

according to the Mosaic record, was the earth divided. Compared with Scriptural chronology, that gave us the thirty-second year after the dispersion or confusion, as the date of that emperor, Yu, sitting upon the throne, which was just time enough for such an increase of family as to admit of immigration. The lecturer then gave a brief sketch of the traditional and mythological period, showing the coincidence of many of the events related, with the statements given in the Mosaic record, and proving that the first king of China must have synchronised with the immediate descendants of Noah. The Chinese empire was founded 2,200 years before the Christian era, and was contemporary with the establishment of the Babylonish and the Egyptian monarchies. China had seen the rise and fall of fourteen dynasties, and 236 emperors had swayed the sceptre over the people of that empire."

### ON THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION.

BY THE REV. R. H. THORNTON.

The commencement of our course in this life is characterized by ignorance and weakness. A child while endowed with faculties, which, if duly trained, will fit him to traverse the universe of truth, yet begins his course a helpless stranger—a stranger alike to himself, to the world, and to God. But these faculties, yet in the germ, open daily, and bring him constant intelligence from the world without. The more intelligence the mind receives, the more it yearns for, and through the live-long day, except when "tired nature seeks repose," it is busy seeking or receiving with unalloyed delight new acquisitions of truth. Now what the individual appears in infancy, he is essentially, and it is the province of education to give direction to this spontaneous desire for knowledge—to take this restless little spirit, and conduct it along the paths of true wisdom, and by drawing out its rapidly increasing powers, fit it for the unending work of self-development. "The senses must be trained to observe accurately, the memory to register carefully and recall readily, the reason to compare, reflect, and judge, without partiality." How justly, then, has it been said that "it is education which makes the man." Its province is to infuse into the soul a principle of enduring activity and curiosity, so that it will ever be going forth in quest of light, never considering itself to have attained, but pressing forward to higher truths, and a larger knowledge.

Here it may be well to advert to a theory, which conflicts with these views. It is held by many, and is this, that *children are averse to mental exercise*. It is a theory, however, which, while it libels a most interesting portion of the human family, is founded upon the most profound ignorance of the human mind. The aversion affirmed of the child, however, has been but too often *true of the instructor*. From incompetency for his own department, or from indolence to perform its duties aright, he has attempted to *drive* rather than to *lead* the young. Hence the yearnings of the youthful mind after knowledge have been checked, and while its appropriate aliment has been withheld, its education has not been stopped, but carried on according to a system which, while it is notoriously unsuitable, is generally, as by instinct, rejected. Hence the supposed aversion to mental exercise.

It is alike true, whether viewed physically or intellectually, that "the young of all animals *delight* in exercising their faculties." And the young of our own race if only properly aided, are as much disposed to exercise their *minds* as their *limbs*, and it may be added that the exercise is accompanied with a similar pleasure and a corresponding improvement. And every one entitled to fill the responsible sphere of a teacher, has often seen this manifested by the beaming countenance, and the eager eye of the pupil, when some difficulty has been surmounted, or some new acquisition made to the mental stores. And here let it be carefully remembered, that to whatever extent the mind of an individual receives such an acquisition, it is thereby furnished with means for enriching itself the more. Sound knowledge expands the whole mind, refines the taste of pleasure, and opens up numerous sources of intellectual enjoyment. The individual thereby becomes less dependent for enjoyment upon appetites and gross enjoyments, and made the more easily to feel the superiority of the spiritual to the material part of our nature.

Now, if such be the effect of education, its tendency must be to raise man to his exalted place in the world, and of course, therefore, to free him from the ensnaring errors and enslaving prejudices which beset him on every hand; and which often so completely overwhelm the minds of the uneducated. And no more obvious mode of exhibiting the benefits of education can be adopted, than to glance briefly at the errors and prejudices by which the individual is beset, when destitute of its blessed influence.

Under the reign of ignorance, "the higher faculties of man," says Dick, "not only remain in a great measure unexercised, but the reasoning faculties are in a great measure suspended." Hence the individual in such a case, instead of being guided by the dictates of his rational nature, will vacillate between the conflicting opinions of others who may have power to sway him, or will blindly give in his adherence to "those false maxims which constitute the philosophy and guide of the uneducated." To illustrate this, the well known fact may be alluded to, that an eclipse, in comparatively recent times, was an occasion of no small concern to many, living at no great distance from the light of science and revelation. And such an occurrence *still* strikes terror and dismay into many a darkened tribe in the heathen world. In many places those eccentric bodies called comets are even still regarded as the precursors of some dire calamity. And not long ago, the appearance of one in the Canadian horizon, was regarded by many of the ignorant as giving surer token of the speedy overthrow of this mundane system, than all the prophecies of the Holy Book—prophecies which, notwithstanding all that these individuals have affirmed, the Deity is taking his own time to accomplish. Thus while man in his best estate is "born to trouble," under the influence of ignorance he is continually borrowing imaginary evils. Where knowledge is instilled, not only do such imaginary ills cease to influence the mind, but the very *means of distress and consternation* become the objects of exalted contemplation, and to the devout mind furnish occasion of praise. The comet is then understood to revolve in its eccentric orbit, and the eclipse to occur, under the influence of those settled laws by which He who "hath garnished the heavens by his Spirit" hath bound all creation. In the absence of mental light nothing is too insignificant to affect the mind. It has found distressing fears from the ticking of an insect in the stillness of the night, which has been called "the death-watch," whereas education distinctly informs us, that it is *the call of love*; and most disastrous calamities are occasionally foreboded from a fancied unusual sound in a boiling tea-kettle!!

Besides the evils of an imaginary nature to which ignorance and credulity give being, there arise from the same source, a great variety of foolish opinions, which pass current for truth with a large part of society, and exert a greater amount of practical influence than is often supposed. It is quite current in Canada, for example, that the last Friday of the month foretells the weather of the following; that winter is colder than summer because the sun is farthest from the earth. And in the fall many a Canadian farmer is most careful not to leave his plough-point *toward the north*, because of the almost certainty of all being *frozen up* by next morning! To many such things, *destitute of one particle of truth*, have ignorance and credulity given in their assent, and not without receiving most serious injury. For while the mind thus receives falsehood for truth, and folly for wisdom, it is rendered gradually unfit to reason accurately upon any subject. We may laugh at such things as whims, as harmless in themselves, but there is both a great *moral* and *intellectual* evil connected with them, which must not be overlooked. For the moment that the mind gives way to the idea, for example, that one day is *more lucky* than another; from that period it must overlook the fact, that *all things* are controlled by Him "with whom one day is as a thousand years," &c.; or if from ignorance of those laws by which He has bound the universe, alarm be excited by any phenomena creation may present, the mind then loses some of the best opportunities for perceiving and admiring the wisdom of Him, "who upholdeth all things by the word of his power." Such is the *moral* injury which ignorance in such things inflicts upon the mind. But there is also an intellectual evil, inasmuch as the tendency of all such assumed and ill-founded maxims is, to suspend and sink the reasoning powers. Were they allowed to come into exercise and put