

ART. II.—SOME PROVERBS OF SOLOMON.

No. II.

“*Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.*—PROVERBS xxii. 6.

THIS proverb, by the mere fact of our familiarity with it, makes good its claim to be numbered among the “words of the wise.” That is a true proverb which, written in an Eastern country well-nigh three thousand years ago, retains its hold on us to-day in these far-off islands of the West; which has guided and encouraged the teacher in his arduous task, alike in England in this nineteenth century of the Christian era and in Palestine a thousand years before Christ was born. We find, too (and in this lies the secret of its power), that all the main principles of education are virtually comprised within its narrow but pregnant compass. Rightly understood, it includes alike the general and special conditions on which success in the training of childhood depends. It lays down the broad, solid foundations on which all true education must rest, and at the same time plainly indicates the variety of method and treatment which individual scholars demand.

1. In its broad, fundamental principles education is the same for all who are its subjects. “The way in which he should go” is, in this respect, but one way for all who tread it. In every case education must concern itself with *the whole man*.

The education of *the body*, as in these days we have come to understand, must in no case be neglected. Our aim must always be to provide for the *mens sana* the *corpus sanum*, as its proper and congenial dwelling-place. “Bodily exercise is profitable,” even though, in comparison of the greater profit of “godliness,” it be but “for a little.” The teacher who would train the child, whether of peer or peasant, in “the way he should go,” must pay attention to the due development and discipline of the body. The hand should be firm and vigorous, whether it be destined to guide the plough or to grasp the helm of the State. To “endure hardness” is a training as available against the seductions of an easy and luxurious lot, as against the sterner experiences of a severe and straitened poverty. It is a pitiable sight to see the breadwinner prostrate and enfeebled in the poor man’s cottage. Is it less pitiable to see the imperious mind, which wrests her secrets from Nature and is the benefactor of all mankind, weighed down and paralyzed by the infirmity of the corruptible body, or the large opportunities which wealth and station confer unoccupied through the remorseless presence of bodily pain and weakness?

Quite as little, nay, even less if possible, can any respect of persons be allowed, any difference of "way" recognised, in the training of the *moral nature*. Honesty is not the prerogative of any one station in life. Truthfulness should be as much the inmate of the cottage as of the palace. Purity is a priceless gem which shines lustrous alike on the chaste bosom of the village maiden and in the royal diadem of the queen. Temperance—not the partial or total abstinence from one of God's good gifts, which that word has unhappily come to mean, but self-control in the free and lawful use of them all, and mastery over all our appetites and passions—is a necessary and vital part of the education of every child of man.

Above all, in its religious aspect, in its relation to the spiritual being of man and his eternal destinies, "the way in which he should go" is the same for every man. "The way everlasting" knows no change in its essential characteristics. It varies not as through long ages the countless procession winds along it, going through clouds and sunshine, joy and sorrow, prosperity and adversity, "from strength to strength," till every one of them appears before God in Zion. One way only there is by which that goal can be reached, and in that one way, therefore, every child must be trained. This is what the Church means by her earnest striving for religious education, and for the maintenance of her voluntary schools. She would have it not only a possible privilege, but an acknowledged duty, to guide the feet of her children into this way in which they should go. She would give them not only religious knowledge, but religious education. She would not only inform, but "train" them, making their whole life, work no less than worship, religious, and bringing the powers and energies of their whole being within the restricting, yet expanding and ennobling, limits of that narrow way.

2. But if this proverb thus lays down by implication the common lines of an universal education, if it indicates the broad principles of bodily and moral and religious training on which all successful education must rest, it also opens up the interesting field of special dealing with the individual scholar. This is what lends its fascination to the teacher's office, raising it to the dignity of a profession, and providing scope for the highest gifts in its successful discharge. The literal rendering of the proverb, as the margin of the Revised Version notices, is, "Train up a child *according to his way*," thus suggesting that while in all that is essential "his way" is the way of all men, it may nevertheless be, as indeed it is, in important particulars, *his way* only. The tenor of *his way*, in the case of every pupil, must be the subject of careful study on the part of the true teacher.

"*His way.*" What may the parent or teacher learn concerning it; how may he be helped and guided in the difficult task of applying the general principles of education to the particular subject of it by the character and temperament and disposition of each individual child? He has to deal not only with

voices low and gentle,
And timid glances shy,
That seem for aid parental
To sue all wistfully,
Still pressing, longing to be right,
Yet fearing to be wrong;

but with

the eye of keenest blaze
And the quick-swelling breast,
That soonest thrills at touch of praise;

and he needs "glance both kind and true" to discern and treat accordingly.

"*His way.*" It must be fashioned also by the gifts and talents which His hand, who in nature as in grace "divideth to each one severally as He will," has bestowed upon the individual. Not less perilous and injurious to society than unjust and mischievous to the individual is the education which would keep down, or refrain from helping upward, what God has formed to rise, or which wearies itself in futile attempts to raise unduly what He has fitted for less conspicuous, though not less necessary, paths of service.

"*His way.*" What again does the providence of God, so far as we may presume to scan it, add to our forecast of its special future? It is our aim to train every baptized child to "do his duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call him." How far can we foresee for each scholar committed to our care what that state of life will be? That, too, is a consideration which the proverb commends to us, when it bids us train him after the tenor of *his way.*" The wisest of men lends no sanction to the unwisdom of an education which in details is the same for all.

It is to education thus conducted, to education which lays its strong foundations of physical and moral and spiritual training, unvarying for all men, and rears upon them, with wise and discriminating hand, its multiform superstructure, in accordance with the character and gifts and calling of each man, that a successful issue is guaranteed by this proverb. Thus, in the faith of Him who gives the command, "Train up the child according to his way," and then, in the like faith of Him who gives the promise, look for the reward: "even when he is old he shall not depart from it."

T. T. PEROWNE.