

**PROVERBIAL PHILOSOPHY:
BEING THOUGHTS AND
ARGUMENTS ORIGINALLY
TREATED**

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Proverbial Philosophy: Being Thoughts and Arguments Originally Treated by Martin Farquhar Tupper

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MARTIN FARQUHAR TUPPER

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BEING

THOUGHTS AND ARGUMENTS ORIGINAL-
LY TREATED.

BY

MARTIN FARQUHAR TUPPER, Esq., A. M.

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PREFATORY.

THOUGHTS, that have tarried in my mind, and peopled its inner chambers, the sober children of reason, or desultory train of fancy; clear running wine of conviction, with the scum and the lees of speculation; corn from the sheaves of science, with stubble from mine own garner; searchings after Truth, that have tracked her secret lodes, and come up again to the surface-world, with a knowledge grounded deeper; arguments of high scope, that have soared to the keystone of heaven, and thence have swooped to their certain mark, as the falcon to its quarry; the fruits I have gathered of prudence, the ripened harvest of my musings, these commend I unto thee, O docile scholar of Wisdom, these I give to thy gentle heart, thou lover of the right.

What, though a guilty man renew that hallowed theme, and strike with feeblér hand the harp of Sirach's son? What, though a youthful tongue take up that ancient parable, and utter faintly forth dark sayings, as of old? Sweet is the virgin honey, though the wild bee have stored it in a reed, and bright the jewelled band, that circlet an Ethiop's arm; pure are

the grains of gold in Ganges' turbid stream, and fair the living flowers, that spring from the dull cold sod. Wherefore, thou gentle student, bend thine ear to my speech, for I also am as thou; our hearts can commune together; to meanest matters will I stoop, for mean is the lot of mortal; I will rise to noblest themes, for the soul hath an heritage of glory; the passions of puny man; the majestic characters of God; the feverish shadows of time, and the mighty substance of eternity.

Commend thy mind unto candor, and grudge not as though thou hadst a teacher; nor scorn angelic Truth, for the sake of her evil herald: heed not him, but hear his words, and care not whence they come; the viewless winds might whisper them, the billows roar them forth, the mean unconscious sedge sigh them in the ear of evening, or the mind of pride conceive, and the mouth of folly speak them. Let us walk together as friends in the shaded paths of meditation; nor judgment set her seal until she hath poised her balance; that the chastenings of mild reproof may meet unwitting error; and Charity not be a stranger at the board that is spread for brothers.

PROVERBIAL PHILOSOPHY.

THE WORDS OF WISDOM.

Few and precious are the words which the lips of Wisdom utter: to what shall their rarity be likened? What price shall count their worth? Perfect, and much to be desired, and giving joy with riches, no lovely thing on earth can picture their fair beauty. They be chance pearls, flung among the rocks by the sullen waters of Oblivion, which Diligence loveth to gather, and hang around the neck of Memory: they be white-winged seeds of happiness, wafted from the islands of the blessed, which Thought carefully tendeth, in the kindly garden of the heart: they be drops of the golden dew, which the wings of angels scatter, when on some brighter sabbath, their plumes quiver most with delight: such, and so precious, are the words which the lips of Wisdom utter.

Yet more, for the half is not said, of their might and dignity and value; for life-giving be they, and glorious, redolent of sanctity and heaven. As the fumes of hallowed incense, that veil the throne of the Most High; as the beaded bubbles that sparkle on the rim of the cup of immortality; as wreaths of the rainbow spray, from the pure cataracts of Truth: such,

and so precious, are the words which the lips of Wisdom utter.

Yet once again, loving student, suffer the praises of thy teacher, for verily the sun of the mind, and the life of the heart is Wisdom. She is pure and full of light, crowning grey hairs with lusture, and kindling the eye of youth with a fire not its own; and her words whereunto canst thou liken them? for earth cannot show their peers: they be grains of the diamond sand, the radiant floor of heaven, rising in sunny dust behind the chariot of God; they be gleams of the day-spring from on high, shed from the windows of the skies; they be streams of living waters, fresh from the fountain of Intelligence: such, and so precious, are the words which the lips of Wisdom utter.

For these shall guide thee well, and guard thee on thy way; and wanting all beside, with these shalt thou be rich. Though all around be woe, these shall make thee happy; though all within be pain, these shall bring thee health: thy good shall grow into ripeness, thine evil wither and decay, and Wisdom's words shall sweetly charm thy doubtful into virtues. Meanness shall then be frugal care: where shame was, thou art modest; Cowardice riseth into caution, rashness is sobered into courage. Life shall have no byeway, but thy steps can track it, for thou hast a silken clue, to lead thee through the darkness. Wherefore, friend and scholar, hear the words of Wisdom; whether she speaketh to thy soul in the full chords of revelation; in the teaching earth, or air, or sea; in the still melodies of thought; or, haply, in the humbler strains that would detain thee here.

OF TRUTH IN THINGS FALSE.

ERROR is a hardy plant : it flourisheth in every soil ; in the heart of the wise and the good, alike with the wicked and foolish : for there is no error so crooked, but it hath in it some lines of truth, nor is any poison so deadly, that it serveth not some wholesome use ; and the just man, enamored of the right, is blinded by the speciousness of wrong, and the prudent, perceiving an advantage, is content to overlook the harm. On all things created remaineth the half-effaced signature of God, somewhat of fair and good, though blotted by the finger of corruption : and if error cometh in like a flood, it mixeth with streams of truth ; and the Adversary loveth to have it so, for thereby many are decoyed. Providence is dark in its permissions ; yet one day, when all is known, the universe of reason shall acknowledge how just and good were they ; for the wise man leaneth on his wisdom, and the righteous trusteth to his righteousness, and those who thirst for independence, are suffered to drink of disappointment. Wherefore ? — to prove and humble them ; and to teach the idolators of truth, that is but the ladder unto Him, on whom only they should trust.

There is truth in the wildest scheme that imaginative heat hath engendered ; and a man may gather somewhat from the crudest theories of fancy. The alchemist laboreth in folly, but catcheth chance gleams of wisdom, and findeth out many inventions, though