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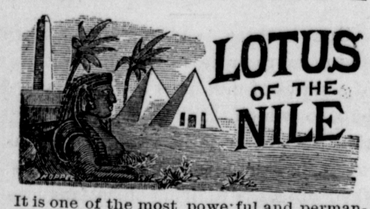

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FROM PELOUBETS' SELECT NOTES.

Fourth Quarter.

Lesson 9.—Nov. 30. Prov. 8: 1-17.

TRUE WISDOM.

GOLDEN TEXT.

I love them that love me: and those that seek me early shall find me.—Prov. 8: 17.

INTRODUCTION.—The whole discourse is poetical, and the product of a vivid oriental imagery. This section is a companion picture to that of ch. 7. Contrasted with Sin, is the Wisdom whom the disciple had been told (7: 4) to make his sister and his kinswoman. He, as Heracles in the Greek mythos of Prodicus, is to look first on this picture and on that, and then to make his choice. She too calls (ver. 5) to the "simple" and the "fools," and they have to choose between her voice and that of the Temptress.

1. *Doth not wisdom cry*, etc. This form of interrogation, which expects as its answer an emphatic "Yes, truly!" points to the fact that wisdom bears an unceasing witness in her own behalf in the life of men. She will be heard. So the prophet cried, "Ho every one that thirsteth"; so Jesus stood and cried, "If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink." Wisdom needs a loud voice; some souls are asleep, and some are hard, and some are a long way off.

2. *High places.*—High-lying parts of the city. *In the places of the paths.*—Where many paths meet. Wisdom's directions are given where they are most needed, that travellers, who will but ask, may be shown the right way, just there where they are at a loss.

3. *She crieth at the gates.*—The places of judgment, and of the confluence of people. *The entry.*—To invite passengers at their first coming, and to conduct them to her house. *At the coming in at the doors* (comp. 1: 21), *i. e.*, standing on the farther (outer) side of the gateway.

4. *O men . . . and the sons of man.*—All men without exception (comp. Ps. 49: 2). Wisdom appeals to all, if by all means she may win some. "Whosover will" may receive that which cannot be gotten for gold, and whosoever will "not" also hears the call.

5. *O ye simple* (see 1: 4), whose leading characteristic is absence of goodness rather than positive activity in evil. Those who are easily influenced for good or bad. *Ye fools.*—Wisdom calls not only the simple, who are undecided and easily led, but those who have already chosen unwisely, and have begun to tread in the ways of sin and folly. All sin is foolishness.

6, 7. *Hear.*—The word is used in this manner nine times in Proverbs. *Excellent things.*—Heb., of "princely things," worthy of princes to learn and practise; or, such as excel common things as much as princes do ordinary persons. *The opening of my lips*=my words. *Right things.*—Uprightness, honesty, sincerity. Evident (comp. ver. 9). *My mouth shall speak.*—It signifies quiet, inward meditation; also discourses going forth from it (see Ps. 1: 2). *Truth.*—Things as they are; fixed laws. *Wickedness is an abomination* (hateful and hated) *to my lips.*—The contrary of moral truth is wickedness. I hate to speak it; therefore you may be assured I shall not deceive you.

8. *All the words of my mouth.*—All my precepts, promises, threatenings, etc. *Righteousness.*—Uprightness. *Nothing froward or perverse.*—Not the least mixture of vanity, or error, or folly.

9. *They are all plain . . . and right.*—Upright and just, in contrast with the deceitful and perverse. There is neither deception, error, nor circumlocution in the utterances of wisdom; they are straight or even, giving no occasion of stumbling, removing the danger of erring from those who have the knowledge to distinguish between good and evil. To him who has understanding enough to diligently use the means; also him whose mind, to outward seeming ignorant, God enlightens by His Spirit. To him that hath shall be given. *That find knowledge.*—Truly wise and discerning persons. To the wicked and those that love folly, they will not always seem right; but to seekers after knowledge, who always find, the wisdom and righteousness will appear. "Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord."

10. *Receive my instruction.*—Make it a part of your truth and life. *And not.*—Rather than. *Knowledge rather than choice gold.*—He seems to intimate the inconsistency of these two pursuits and designs. One or the other must be chief.

11. *Rubies.*—The true rendering of this word is "gems" or "pearls." Others render it "corals." Get wisdom, for wisdom is profitable to direct, and the course so directed issues in rest and riches.

12. Ver. 12 follows ver. 11 as a justification of the high estimate of wisdom. In the first address of Wisdom (1: 22-33), her words were stern and terrible. The first step in the divine education is to proclaim "the terrors of the Lord;" but here she neither promises, nor threatens, but, as if lost in self-contemplation, speaks of her own excellence. *Wisdom.*—High and lofty, occupied with things heavenly and eternal, does not exclude, yea, rather "dwells with" the practical tact and insight needed for the life of common men. *Dwell with prudence.*—She has settled down, as it were, and taken up her residence in it; is at home in its whole sphere, and rules it. *Knowledge of witty inventions.*—Of sagacious councels. "Counsels" would, perhaps, express better than any other word the truth intended, that all special rules for the details of life spring out of the highest wisdom as their source.

13. *The fear of the Lord is to hate evil.*—"Inasmuch as the fear of God, this beginning of all wisdom (see 1: 7; 9: 10), comprises within itself as a distinguishing characteristic the hatred of evil, I, Wisdom, accordingly hate everything proud, wicked, crafty." *Pride.*—Exaltation of one's self. *Arrogancy.*—Haughty disdain of others. *The evil way.*—All wicked customs and courses. *The froward* (deceitful or crafty) *mouth*, or speech (chap. 2: 12; 6: 14). False doctrines, bad counsels, and deceits. *I hate.*—The affection of hatred, as having sin for its object, is spoken of in Scripture as no inconsiderable part of true religion.

14. After Wisdom has said what she hates, and thus what she is not, she now says what she is, has, and promises. Whoever gives anything must himself possess it. In this sense Wisdom claims for herself counsel and promotion. *Counsel.*—Good judgment or advice. One of the offices of our Saviour was "The Counsellor" (see Isa. 9: 6). *Sound wisdom.*—Literally, "essence of wisdom." The very essence of things, whence they derive their soundness and strength. *I am understanding, I have* (literally, "mine is") *strength.*—This change in the pronouns is certainly not undesigned. "Understanding" is exhibited as one with wisdom. "Strength," however (*i.e.*, true efficiency or energy), as a possession, or result of wisdom, just as previously, in the first clause, "counsel" and "reflection" are named as constant products, possessions, or attributes of Wisdom.

15, 16. It is not meant that Wisdom has the highest places in the state to give, but that she makes men capable of holding and discharging the duties of these. Rulers should be under the guidance of wisdom. Kingsley tells of a man who wanted but one step to glory; he governed others, but could not rule himself. *By me kings reign.*—Queen Victoria recognizes this in her "*Dei gratia*," "by the grace of God," etc. *Princes.*—Might, as a word of function, rather than honor, be rendered rulers.

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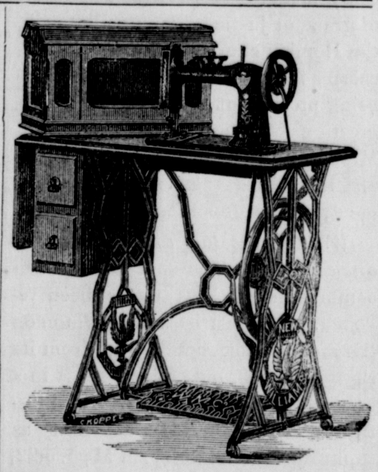

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