Proverbs - Commentaries by James M. Freeman

Manners and Customs of the Bible, 457. External Applications

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Proverbs 3:8. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.

Sir John Chardin supposes that allusion is here made to the custom, so prevalent in the East, of making external applications of oils, ointments, plasters, and frictions, especially on the stomach and abdomen. In addition to this the passage may obtain further illustration from a fact mentioned by Roberts. He says that in India “the navel is often spoken of as a criterion of prosperity”; and he gives several proverbial expressions which are frequently used to denote good fortune, in which a figure is brought out similar to that in the text.

Manners and Customs of the Bible, 465. Beautiful Work in Metal

Proverbs 25:13. A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.

Maskiyoth, “pictures,” is supposed by some to convey the idea of carved work, rather than that of painted work, and hence they would refer it in this place to something that is made by the skill of the carver or the engraver, such as a salver of silver with chased work upon it, and having fruit of gold. Others think that silver baskets of filigree work are meant, the fruit contained in them being real and of a golden color, or else artificial, and made of gold. Either of these interpretations would be consistent with Eastern customs. Roberts suggests that, inasmuch as in verses 6 and mention is made of the manner in which one should approach a king, Solomon in this verse had before his mind the presents which are sometimes made to Oriental monarchs—golden ornaments in the shape of fruit, placed on highly polished silver salvers.