

## A LIBERAL EDUCATION.

BY REV. MR. ELLIOTT, OTTAWA.

**M**R. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen: A strange sense of intellectual weakness, brokenness, and incapacity sometimes takes hold upon a man. That is in no small degree my experience to-night. I look at our subject, "A Liberal Education," and I cannot shake off the consciousness that a subject of such vast importance can receive but scant justice from me. I but stand at the threshold of the temple of knowledge, or, at best, have had but a glimpse of the rich treasures which may be found within, a glimpse which reveals ignorance and stimulates desire, without even in an ordinary degree satisfying aspiration. Still I will, as Carlyle would say, in God's name, attempt to place before you a few thoughts on the subject; I would not speak as a dogmatist on this or any subject. I would approach the subject with a consciousness that here especially a narrow dogmatism would be a fatal mistake. Yet to be true to myself and to you, I must place before you as definitely as I may, the ideal which is ever present to my own mind. I venture to say that of all many-sided subjects, education, human education, the right development of man's complex nature, the teaching that nature to see what is best, the inspiring that nature to do what is best, has the greatest number of sides. Its sides grow in number until we become bewildered. Each phase of it grows in importance until we reach a standpoint where we seem to see that, of all things on our planet, human education has an easy first place. It includes whatever we do for ourselves, and whatever others do for us, for the express purpose of bringing us somewhat nearer the perfection of our

complex nature. But it includes much more. In its widest acceptance it comprehends all the indirect effects produced on our faculties and character by things of which the direct purposes are different. Laws, forms of government, modes of social life, and even climate, have all a powerful, though, in a great degree, imperceptible, influence on the education of man. In this broad sense, whatever tends to shape the individual, to make him what he is, or prevent him from becoming what he is not, is part of his education.

From what I have already said you will clearly see that I do not regard education as solely or even principally a matter of schools, teachers, text books, recitations and all the rest of it, though with none of these can we dispense, if the rising generation is to be thoroughly educated. Nor do I regard education as solely belonging, or, indeed, chiefly belonging, to the early years of life, though I am fully convinced that to reach the best results educationally, seed sowing must commence early, and a foundation both broad and deep must be laid while we are young.

Education is the developing or perfecting of all the root principles of man's nature, together with the correction of all wrong tendencies. It reveals to the man gradually, as it develops what he really is, what he may become. Nor can it be said to have completed its work till it has inspired his being to make the best of all his powers for God's glory and human good.

Education is not the mere possession of knowledge, except in so far as knowledge makes the man wiser, better, more profound in his thinking, more