

one class another; and on our worship of money—God has made us burn our money before Him five million a day, as the idol furniture was burned before the Apostle at Ephesus; on the mad partizanship of our politics; on the empty cradle and its hideous explanation; on the unsocial nature of our society and its bitterness of spirit—one remembers Pope's line, 'And each but hates his neighbour as himself.' The war has shown us our profound need of a Christian Reformation.

But simultaneously it has demonstrated the enormous spiritual resources which exist among us to accomplish such a reformation: the same heroism, the same sacrifice, which for the war have flashed out like a sword suddenly drawn in sunlight—could they not have been evoked sooner to win our country from domestic shame? *We are able*; but we have been unready, egotistic, faithless, slothful, afraid. And Heaven will not bear it, because Heaven has loved us; we must arise and follow Christ.

And there is the question of the meaning of the visitation for the Church. The present writer does not venture to say more of this than to indicate that that question also exists. Looking abroad upon our islands one might possibly be driven to ask what Church there is. One sees a system for

the provision of Christian ordinances to those who desire them. One sees a system which 'represents a phase of the national life'—a phase, that is, of the world. One sees something which is so closely identified with the natural society that, as Canon Scott-Holland has said, there is difficulty in assigning to it any independent responsibility. It has been defined as 'the nation in its spiritual aspect'—scarcely a satisfactory description of the *Civitas Dei*. No doubt the Church is more to many of its members, and in the knowledge of God is much more than any of these things. But we are speaking of Divine meanings as to our corporate life: what does the world know of the Church as a social witness, a corporate conscience? Where do we see that which Christ has *founded upon a rock*? Does the Church even make clear to the world which in its own judgment is the rock and which is sand?

The meaning of the visitation for us who are 'put in trust of the Gospel'? No doubt that question also lies in our way: and who is to answer it? One can feel sure of at least one thing, that it is vain for men to say to others, *Go to—repent*. Each must say, *I repent*. *We have gone astray like sheep that are lost: O God, seek Thy servants: for we do not forget Thy commandments*.

## Proverbs of Oriental Wisdom.

BY THE REV. GEORGE M. MACKIE, M.A., D.D., ALEXANDRIA, EGYPT.

IN Syria and Egypt there are numerous proverbial sayings current among the people. Various causes contribute to their popularity and influence. Their name in Arabic is *Amthâl*, 'similitudes,' and much of their arresting charm arises from this discovered resemblance between external nature and inward experience. They have the dignity of antiquity, a new proverb savouring of impertinence. The form is often of such brevity as to give to those who understand all that is implied a place among the enlightened. The proverb has not unfrequently a touch of hyperbole, which, however, does not affect it as a statement of truth, to the Oriental mind. Its literary grace and balance of sound give it an oracular value and appeal to a people who are stylists in everything. Finally, the rhymed construction in which it is often cast makes it easily

remembered and quoted. The subject-matter in most cases refers to the practical conduct of life, and the proverb rightly assumes that every man is deeply interested in himself and his own welfare, and will follow the path of wisdom when it is pointed out. It was to this love of the concrete and pictorial among Orientals that Christ appealed in His parables. It was the inadequacy, in the hour of temptation, of these ethical ideals, without the compelling power of a great motive, that led St. Paul to compare such wisdom with the gospel way according to which Divine power rests upon and transforms human weakness. Hence the challenge, 'Where is the wise? Where is the disputer of this world?' Inasmuch as the determining fact, the power to accept and carry out such precepts, was regarded as something resident in the hearer

and contributed by him, such Proverbial Wisdom had the same weakness that the Apostle detected in the Law (Ro 8<sup>3</sup>).

In the following selections, the proverbs are arranged not according to subject-matter, but according to the field of similitude from which they are taken.

### 1. THE HUMAN BODY.

The tongues of men are the pens of truth.

The tongue is the dragoman of the heart.

The peace of man is in the governing of the tongue.

Never be the head of anything, because the head has many pains.

A hair here and a hair there makes a beard (diligence, thrift).

You can't clap with one hand (friendly intercession).

The hand that does not put in will not take out.

He who clipt your neighbour's beard can do the same to yours (in commendation of union).

### 2. NATURE, ANIMAL LIFE.

Custom is the fifth element in the universe (earth, air, fire, water—and custom).

Everything obeys custom, even the worship of God.

If the camel should see his own hump, he would fall down and break his neck.

Accursed is he who drinks from a fountain, and then fills it up with stones.

The goat was lying dead, and the wolf was standing beside it (circumstantial evidence).

The she-ape always thinks her young one is a gazelle.

Buy the nose-bag before you buy the mare.

A rose can blossom among thorns.

Low-lying ground drinks its own rain and that of its neighbours (advantage of humility).

The silkworm and the needle clothe others and remain naked themselves (labour without personal profit).

Birds always alight among those of their own species (sparrows among sparrows, storks among storks; advantage or danger of companionship).

The mangy goat must always drink from the fountainhead (smallest right makes biggest claim).

Your gamecock crows from the shell (character).

If the father be onion and the mother garlic, how can the child have a sweet perfume? (heredity).

It is better to be the last among lions than the first among foxes.

He who has moonlight does not ask about starlight.

### 3. FAMILY, NEIGHBOURS, ETC.

Better a thousand enemies outside the house than one inside.

If you stay forty days with people, at the end of that time you will either leave them or become like them (environment).

He who knows you when you are young will never respect you when you are big.

My brother and I against my cousin, my cousin and I against the outsider.

Better a near neighbour than a far-away brother.

How many brothers I have met who were not sons of my father!

Hatred flourishes among relatives, and jealousy among neighbours.

A man is a neighbour to himself.

The house that receives no guests receives no angels. (The traveller is especially under God's protection; he who receives the traveller helps God, and God does not remain in debt to any one.)

A loaf here, and a loaf there, but never let your neighbour go hungry.

The evening guest gets no supper (that is, cooked, after the hour of the family supper, but he must receive bread).

If your neighbour be well, you are well.

Your neighbour is your neighbour even when he commits an unneighbourly act.

Three kinds of work never degrade a man: for his family, for his guest, and for his mare.

All blessings of the home come from the wife, and therefore she should be honoured.

Let man beware of making women weep, for God counts their tears.

### 4. SOCIAL CONDITIONS.

A stranger in a strange land is a blood relation to every other stranger.

Travel is a part of eternal punishment; no, eternal punishment is a part of travel.

When three men are on a journey, one of them must be chosen sheikh.

A man in a strange land is blind though both his eyes are open.

There are three evils in life : poverty, sickness, and death.

Never sit down in the place of a man who can say to you, ' Get up ! '

Better bad news in the morning than even good news at night. (The evening is for repose of mind and body.)

The rich man rises for his wealth, and the poor man for his breakfast.

Better bread and onion with peace than stuffed chicken with squabbling.

If the fox become king bow down before him.

The world is with the one who is standing. (In the case of a quarrel, it is well to sympathize with the one who has conquered.)

Two coins make more noise in a bag than a hundred (boasting).

#### 5. TRADES AND OCCUPATIONS.

*Potter.* The potter can put the ear of the jar where he likes (how the Oriental mind regards the problem of miracles).

*Buying and Selling.* Sell one article and the world will call you a merchant.

*Street-hawker.* The seller of olive-oil in the skin never proclaims that his oil is rancid. (One can't be expected to put truth above self-interest.)

*Farming.* The value of the standing-crop is not always that of the grain on the threshing-floor (rain failure, east wind, locusts ; expectations unfulfilled).

He who sows kindness reaps gratitude.

A man sowed the seed called ' Tomorrow,' but it didn't come up.

*Blacksmith.* Men are locked boxes, and the keys that open them are temptations.

Patience is the key to success.

*Cooking.* The bare bone makes most noise in the boiling-pot (pretensions, claims).

*Baker.* Give your batch of dough to the baker though he should eat half of it. (What you get will be good.)

*Begging.* Begging is an easy trade, but the standing at the door is tiresome (need of circumspection).

*Porter.* Truth is a heavy kind of material, and therefore few wish to carry it.

*Mason.* One tap from a master, though behind his back, is better than the hammering of a thousand amateurs. (A mason undertook to build a bridge over the river Adonis, and before removing the scaffolding demanded the payment agreed upon. The Emir refused and engaged other masons to remove it. These were afraid to meddle with it, and when the sum was paid, the builder stood with his back to the work and tapped a wedge with his hammer, and the scaffolding collapsed and left the bridge standing free with its one large arch.)

#### 6. EDUCATION AND KNOWLEDGE.

He who has taught me a letter has made me his slave.

Instruction in youth is like carving in stone ; instruction in age is like a wave on the sea.

He who is older than you by a day is wiser than you by a year.

#### 7. MEDICINE.

Consult the patient : not the physician.

The chief resource of medicine is branding.

The doctor who gives medicine for nothing does nothing with it.

The near-at-hand church works no miraculous cures.

#### 8. MORALS AND RELIGION.

Humility along with honour is more honourable than the honour itself.

How can a Bedawi sleep with honey over his head ? (Opportunity leads to crime.)

Better to fall into trouble than be always expecting it.

The son who doesn't get discipline from his father will get it from experience.

He who does not thank men will never thank God.

Better to escape from self than to escape from a lion.

It is difficult for a man to know himself.

Birth is the messenger of death. (Whatever begins must end.)

He whom men love is beloved of God.

Humanity is the family of God, and those whom God loves most are those who are most useful to His family.

The thief who does not get an opportunity of stealing considers himself an honest man.

Do not despise any man, or consider anything impossible: for every one has his time, and everything has its place.

You will avoid evil if you remember three things: where you came from, whither you are going, and before whom you will be judged.

The tyrant, the liar, the hypocrite, and the scandal-monger have no standing in the house of eternal joy.

Worship is not the raising of the voice in prayer, but the uplifting of the soul to heaven.

The worst trouble is always the present one.

Do what is right and throw it into the sea. (It will float, and righteousness will ultimately prevail.)

Teach your tongue to say, 'I don't know.'

Hospitality is a part of Divine service.

Don't go to an auction if you have nothing to spend (avoid temptation).

He who increases his flesh increases food for worms.

Be reverent to those above you; gracious to those beneath you, and faithful to all.

Silence is the wall that surrounds wisdom.

Consider not 'who spoke?' but what was spoken.

Whoso knows himself and knows his Lord, evil will not easily prevail against him.

The sin of laziness is like that of idolatry.

There is a vast difference between the man who is ashamed before himself, and the man who is only ashamed before others.

He who eats and drinks without thanking God deserves the punishment of a thief.

Whoever puts a stumbling-block in the path of another is far from the gates of Paradise.

The good deeds that you do in this life take on personality and follow you into the next.

## In the Study.

### Jael.

#### A STUDY IN EARLY ETHICS.

'Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent.'—Jg 5<sup>24</sup>.

In the study of the Old Testament it is of the highest importance to remember that the revelation of God was a gradual process. It is true that under the Jewish dispensation there was a lower standard of religious perfection altogether than under the Christian. This is proved by innumerable facts in the Old Testament history that even the greatest of those of whom we read, prophets, priests, or kings, were in many respects not enlightened beyond their time, so that even the least in the kingdom of Christ is greater than they. But, more than that, there was a different standard at different times, according to the growth of the knowledge of the true God and His righteousness. If, therefore, we are to understand the character of Jael and to form a right judgment upon her famous act, we must know something of the particular period of the history of Israel in which she lived.

What do we find to be the moral features of

Hebrew society in the period of the judges? Did any decisive changes take place in the community of Israel which would tend to develop the national and individual conscience, and make it a controlling force in speech and act as between Hebrew and Hebrew, and Hebrew and foreigner? Were the three prime qualities, rectitude, chastity, and magnanimity, largely exemplified? How did the occupations of the people and their general social environment affect them? It must be confessed that the virtues most likely to be encouraged were those of the heroic or semi-barbarous type. Courage, endurance, fidelity to clan, family, and companions in arms, must have been often and signally displayed. The long struggle with the native Canaanites, over wide areas or in isolated holdings, for the possession of fortresses, fertile valleys and plains, vineyards and olive groves, or with various swarms of foreign invaders, played a principal part in moulding the Hebrew temper into strength, elasticity, and hardness. It was this discipline that gave to Israel the resisting and recuperative power which was and is the marvel of the ancient and the modern world.

Not very much can be said of influences favour-