

Ancient, Literature, and Elementary Instruction.

No. I.

We purpose reviewing the state of Ancient, Literature, and Elementary Instruction, from the beginning of the antediluvian period; and to the intellectual enquirer, whose object it is to mark the operations of mind and the progress of knowledge—this subject is one of deep interest. From the many blanks presented by the pages of early history, we shall be necessarily brief; in truth, many of the periods into which history has divided the world, presents little more than a barren and dreary waste, so far as the extension of elementary knowledge among the mass of mankind was concerned.

The Scriptures, the only authentic history of the antediluvian period is silent respecting literature and scholastic attainments; and from all the testimony we can gather, it is not probable that there was any written language during this period of the world. But this age is none the less characteristic of great events. It was at the beginning of this ever-memorable era that God conversed with our first parents, probably in the Hebrew tongue,—hence the introduction of language; it was at this period that Adam gave names to the animal creation; and it was by the channel of an oral language also, that the serpent infused the first taint of sin in the bosom of man. No sooner did God breathe the breath of life into man, the noblest of all his wondrous works, than by the same supernatural agency the power of utterance was given to the first of our race—the power to hold converse with his fellow man and with his God.

During this period, man's great longevity, and in all probability strong and vivid intellectual ability, was favorable to such a state of social and intellectual existence; having no written language, all transactions and commands could be minutely handed down and acted upon to the time of the Deluge, which occurred in the 1656th year of the world. Speaking of the knowledge of the antediluvians, Gauguet says that "all deeds at that time were verbal, and were authenticated and ascertained by being made in presence of all the people."

The next period under our proposed arrangement is from the Deluge down to the birth of Christ; and here again the sources of knowledge are still meagre, and we think, do not afford all the evidence connected with the march of intellectual improvement of that age. But, as in the previous age, this period is characteristic of great events; it was during the early part of this period that Moses was commanded to ascend the mount, and there to receive the law; "the tables, we are told, were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables;" it was soon after this period that Moses was commanded to write the laws in a book—to write a copy of the law for future kings—to record the laws that they might be read, etc.

We have no doubt but that it was during the typical forty days—the time spent on the Mount, that Moses was taught the use, probably the perfect use of alphabetical writing, and that too, by the Creator of the Universe.

Thus it would appear that *oral* and *written* language were miraculously introduced,—the former in the garden and the latter on the mount; the introduction of the former accompanied the fall of man; the latter was introduced, accompanied by lightnings, thunderings, flame and smoke; both were introduced under the most momentous circumstances ever recorded.

Leaving this part of our subject to be treated upon by those better acquainted with philological science than we profess to be,—we pass on to trace the progress of Alphabetical writing through the mists, in which all things ancient are so deeply enveloped.

That alphabetical writing was thus early introduced is beyond dispute, but as to what portion of the human family became the recipients of this, in the first place, heaven-born gift, it is impossible to say. The only educational institutions mentioned in the early part of sacred history, are the "Schools of the Prophets," where the "sons of the prophets" were educated, so as to be able to conduct the civil and religious ser-