

THE SECRET OF SOLOMON

BY JULIAN HAWTHORNE



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HOW WISE SOLOMON WAS

Of all sons of men, King Solomon was wisest; my audience has heard that before; but I have a reason for reminding them of it now.

In his Book of Proverbs is abundant proof of the fact,—of all human books it is the most sagacious and conservative, and the sanest. None before or since has known men and the world as Solomon knew them, their frailties and follies

Spreading far and wide, the fame of Solomon reached Bakris queen of Sheba, herself wise, wealthy and beautiful. But she had doubts concerning the wisdom of Solomon, and, in order to determine the matter, she journeyed from Southern Arabia to Jerusalem, carrying with her a selection of the most difficult riddles in the world, wherewith to test his sagacity.

The Queen was most hospitably received by the Great King, who solved all her riddles without so much as clearing his throat to gain time. Whereupon she

made him handsome presents, and the confession, no less handsome, that she found him yet wiser than had been reported. So they became friends; and the gossip of that day declares that from this Union of Beauty and Wisdom, the Ethiopian race is descended,—the Ethiopians, about whom we had imagined we knew something!

But do not let this distract your minds from the wisdom of Solomon. A man merely learned may nevertheless be a fool; but a wise man, never. Nor was Solomon's wisdom in danger of degenerating into the dogmatism of senility; for he came to the throne in his 'teens, and reigned forty years,—which is one more nail in the coffin of Dr. Osler's reputation.

Moreover, Solomon built the Temple, the most wonderful and costly building in the world.

HOW WEALTHY HE WAS

Where did Solomon get the money to build the Temple?

That brings us to his second claim to distinction.

Not only was he the wisest, he was also the richest man in the world.

How rich was he?

There is in circulation today a good deal more of the precious metals than in the time of King Solomon; nevertheless, we have it on Scriptural authority that his revenues, in a single year, were Six Hundred and Sixty Six Talents of gold.

What would that mean in United States money?

If—as seems probable—a Hebrew talent of gold be worth about \$25,000, then the King's income would be \$16,500,000. And, if interest on capital were 5%, that would make him worth something like Three Hundred and Thirty Million Dollars.

Remember, too, that the purchasing power of a dollar, a thousand years ago, was probably near a hundred times what it is in our era.

So we are justified in saying that Solomon was the richest of mankind. It is likely he could have bought out King Croesus (who lived some five hundred years later) and never have missed the money.

Richest as well as wisest of mankind; and he built the Temple. He was an all-round man—about the biggest we know of.

WHERE DID HE GET IT?

So far it has been plain sailing. But now we come to the third point; the answer to which will repay consideration.

Where did he get it?

Did he make it in the Wall Street of Jerusalem? No: in those days there were no stocks or stock-markets.

For a like reason, he was President of no banking or insurance companies.

Nor did he, like our Morses, Edisons, Marconis and Bells, patent an invention.

Neither did he corner wheat, or exploit a steel or any other trust.

And—though credited with occult powers,—he did not, after the fashion of Mediaeval alchemists, make gold from baser metals.

Where, then, did he get it? Is the mystery as impenetrable as that which veils the source of the wealth of some of our political contemporaries?

Not at all; there is no mystery about the matter.

All historians agree that Solomon got his gold from the Mines of Ophir.

Yes, he was a miner,—this Great King; his wealth was clean, virgin gold out of the ground. He was wise enough to get it in that way, and too wise to try to get it in any other way.

A wonderful place was Ophir; not only supplying gold and silver, but diamonds and other precious stones, peacocks, sandalwood, ivory, and apes. But of all its products, gold was the chief,—24-carat gold, running to \$100,000 the ton.

Solomon was a pioneer miner of Ophir.

That is where his Three Hundred Million Dollars came from.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL PROBLEM

But where were, or are, the Mines of Ophir?

They are like the Garden of Eden. in that respect; nobody really knows.

In Arabia, say some; others, on the further side

of India; and my friend, Mr. Rider Haggard, in his fascinating Romance of "King Solomon's Mines," places them in Darkest Africa.

One thing, however, we do know about the site of Ophir, and that is, that it took King Solomon's ships three years to get there.

Three years—think of it!

And—providing all went well, three more to get back again. Allowing one year for the digging, which, without our modern quick-action machinery, is not much, Solomon had to wait seven mortal years for a single shipment.

That would be only about five shipments in the forty years. They must have been big ones.

And what appalling obstacles!

No trains or steamboats; no telegraphs or wireless; not so much as a post-office. Travelers' tales were the sole source of news; and the seas were thick with the worst sort of pirates.

A mine three years away. Nowadays, you might as well tell your prospective investor that your mine was in the Moon.

Why, Weston, the pedestrian, walking three and a half miles an hour, takes three months to travel four thousand miles on railway ties and motor roads across this continent. At that rate, to circumambulate the entire globe would consume eighteen months.

And eighteen months is only half the time Solomon needed to reach the Mines of Ophir.

Now, suppose a promoter (the most eloquent one alive) got in touch with the most reckless of all pos-

sible investors, and suggested to him the development of a mine twice as far away as all round the world afoot.

Would a committee of alienists be required to sit on such a case?

He would be voted to a padded cell by popular acclamation.

But are you able to conceive of an investor agreeing to such a proposition?

You don't have to conceive of it, for none such exists.

Not today,—nevertheless, one did exist three thousand years ago.

Was he a fool, or a maniac?

Not exactly. He was universally acknowledged to be the wisest of mankind.

And his name was—Solomon.

SOLOMON'S SECRET OF SUCCESS

The audience now sees what I am driving at.

Solomon, wisest of Kings and men, author of the sanest and safest of books, was a gambler.

Compared with the mining risk he took, the wildest risks of our day are child's play,—school-boys amusing themselves with marbles on the street-corner.

What shall we do about it? Say that it was the single folly of a man otherwise chief of sages?

No: for, since the world made its first summer-sault in space, the sole child of folly has been disaster.

But Solomon's gamble, so far from breeding disaster, made him a multi-millionaire, and enabled him to build the Temple.

And no King of our day could duplicate that Temple, even at the cost of joining the bread-line.

There is no getting round it. Solomon made himself richest of men by a gamble. And that gamble, so far from convicting him of folly, was the crowning illustration of his sagacity.

Evidently, to profit by this lesson, we must revise some of our fixed notions.

First let us recognize the truth that there are gamblers—and gamblers.

One kind of gambler puts his last gold-piece on the red, and when black comes up, goes forth and sends a bullet through his head in Monte Carlo Gardens.

He trusted to brute luck; his only use for a brain was to shoot that bullet through it. He believed—no, not believed, for belief implies intellect—he deluded himself with the notion that Something may be got for Nothing, in this world.

Prompted by greed, debilitated by self-indulgence, narcotized by ignorance, he shut his eyes and jumped.

He hoped to land in the Mines of Ophir; but what happened was, that he tumbled over a steep place into the Sea.

He was one kind of a gambler—the kind that Solomon was NOT.

Here let me call your attention to something.—

We have gambling houses, run by so-called gamblers. They are frequented by men who bet on the turn of the die, always losing in the long and often in the short run, and pauperizing themselves if they keep at it.

It is these men—not the keepers of the establishment—who are the real gamblers.

The keepers of the establishment are not gamblers at all; for, so far from courting chance, they are sedulous to take no chances.

Their dice are loaded, their cards marked, their roulette wheels obey their hand. They always play the sure thing.

Not on any gambling of their own, but on their customers' gambling do they grow rich. They work on a principle opposite as the poles to their customers'.

And the imbecility which prompts the latter to pour their money into the former's laps should not be blamed on the gambling-house keepers, who merely afford facilities for the exploitation of this imbecility.

Be that as it may, Solomon belonged to neither class.

What sort of a gambler, then, was he?

THE SORT OF A GAMBLER SOLOMON WAS

When the Great King, casting about for means to build his Temple, adopted the Ophir Mines scheme, he was neither shutting his eyes and jumping at hazard, nor was he playing a sure thing.

No absolutely sure thing exists; even a loaded die may lose.

Solomon knew he was taking a risk.

The promoters might be liars, or self-deceived. That was an obvious risk.

Do you know how Solomon met it?

By his profound knowledge of the human heart. He tested the integrity and judgment of those promoters to the last fibre, as he would test the rope which was to swing him across an abyss.

Other risks he met by his knowledge of natural laws and of human affairs. Was a mine likely to exist where they said? Could it be as rich as they asserted? Was labor for its working available? Would expenses outweigh profits? Vital questions, to which his wisdom must find answers.

The Great King, in short, was not under the delusion that Something may be had for Nothing. He was ready to give the *Quid pro Quo*.

Against the treasures of Ophir, he staked the treasures of a wisdom not less inestimable. He knew that, to control the Goddess of Chance, he must bring to the struggle intelligence, prudence and persistence such as to equalize the odds. He did not shut his eyes, but opened them to their widest.

Yet, after all precautions and calculations, be sure that Solomon knew his risk, and that even his wisdom had its limits. Yes, Ophir was a risk; but a risk worthy a King's taking; and Solomon was King and man and gambler enough to take it.

If he lost, the Temple could never be built, and his reign would be a failure.

But, with his wits about him, with all his resources at command, he accepted the challenge of destiny—and he won.

That was the sort of gambler Solomon was.

OTHER GAMBLERS

That was the Secret of Solomon; he was a gambler.

And without that element in his nature, never, for all his wisdom, would he have accomplished the mighty works by which we know him and for which we honor him.

Nor was it a blot on his character; it was one of his noblest endowments.

I will say more;—every man whose acts have advanced civilization, created new eras in history, conferred signal benefits on mankind,—all men of that stamp have been such gamblers as was Solomon.

Alexander the Great—what a titanic gambler was he! What enterprise more desperate than the conquest of the world with a handful of Macedonian soldiers!

But that marvellous Boy had calculated the odds. The greatest of philosophers and scientists—Aristotle—had developed his mind; the greatest soldier before himself—his own father, Philip—had taught him the art and practice of war; he knew what clumsy rables

were the armies opposed to him; he knew the impregnability of that Macedonian phalanx of his,—and he trusted to his own towering ambition and genius. He was a successful gambler who deserved success.

Another of the giant brotherhood—Julius Caesar—was a gambler as successful as and more reckless than Alexander. His debts before he was twenty were high in the millions. By way of getting even with the world, he conquered it.

But, before that, captured by pirates (as ruthless and lawless cutthroats as ever flew the black flag) Caesar, standing solitary on their deck, actually assumed command of the ship and ordered the desperadoes about like poodle-dogs. He bade them steer for his own home-port, promising them as reward a hanging as soon as they got there. What is more, on arrival, he fulfilled his promise down to the last scoundrel.

In his European campaigns, his legions always conquered; but in the eye and voice of Caesar was something which conquered the legions themselves. Finally, by crossing the Rubicon, he challenged the Power which had overcome all nations; but Rome herself had to yield to Caesar, the gambler who made Chance obey him.

Then, that slim, aquiline, sallow little Corsican student at Brienne,—he too had the soul of an heroic gambler. Before he was thirty, the Continent was at his mercy. But, like other great gamblers whose game is war, Napoleon was at last destroyed by forces he had himself unleashed.

Gamblers who, like Solomon, win in the long last, are those who devote their genius and fortune to the cause of prosperity and peace. For, then, the laws of nature and the interests of humanity fight on their side.

The latest famous gambler of this sort died only the other day.

His name was Cecil Rhodes.

A MODERN WORLD-MAKER

Let the young men in this audience listen; for this is the story of a young man.

Cecil Rhodes, an Englishman, gambled more for England's sake than his own.

He was nothing astounding to look at,—a quiet, courteous young Oxford graduate, delicate of constitution (he went to Africa for his health;) self-possessed, observant, thoughtful. But no man in England had a soul so big, deep and daring as his. And he was a gambler to the marrow.

He needed Africa not for his bodily health only, but for his mind and imagination too.

Remember that nothing else is more indispensable to greatness in a man than imagination. The best men have always been men of imagination. But for the imagination of Christopher Columbus, where would we be to-day?

England is an island—quite an island too in its way—but Rhodes could not get air enough to breathe

in it; his imagination was not insular, but continental, nay, world-wide.

The continent of Africa served to set him going.

Some men—notable in their degree—regard Africa as a place to shoot big game in; beyond that they see nothing in it.

Others—like Livingstone—have spent unselfish lives in the effort to enlighten the minds and uplift the moral nature of black men.

Still others, like Beit and Bernato, sought Africa for fortunes, and made them.

Compared with such people, Rhodes was as a California sequoia to the sapling peach-tree struggling for life in your back-yard.

Sitting in meditation in his veranda chair one evening, his mind surveyed the mighty region to the north—rivers, mountain-chains, forests, valleys, tablelands,—and his imagination pictured all as an empire for England—as the future scene of a national power and wealth and of a human expansion and development, the like whereof the world had never yet beheld.

He said—but so low that the man in the neighboring chair did not catch the words—“I’ll do it.”

He was a mere boy in years, utterly unknown, with no pull social or political, and with an income of perhaps \$1500 a year.

But he had that soul, and that imagination, and he was a gambler.

At dinner that evening he remarked to the man opposite, “A railway from the Cape to Cairo would be a good thing.”

The man opposite chuckled indulgently. "Dreams, my boy. Get down to the practical."

Rhodes said (to himself this time) "Money is my need. Well, I'll get it."

Kimberly diamond mines were starting then. Beit and Barnato were in them. Rhodes, using men, in his quiet way, as we use a spoon for porridge, joined them; and money began to come.

For money he personally cared no more than do you for your last year's shoes; but for its aid toward realizing his dreams he did care. So he dug diamonds by handfuls out of the stiff blue clay in the conical pits; and broke off clusters of gold from the reefs of the north, till he could count his wealth by millions sterling, and his credit in countless millions more.

Child's play—for him—but useful.

He also recognized the value of political influence; at thirty-one he was in the Cape Ministry; at thirty-six he was Prime Minister.

England and the world had begun to know him now, and followed his course with mouths agape.

His dream of empire was taking form. Study the plans he laid and the deeds he did,—their far-reaching wisdom and tremendous energy.

But all at once, the Boer War happened.

What was a war to Cecil Rhodes?—A gambler's risk. He shrugged his shoulders, but never flinched or swerved.

Summoned to England to explain things, he appeared before a Parliamentary Committee composed of the ablest men in England.

Rhodes treated them as the head-master treats the kindergarten class,—kindly, patiently, but with the invincible superiority of his genius.

He dominated them as Pike's Peak dominates Colorado Springs. He gave them a needed lesson in the meaning and ethics of gambling; after which they bowed him humbly out, and never again meddled with him.

The world-beater resumed his labor of world-building.

But now came a new interruption—Death.

Another gambler's risk, which Rhodes accepted with composure. For he knew that the seed he had sown would bring forth grain, and was too great to grieve that it would be reaped by others. He died, assured that his work would be completed. He died—but will live as long as England.

THE COMPANY

But whether Rhodes had lived or died, men of his strain always arise to keep up the great tradition.

Always will there be great World-builders, Leaders of Civilization, to carry on the mission begun by their predecessors.

Invention, Discovery, Commerce, Industry, are immortal. The Firm of Solomon, Columbus, Rhodes and Company will never lack living representatives.

Benjamin Franklin got the first human grip on electricity in 1752. Morse's telegraph followed

ninety years after. Edison, thirty-seven years ago, made it print its messages. Bell, in 1876, taught his voice to ride on the current, with but a wire to hold on by, for thousands of miles; and only the other day, young Marconi dropped the wire, and carries on living conversations, through empty air, across oceans.

These members of the Company have transformed the business world, and hundreds of thousands of men and women find daily employment in handling their inventions.

George Stephenson built his locomotive in 1830. Mankind began running to and fro upon the earth, subduing it, and making one another's acquaintance. In 1859 George Pullman enabled them to go to bed and sleep at night on their way. And again thousands upon thousands of idle hands got work to do.

And then appeared the organizers.

Lincoln and Grant saved the Union; but the Railroad Kings kept it alive after it was saved. And if two million men risked their lives in the Civil War, how many more have owed their living to railroads since the War was fought?

Vanderbilt began the wonderful game of amalgamating roads and managing them from a central seat of authority. Huntington and his rivals or associates bestrode the continent and bound its Pacific coast with steel. And when only the other day Hariman opened his mouth, the world paid even stricter attention than to a Presidential Message.

Railroads need steel. Carnegie, the canny Scotch peasant-boy, opened his first little factory in

1865; Bessemer perfected his process five years later; and with an explosion, as it were, steel rose from the bottom to the top of the heap. The sum which the Steel Corporation set apart for up-keep and improvements, after earning dividends, has been something like 232,000,000 dollars during the past eight or nine years.

One of their iron-ore mines contains 400 million tons of the best sort of ore.

Rockefeller started neck and neck with Carnegie. He found, after a few years, that he was producing 4% of the oil in this country. He put those economical and far-seeing brains of his at work, and in seven years more he was selling 95% of the total American output. The Trust has a payroll of 70,000 persons, and its net profits per annum are 800 million dollars—or more.

There were a dozen big tobacco men thirty years ago. Competition ate into their profits. Duke, and a few other men of industrial genius, got them together, and now the New American Tobacco Company earns per annum 27 million dollars net.

Cotton is still King in the United States; and though there have been a few half-hearted attempts, no man or allied group of men is as yet King of Cotton. But the capitalization of American cotton interests is 750 million dollars; and two and a half million persons get their living handling it.

But this enumeration may as well stop:—there is no end to it.

The gist of it all is, that the present stupendous

industrial production of this country is due to the brains and energy of a mere handful of individuals,—all of them members in good standing of the Firm of Solomon, Columbus, Rhodes and Company.

By organizing and economizing the work of the nation, they have hastened our development by hundreds of years; they have put money in people's pockets and bread in their mouths, and they have saved all hands uncounted billions of dollars.

But they are Gamblers?

Yes: and it begins to look as if gambling were not so black as it is painted.

THE TALENT IN THE NAPKIN

Now arises a pink-faced gentleman in a plump white waistcoat.

He says.—“Gambling, as you term it—speculation might be a more accurate word—is all very well for persons with large fortunes, or for men of industrial and inventive talent. But most people are only fairly well off. Why is it not wiser for them to stay on the safe side?—retain what they have, rather than risk losing it by grasping after what they may never get?”

This gentleman owns a talent, done up in a napkin, in a safe-deposit drawer.

It is doing nothing there,—helping no one. But he thinks it's safe.

Well, he will certainly not lose it. But then he will never use it either.

And what, after all, is the difference between losing and never using?

The pink-faced gentleman is a conservative.

Were all like him,—were there no Firm of Solomon, Columbus, Rhodes and Company,—he might still have a pink face; but he would *not* have a white waistcoat. For he would be a primeval savage in a grass girdle. And nothing would have been done since the Flood to make the world different from what it was at the start.

Men who live by brains and courage live in their deeds after their bodies are dust.

Parasites (conservatives) live on the brains and courage of Solomon & Co., and, dying, are perfectly and permanently dead.

“Keep on the safe side!” is the conservatives’ motto.

Solomon & Co. have several. For example:—

“One crowded hour of glorious life is worth a world without a name!”

Another:—“There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to Fortune. Omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in miseries.”

Or, that anecdote of Queen Elizabeth and her noble suitor:—

“Fain would I climb, but that I fear to fall!” wrote his timid little lordship on the great Queen’s chamber window-pane, with his diamond ring.

“If thy heart fail thee, do not climb at all!”

wrote the wise and royal Virgin beneath it; and, later, she had the young gentleman's head chopped off.

But poetry and tradition are full of boosts for gamblers; whereas the comments on conservatives are seldom complimentary.

He that locks his talent in a safe-deposit drawer, locks up his soul along with it.

But no key turns on the souls of the Solomon folk.

They have put out their talent at interest in the world, and the world is theirs forever.

THE ROLL-CALL

Will any person in the audience who wants something he has not, please rise?

—All are on their legs—even the conservatives.

Now let us see what each of you desires.

The salaried men would like to cease being other men's men.

Professional men would like a chance to catch their breath.

Business men would like another string to their bow.

Politicians would like to be able to tell frankly where they got it.

Clergymen and philanthropists would like means to do good.

Artists of all kinds would like to cultivate art instead of patrons.

Farmers would like security against short crops, bad markets, and murderous freight rates.

Capitalists, of course, would like a good investment.

Poor men would like security from the poor-house.

Idle men would like a spur in life.

Young men would like the sinews of war.

Old men would like an evening of peace.

Columbuses would like their caravels and crews.

Rhodeses would like their Cape-to-Cairo railways.

Solomons would like their temples.

The world is still unfinished, and each of us, in his own way and degree, would like a hand in the finishing.

It appears, then, that the thing which you all want, and have not, or have not enough of, is money.

For money means for each, ability to take part in life in the manner best suited to him.

How, then, would you prefer to get your money?

In the form of wages, or of alms, from others?

Or would you rob, or trick others out of money?

Or would you choose, diminishing no one's possessions, to increase the wealth of all along with your own?

If so, then but one course is open to you.

You must bear a hand in finishing the world.

RECESSIONAL

Unwrap from its napkin that talent in the safe-deposit drawer.

Take the tide at its flood.

Climb, and do not fall.

Open the door to opportunity.

Remember, that the most paltry way to lose is—
not to use!

But remember, too, that Solomon looked before
he leaped.

Study the situation well.

In the whirl of excitement, keep your head level.

Trust those who have proved themselves trust-
worthy.

Listen most to those who talk lowest and promise
least.

But, having resolved what to do, be prompt.

For he that lingers till tomorrow buys dear what
was cheap yesterday.

As the audience retires, let each person take a
copy of the verses which will be handed to them, writ-
ten three hundred years ago.

Read it and lay it to heart.

He either fears his fate too much,

Or his desert is small,

Who dares not put it to the touch,—

To win or lose it all!

