarch or Plato. Göthe's view of the proverb is decidedly different from the common acceptation. He accounts for the fact by saying that it requires a hero to judge a hero, while valets as a rule have only the aptitude to judge

¹ Heu machen während die Sonne scheint. — *German*.

² Aus den Augen, aus dem Sinn.

³ Et semel emissum volat irrevocabile verbum.

valets. "Hope is but the dream of those that wake" is ascribed by two Greek authors respectively to Aristotle and Plato. The proverbial quotation from Pope that "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread," is probably framed on the Shakespearian model that "Wrens make prey where eagles dare not perch." "God helps them that help themselves," a favorite proverb of Franklin, is found in La Fontaine, and may be traced up to Sophocles. "Where ignorance is bliss 'twere folly to be wise," made current by Gray, seems but a later version of Prior's couplet,

"From ignorance our comfort flows,
The only wretched are the wise."

The proverb, "Hell is paved with good intentions," is ascribed by Francis de Sales to St. Bernard.

Most of those which follow have currency as English proverbs, but whether they are English-born must remain matter of inquiry. "All's well that ends well." "Almost and very nigh saves many a lie." "Church work goes on slowly." "Everybody's business is nobody's business." "Faint heart never won a fair lady" (Latin?). "Feather by feather the goose is plucked." "God sends meat, and the devil sends cooks." "Haste makes waste, and waste makes want, and want makes strife between the good man and his wife." "Lawyers don't love beggars." "Many a true word is spoken in jest." "No smoke without some fire." "No fool like an old fool." "Oil and truth will get uppermost at last." "One half of the world knows not how the other half lives." Of the last we know that it was used as a French proverb by Rabelais (A.D. 1495-1550). The genuine English origin of this, at least, is beyond doubt: "Shake a bridle over a Yorkshire man's grave, and he'll rise, and steal a horse." "The atheist has got one point beyond the devil." "For ill do well, then fear no hell." "If every one would mend *one*, all would be mended" (an adaptation from the French¹). "Speak the truth, and shame the devil." "The best physicians are Dr. Diet, Dr. Quiet, and Dr. Mer-

¹ See above p. 608, note 4.

ryman" (a translation from the Latin¹). "Change of weather is the discourse of fools," quoted in an old collection on husbandry and weather, is a proverb the wisdom and truth of which do not seem to commend themselves to mankind in general, for many people would deem it a great hardship to have that theme of conversation tabooed.

Considering the close political relations between England and Scotland, the proverbs of the latter country might, indeed, be included among those of the former but for certain peculiarities which stamp them with an impress of their own. They are very numerous, and in most instances pointed, humorous, and canny. "A good tale is na the waur to be twice told," as all may learn by reading some of the inimitable stories in Dean Ramsay's charming book. "A gude word is as soon said as an ill one." "A mon is weel o wae as he thinks himself sae." "Better *keep* the de'el out than turn him out." "Gie ne'er the wolf the wether to keep." "Gie a dog an ill name, and he'll soon be hanged." "Great barkers are nae biters." "He that cheats me anes, shame fa' him; if he cheats me twice, shame fa' me." "He's worth nae weel that can bide nae woe." "Honesty's nae pride." "A pin a day is a groat a year." "Better spared than ill spent." "He that canna mak sport should mar nane." "Keep something for a sair fit." "Play's gude while it is play." "Many blame the wife for their ain thriftless life." "If marriages are made in heaven some have few friends there." And in conclusion this truly characteristic one: "God send me some money, for they are little thought of that want it," quoth the Earl of Engleton at prayers."

In this connection a few Gaelic proverbs may not be out of place as singularly descriptive of the people and the land of their birth. "A man may live upon little, but he cannot live upon nothing at all." "A salmon from the pool, a wand from the wood, and a deer from the hills are thefts which no man can be ashamed to own." "One dog is better by an-

¹ "Si tibi deficient medici tibi fiant

Haec tria; mens laeta, requies, moderata dieta."

other dog being hanged." "The oldest man that ever lived died at last." "You cannot tell a piebald horse until you see him." "Truth has always a fast bottom." "Keep a thing seven years, and you will find a use for it."

Retracing our steps to the East through northern climes, we pick up in Flanders this one of an obstinate man: "You might sooner rob Hercules of his club than convince him";¹ and these in Holland: "Don't cry 'herring' till they are in the net";² "Time is God's and ours";³ "Fools ask what o'clock it is, but wise men know their time."⁴ This one shows that Holland is not a good field for Latin missionary efforts: "The farther from Rome, the nearer to God";⁵ while in "Fortune lost, nothing lost; courage lost, much lost; honor lost, more lost; soul lost, all lost,"⁶ there is a healthy tone of true Christian manliness.

From Denmark we give these samples: "A child's sorrow is short-lived"; "Make thyself an ass, and every man's sack will be on thy shoulders" intimates the imprudence of undue servility; "Give alms that thy children may not ask them" exalts the blessedness of charity, while "So give to-day that thou shalt be able to give to-morrow" enforces the necessity of its judicious exercise.

Russia gives us the following: "Better sit with a wise man in prison than with a fool in paradise."⁷ "Measure thy cloth ten times: thou canst cut it but once" enforces the admirable lesson drawn from daily life that haste is full of dangers, and reminds us of the Latin to "Hasten with leisure."⁸ And this, "The burden is light on another's shoulders," may be compared with a remark made before in connection with the proverb about dentists, as well as the

¹ Men zou eerder den Kolf uyt de handen van Hercules rukken, als hem te overtuigen.

² Roept geen haring eer hij in't net is.

³ De tijd is aan Goden nous.

⁴ De gekken vragen naar de klok, maar de wijzen weten hunnen tijd.

⁵ Hoe verder van Rom hoe nader bij God.

⁶ Goed verloren, niet verloren; moed verloren, veel verloren; eer verloren, meer verloren; ziel verloren, al verloren.

⁷ See above p. 609, notes 7, 8, 9.

⁸ Festina lente.

German phrase, "It is all very well for *you* to say so,"¹ the reply of one who has just listened to an unsatisfactory piece of consolation, and importing that it is easier to console and condole than to remove our neighbor's troubles, that there is a certain amount of hardship we must always endure ourselves. The following is a very beautiful Russian poetical proverb on death, "Two hands upon the breast, and labor is past," introduced and nationalized by Miss Mulock :

"Two hands upon the breast,
And labor's done;
Two pale feet crossed in rest,
The race is won."

Little acquainted as we still are with the enormous volume of Asiatic literature in general, and folk-lore, comprehending proverbs, in particular, there is little doubt that the true home and source of many proverbs must be sought in the Orient. There are some good collections of Eastern proverbs, from which, as well as from miscellaneous quarters, I have culled the following samples. Beginning here with the far East, Japan furnishes, "A fog cannot be dispelled with a fan," to denote that a great enterprise cannot be accomplished without commensurate means, and its imagery is vivid from the fogs which prevail in Japan, and the universal custom of the people to carry fans. To the same country or to China belongs "There are no fans in hell." The elder D'Israeli, who characterizes many notions of the Chinese as decidedly "architectural," extends that remark to this proverb: "A grave and majestic outside is, as it were, the palace of the soul." The same might be said of "Towers are measured by their shadows, and great men by their slanderers." "He conducts an argument with three ears" appears to be genuine Chinese, and is applied to the maintaining of paradoxes, said to have originated with the philosopher Sung Tung (B.C. 114), who taught that man had three ears, two without and one within. "Happy the man who knows his good fortune" is illustrated by the Eastern comment that a

¹ Du hast gut sprechen.

man who rode a mule, and saw a horseman ahead, and exclaimed, "How much better is that man's state than mine," but turning back beheld a number of pedestrians with heavy burdens to carry, and grew content. The naive and rural poetry of "In a field of melons tie not thy shoe, under a plum tree adjust not thy cap" enjoins not only the proprieties, but furnishes good reasons. "Better a diamond with a flaw than a pebble without one" is chosen by Trench as the text of a little homily on the character of David.

As oriental without a specifically established nationality may be named "The wise man knows the fool, but the fool does not know the wise man." "He who feels it is miserable once, but twice he who fears it before it come" is the Asiatic form for saying that "borrowing evil" is as unwise as it is unmanly. "The bread which the wicked secretes [having stolen it] turns to dust in his mouth." It is said that Bonaparte employed this proverb in a conversation he had with the muphti in the sepulchral chamber of the pyramid of Cheops. "Stretch not thy hand so far that thou canst not draw it back without danger."

The glow of tropical imagery marks this from Ceylon: "The man that has received a beating from a firebrand runs away at sight of a firefly"; which is clearly on a par with the Rabbinical saying, "He that hath been bitten by a serpent is afraid of a rope," and may be compared with Göthe's maxim, "A burnt child dreads the fire; an old man that has often been singed dreads to warm himself." The Bengalese proverb, "He who gives blows is a master, he who gives none is a dog," strikingly portrays the degraded condition of a people smarting under the oppression of Mogul despotism.

To describe the ultimate recognition of a man's merits, for a time concealed, the Persian proverb prettily says, "A stone that is fit for the wall is not left in the way." The stern reality of life is expressed in "Of four things every man has more than he knows: of sins, of debts, of years, and of foes." Bitter sarcasm lurks in "The palace of health is the palace of death," for hospitals, called in Persia "palaces of health,"

are quite numerous, but the mollahs that serve them are so greedy and selfish that they refuse to the patients the smallest comforts or necessaries, and so bring about the terrible charge of the proverb. The statement of a writer in the *Contemporary Review* (February, 1879) shows that there are hospitals in London served by such English mollahs. "Alms are the salt of wealth ; without them it perisheth " is a proverb that rises to the dignity of a Christian precept (see Luke xii. 24, etc.), and a melancholy truth is uttered in "The more wealth you leave to your heirs the less they will regret you."

The Turkish collections enumerate these, of which some, at least, seem to be of Arab birth. "Riches in the Indies, wit in Europe, pomp among the Ottomans." "Death is a black camel that kneels at every man's gate." "Curses, like chickens, come home to roost." "It is not by saying, 'honey, honey,' that sweetness enters the mouth." "What God has written on thy heart is sure to come to pass" is unmistakably Turkish fatalism, while "Friendship is measured by the ton, trade by the grain" redounds to the honor of the popular heart.

The number of Arabic proverbs is very great. Many are cynical and sarcastic, but quite a number resemble in diction and thought the Solomonic proverbs. Of the first class these which follow may serve as samples. "Let not your tongue cut your throat" is a decidedly expressive homily on the dangers of licentious speech. "The barber learns to shave on the orphan's face," or as it runs in another version, "In the head of an orphan the surgeon obtaineth knowledge for himself," is a proverb which circulates in many languages, and teaches the truth that the experience necessary to proficiency in a trade is often acquired at their expense who allow themselves to be experimented upon ; or, if the second reading be adopted, that proficiency is obtained not without injury to the helpless and unprotected. The bitter sneer on woman for which the sayings of polygamous races are notorious lurks in these two : "If all men should become wise the world would

soon be depopulated," i.e. there would be no marriages ; and " Marriage is like a besieged fortress : those without want to get in, and those within want to get out." An Arab's mode of saying that " Like begets like " is " A camel kneeleth down in the place of a camel." The cynicism of the children of the desert in " The world is a carcase, and they who seek it are dogs," loses none of its force when the habits and estimate of oriental dogs are taken into account. The thoughts of a nomadic race and the seclusion of a tent life seem perceptible in " The best companion to pass away time is a book." " Sound the depth of a water ere thou plunge into it." " A ruler without justice is a river without water." " He that cannot tell good from evil must be joined with beasts." The mind of the slave-trader is heard in " Whatsoever is in the hands of a servant belongeth to his master," and the tradition of Islam in " Mahomet did not go to Shiras lest the women of the country should shut against him the gate of paradise," the meaning being that their beauty would compel him to relax the disabilities of the Koran.

Of the loftier sort, resembling the matchless collection of biblical proverbs, are, " The beginning of wisdom is the fear of God " ; " He that honoreth his father prolongeth his days " ; " Robbery taketh away much wealth " ; " Be content with what God giveth, and thou shalt be rich ; " and " Do good if you desire others to do good to you."

But of all the proverbs of the Orient none can compare in number and ethical worth with the comparatively unopened mine of the proverbial lore of the Hebrews. The reference here is not to the proverbs embodied in the Bible, but to those in the apocryphal books of the Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus, the Pirge Abthoth, the Mishna, and the Talmud. It would lead us too far to attempt the production of specimens beyond two or three, but if we could get all the proverbs contained in those works collected and arranged in a *Corpus Proverbiorum*, it would probably excel all existing collections, and doubtless unlock the secret of the origin of a vast number of proverbs which for centuries have circulated

among the nations of Asia, Europe, and Africa. The four proverbs which follow are taken at random, but may serve our present purpose: "A nod for the wise, a rod for the fool"; "A camel in Media dances in a little cab," a proverbial falsehood to intimate the prodigious character of a preposterous one; "Do not dwell in a city whose governor is a physician"; and "In my own city my name, in a strange city my clothes, procure me respect."

In this place I can only make a passing remark on the Book of Proverbs in the Bible, but that remark will not be impaired by its brevity when I unhesitatingly affirm that it is in every respect superior to all existing collections, so superior in fact as to lie almost infinitely beyond the reach of all comparison. It is undoubtedly the best, the purest, the wisest, and most useful treasury of proverbial literature, and on that account the best directory "of every one's active life and social demeanor."

Quite a number of proverbs, and some of profane origin, are found in other portions of the Bible. Three among the oldest are the following: "Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord" (Gen. x. 9); "Skin for skin; yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life" (Job ii. 4); "Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked" (1 Sam. xxiv. 13); and these three are cited by our Lord: "Physician, heal thyself" (Luke iv. 23); "Wheresoever the carcass is there will the eagles be gathered together" (Matt. xxiv. 28); and "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks" (Acts xxvi. 4). The last, though current in Palestine, may be found in Aeschylus, Euripides, and Pindar.

I cannot conclude this article without a brief reference to good American proverbs. Convinced that there must be a great number of such, I am sorry that I have not been able to find many. Though much has been done by Bartlett and Schele de Vere with respect to Americanisms, a collection of good American proverbs remains a desideratum,—I say, proverbs good qualitatively as to moral worth, of genuine American growth. "Ambition is as hollow as the soul of an

echo" I understand is such a one. "You paid too dear for your whistle," though good in another sense, is genuine American; it alludes to the story told by Benjamin Franklin of his nephew, who set his mind on the possession of a common whistle, which he bought of a boy at four times its value. As to its application we have Franklin's own account: "The ambitious who dance attendance on court, the miser who gives this world and the next for gold, the libertine who ruins his health for pleasure, the girl who marries a brute for money, all pay too much for their whistle." As genuine American are also named: "Big feet, like a leather shirt, are more for use than for ornament"; Abraham Lincoln's caution, "Do not swap horses when crossing a stream"; on Captain Love's authority, "Yankees and weasels ain't often caught napping," and on that of Mr. Slick, "Nicknames stick to people, and the most ridiculous are the most adhesive" are probably entitled to the same nationality. The following similes are also vouched for as genuine: "As quick as greased lightning"; "As crooked as a Virginia fence"; "As tight as the bark of a tree"; "As proud as a tame turkey"; "As useless as whistling psalms to a dead horse." All these, and two of the proverbs, I have found in Bartlett; but there must be a great many more. And now, gentle reader, if the perusal of this paper have, as I fain hope, afforded thee instruction and entertainment, and thou remember some real good American proverbs, pray oblige by sending them to the writer.