

B.C. 990.]

LESSON VIII.—PROVERBS OF SOLOMON.

[November 23.]

Proverbs 1. 1-16.



- 1 The *a* Proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel;
a 1 Kings 4. 32.
- 2 To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding;
- 3 To *b* receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and *a* equity;
b Chap. 2. 1.—*a* Equities.
- 4 To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and *b* discretion.
b Or, advisement.
- 5 A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:
- 6 To understand a proverb, and *c* the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.
c Or, an eloquent speech.
- 7 The fear of the Lord is *d* the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.
d Or, the principal part.
- 8 My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother:
- 9 For they shall be *e* an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.
e An adding.
- 10 My son, if sinners entice thee, *c* consent thou not.
c Gen. 39. 7; Eph. 5. 11.
- 11 If they say, Come with us, let *d* us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause:
d Jer. 5. 26
- 12 Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, *e* as those that go down into the pit:
e Psa. 28. 1.
- 13 We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil;
- 14 Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse:
- 15 My son, *f* walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path:
f Chap. 4. 14.
- 16 For *g* their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood.

GENERAL STATEMENT.

The Book of Proverbs presents the principles of heaven in their application to the affairs of earth. It contains pure gold, coined in the divine mint, and bearing the image and superscription of the King, for use in the marts of men. Three centuries before the "wise men of Greece" appeared, the wise king of Israel penned these maxims, which embody more sound wisdom than may be found elsewhere in all the ancient world. They do not soar into the lofty spiritual atmosphere of the Psalms or the prophecies; they move on the earth; but they lay the foundation of character in the fear of the Lord and the principle of righteousness. He who walks in the light of these commands

will tread a sure path, will inherit the true riches, will be led into higher knowledge. As Coleridge says: "The Book of Proverbs is the best statesman's manual ever written," and, we might add, that it is the best collection of counsels in political economy, in social science, and in practical ethics. One remarkable fact concerning it is, that its author lived to illustrate both its counsels and its warnings, the one in his brilliant earlier years, the other in his clouded later life. But not a sentence of the book is an excuse of its writer's sins. It deals truthfully, boldly, rebukingly, with the very crimes which its author committed. As Dr. Arnot has said: "The glaring imperfections of the man's life has been used as a dark ground to set off the lustre of that pure righteousness which the Spirit has spoken by his lips." Warned, then, by the fall of the writer, let us ponder well his utterances, that we may avoid his example while following his precepts.

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

Verse 1. The Proverbs. A proverb is a short, pithy statement of an important practical truth, generally in metaphorical or illustrative language. Proverbs are found in all languages and are quoted by all mankind; but none more wise were ever given than those contained in this book. **Of Solomon.** It is not stated that all the proverbs in this book were written by Solomon, though most of them were. The book itself was formed in the reign of Hezekiah, three centuries after Solomon. It is to be noticed that Solomon's sins receive no countenance from his own writings. He spoke as a wise man, though he acted like a foolish man. **The Son of David.** The greatest glory of Solomon was in the fact that he was the son of the king who was faithful to God, and inheritor of his covenant. **King of Israel.** From his position he could enjoy a wide outlook over society, and study life in many of its phases.

2. To know. The design of the book is stated in these verses, to the end of the sixth. It is, in brief, to give training and guidance to the thoughtful but untrained character. **Wisdom.** This word is employed in this book to mean that state of mind and character which chooses the right and the best. "An intelligent piety" would be its equivalent meaning. **Instruction.** Literally, "chastisement," meaning education, or moral training; the practical side of wisdom. **Understanding.** The power to distinguish right from wrong, and true wisdom from the false.

3. To receive. The meaning is "the design in the proverbs is to enable the one who receives them to become wise and just and discriminating and right." **Of wisdom.** A different word from that used in verse 2, and here meaning *thoughtfulness*. **Justice.** *Righteousness* would express the meaning more precisely. **Judgment.** Here meaning a course