

doubt in many things, in books, in music, in society, yea to some in the grosser things of appetite and indulgence, but the soul that realizes itself, its own powers and its lofty possibilities, turns from all these indulgences, for they are—

"Like to the apples on the Dead Sea's shore,
Beautiful without, but ashes at the core,"

and the cry still goes up, "Where can wisdom," true, divine wisdom, "be found?"

The *second* topic will teach us that it can only be found in God. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," Prov. 1:7. Recall the eighth and ninth lessons of this quarter, and show that true and hearty service of God can alone give lasting happiness and the highest good. Contrast the calm, satisfied, nay rejoicing utterances of Paul, weak, feeble, in poverty and suffering, expecting a violent death, with the wail of this luxurious king of Israel. See 2 Cor. 6:10; 7:4; Phil. 3:1-3; 4:4; 2 Tim. 4:7-8. Read such passages as these to your scholars, draw the contrast in sharp lines, press upon them the truth that peace, satisfaction, happiness here, and eternal joys hereafter, are only to be found in the service of God.

"Here would we end our quest;
Alone are found in Thee
The life of perfect love,
The rest of immortality."

INCIDENTAL TRUTHS AND TEACHINGS.

We have here the utterances of experience and not of theory.

The wisest men, without the control of true righteousness, will sometimes give themselves to folly.

"I should prefer a firm religious belief to every other blessing."—*Sir Humphrey Davy*.

Solomon's attempt to unite wine and wisdom one of his greatest failures.

Great possessions and wealth cannot give satisfaction, so have said many rich men, so would say many others if they spoke the truth of their hearts.

True wisdom is as far from mere worldly pleasure as light from darkness.

MAIN LESSON.—"The service of God alone can give lasting happiness—Rom. 2:7-10; 6:16; Gal. 6:8-9; Phil. 4:9; Col. 3:24; 1 John 5:3; Rev. 22:14.

LESSON 12.

Dec. 21, } THE CREATOR REMEMBERED. { Eccles. 12: }
1884. } 1-14

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."—Ver. 1.

TIME.—B. C. 980 (about).

NOTES AND COMMENTS.—Ver. 1. The last two verses of the preceding chapter should be read in connection; ver. 9 especially is in strong contrast to this verse; the conduct set forth there is based on forgetfulness of God, and so here the young man is exhorted to "remember" Him, the "Creator," to remember Him "now, in the days of thy youth;" fear of the judge was inculcated before, now it is gratitude to the Creator, and this is to be in "youth:" the man is not to spend his early life in the service of sin, and think that the end will be enough for God. "Evil days:" which come to all, days of pain or feebleness or loss of opportunities, evil enough in themselves but doubly so when aggravated by the remembrance of past folly and neglect. "No pleasure in them:" all taste for worldly enjoyment has passed, and it is too late to find pleasure in spiritual things.

Ver. 2. "Sunlight—moon—stars:" these may be taken to mean the time of bodily and mental vigour, and of prosperity and happiness; darkened:" fail, pass away, be suc-

ceeded by weakness or suffering; "clouds return:" a succession of sorrows and continued darkness.

Ver. 3. The image changes to that of a house, old and decaying, and represents here the effects of old age upon four parts of the body, the arms, the legs, the teeth and the eyes. "The keepers—strong men—grinders—those that look out of the windows:" while this represents the progress of bodily infirmity to all, good and evil alike, the good man has anticipated it and is prepared for it. He has light, the light of heaven in his soul, and his strength is in the everlasting arms of his God.

Ver. 4. "Doors shut:" the lips, which are closely shut together by old men in eating, or, as we prefer the explanation, the ears, which in old age are often closed, hearing gone. "Sound of the grinding low:" the most familiar household sounds, as the grinding of the corn is, scarcely heard; "rise up at the voice of the bird:" either alluding to the light sleep of old men, or, in accordance with another translation which reads, "though it rise to the sparrow's note," connecting with the previous and meaning, that while the sound is sharp and shrill it only sounds to the old man as dull and "low." "Daughters of music—brought low:" meaning, probably, the making and the hearing of musical sounds.

Ver. 5. "Atraid—high:" timid, so also "fears in the way," on the plain as well as on the high places. "Almond tree:" the type of old age when the hair is white; the white blossoms completely cover the whole tree, the green leaves do not appear till some time after. "Desire shall fail:" *lit.*, the caper-berry. This was eaten before meals provocative to appetite; "it should fail to have any effect." "Grasshopper—burden:" a small insect, heavy—little cares, burdensome. "Man—long hom:" his house or state in the world to come. "Mourners:" an allusion to the custom (not died out yet) of having hired mourners, these go about seeking and finding employment.

Ver. 6. "Silver cord—golden bowl,—pitcher—wheel:" we need not strive to assign to these images different parts or functions of the body; the end of life is often symbolized by the breaking of a pitcher, a lamp or a wheel, and that is the meaning here. Yet the similes are very beautiful, and would speak powerfully to Easterns who were accustomed to the things used as symbols; the "silver cord" by which the lamp was suspended, if the cord was "loosed" the lamp would fall and the light be extinguished; so the "golden bowl" filled with costly perfume is "broken" and all that it held is lost; the "pitcher" used to fetch the water from the fountain, and the "wheel" to draw it from the "cistern," or well, alike broken, the life-giving element lost and no more to be had. Such are the suggestions of the verse.

Ver. 7. "Dust return to the earth:" made of the earth, Gen. 2:7; the body shall return to it at death. "Spirit—unto God:" either as Father or as Judge, to receive from Him in due time the end of the deeds done in the flesh.

Ver. 8. The mournful refrain of the book breaks out here. "Vanity of vanities:" with this the preacher began, that was his keynote, it is his closing strain, and is a fitting requiem for the man who is "without God in the world," and so "without hope," Eph. 2:12.

Ver. 9. The writer now claims to be heard. He "was wise:" a wisdom not his own, but given to him by God, he was wise in his teaching, and wise in continuing to teach "the people knowledge," teaching, as it would seem, by word of mouth, and committing to writing those "proverbs;" wise thoughts, which should teach when his voice was silent for ever.

Ver. 10. "Acceptable words:" *lit.*, "words of consolation," or words suited to those addressed, to warn, to cheer, to strengthen, as their needs might be. "Upright—words of truth:" whatever men may think, the preacher knew that his words were true.