

**PROVERBS AND THEIR LESSONS:  
BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF  
LECTURES DELIVERED TO YOUNG  
MEN'S SOCIETIES AT  
PORTSMOUTH AND ELSEWHERE**

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Proverbs and Their Lessons: Being the Substance of Lectures Delivered to Young Men's Societies at Portsmouth and Elsewhere by Richard Chenevix Trench

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**RICHARD CHENEVIX TRENCH**

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THE SUBSTANCE OF LECTURES

DELIVERED TO YOUNG MEN'S SOCIETIES

AT PORTSMOUTH AND ELSEWHERE.

BY

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DEAN OF WESTMINSTER.

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## PREFACE.

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IT may be as well to state, that the lectures which are here published were never delivered as a complete course, but only one here and two there, as matter gradually grew under my hands; yet so that very much the greater part of what is contained in this volume has been at one time or another actually delivered. Although I have always taken a lively interest in national proverbs, I had no intention at the first of making a book about them; but only selected the subject as one which I thought, though I was not confident of this, might afford me sufficient material for a single lecture, which I had undertaken some time ago to deliver. I confess that I was at the time almost entirely ignorant of the immense number and variety of books bearing on the subject. Many of these I still know only by name. With some of the best, however, I have made myself acquainted, and by their aid, with the addition of such further material as I could myself furnish, these lectures have assumed their present shape; and I publish them, because none of the works on proverbs

which I know are exactly that book for all readers which I could have wished to see. Either they include matter which cannot be fitly placed before all—or they address themselves to the scholar alone, or if not so, are at any rate inaccessible to the mere English reader—or they contain bare lists of proverbs, with no endeavour to compare, illustrate, and explain them—or if they seek to explain, yet they do it without attempting to sound the depths, or measure the real significance, of that which they undertake to unfold. From these or other causes it has come to pass, that with a multitude of books, many of them admirable, on a subject so popular, there is no single one which is frequent in the hands of men. I will not deny that, with all the slightness and shortcomings of my own, I have still hoped to supply, at least for the present, this deficiency.

ITCHENSTOKE, *December* 13, 1852.



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# PROVERBS AND THEIR LESSONS.

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## LECTURE I.

### THE FORM AND DEFINITION OF A PROVERB.

IT is very likely that from some of us proverbs have never attracted the notice which I am persuaded they deserve ; and from this it may follow that, when invited to bestow even a brief attention on them, we are in some doubt whether they will repay our pains. We think of them but as sayings on the lips of the multitude ; not a few of them have been familiar to us as far back as we can remember ; often employed by ourselves, or in our hearing, on slight and trivial occasions : and thus, from these and other causes, it may very well be, that, however sometimes one may have taken our fancy, we yet have remained blind in the main to the wit, wisdom, and imagination, of which they are full ; and very little conscious of the amusement, instruction, insight, which they are capable of yielding. Unless too we have devoted a certain attention to the subject, we shall not be at all aware how little those more familiar ones, which are frequent on the lips of men, exhaust the treasure of our native proverbs ; how many and what excellent ones remain behind, having now