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REV. A. A. CHERRIER,  
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**Northwest Review.**

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1899

**CURRENT COMMENT**

Loud complaints reach us from many quarters about the delay in the transmission and delivery of newspapers and periodicals from the Winnipeg post-office. We have not much to complain of with regard to our exchanges, which are delivered pretty regularly; but there is a New York Sunday paper, to which we subscribe personally, and which often reaches us one or two days later than it did ten years ago, although during this decade the time of railway transportation has been greatly shortened on all lines between this and New York. Those who know say the reason of this delay is that the Winnipeg post-office is shorthanded. Go in there any day, they tell us, and you will see huge stacks of newspapers waiting to be distributed. The officials are overworked because they are too few. Should it not be the first duty of the Postmaster General to secure efficient service by employing enough clerks and paying them well?

Our voracious contemporary, the Free Press, though so near the post-office, seems to have suffered more than the rest of the long-suffering public. They have merely to wait for their papers; it has actually lost a very important letter written to it six weeks ago by Mr. Tardivel. A letter from the same gentleman came to us by the same mail, but the one addressed to the Free Press—we have the latter's word for it—never reached that editorial office. Perhaps, as it had no "large legal seal," some Winnipeg postal clerk mistook it for a newspaper and threw it on the stack of waiting matter. Really the Free Press ought to lodge a formal complaint with the Post-office Inspector next door.

Quoth Saturday's Winnipeg Tribune:

The following literary diamond appears as an editorial note in the Free Press:

"Money makes the mare go, but it takes wind to make the yachts go."

This would be a credit to any three year old child.

If we may be allowed to interject a remark, we think our Bannatyne street sage is too hard on the old lady of Post-office

lane. To be fair, the Tribune should have said that this was only the middle one—or is it the most middling one?—of five consecutive jokes on the yacht race. The first was pretty good: "What the yachts really want is a big blow-out." The next, "The third attempt ought to be a lucky one for the Shamrock," was imprudent as all uninspired prophecies are, and in point of fact was not verified. Moreover, like all jokes constructed on general principles, it was weak. Albeit, generally speaking, the number three is supposed to be lucky, yet, where shamrocks are concerned, on the specific principle that a four-leaved shamrock is a lucky find, it is the fourth attempt that promises success. Joke number four, "The Shamrock has got her Irish up now, and will win to-day's race or know the reason why," is, we confess, so weak, that it never could have stood alone. But the fifth and last joke is really hot half bad and sheds a retrospective radiance on the others. Here it is: "Sir Thomas Lipton's income is said to be \$7.50 a minute. And yet he knows what it is to be unable to raise the wind." Can it be that the Tribune editor suppressed this felicitous adaptation of a venerable chestnut through pique at not having thought of it himself?

Coal dealers are very busy at this season. They naturally try to undersell each other. Beware of light weight, the rather if your dealer gives you a particularly low rate. One of our friends, who buys the black diamonds in large quantities, found to his dismay that the weighing scales left him two tons short. Better pay ten cents to have a load weighed in the public scales than lose five or ten dollars on shortage.

One good effect of Mr. Hugh John Macdonald's injudicious proposal to make illiteracy a test of ignorance is that it leads the supporters of the government to examine into the validity of the principle on which this test is based. When they are intelligent observers they discover what thoughtful readers of history discovered long ago, and what Sir John Lubbock once illustrated by the fact that in the palmy days of Athenian intellectual supremacy most of the Greeks, cultured thinkers though they were, could neither read nor write and would nowadays be ranked as illiterates. This is how the Morden Chronicle puts it: "Mr. Macdonald forgets that there are many illiterate men who are better intellectually equipped than lots of educated fools; and that there are many educated people that Manitoba would be glad to welcome who have no knowledge of the English language, much less of the Manitoba Act." Quite so. Three fourths of the inhabitants of the British Empire could not read the Manitoba Act, neither could a host of men infinitely abler than Hugh John who could teach him how to frame a consistent policy.

Since writing the editorial note on Mr. Tardivel's lost letter we have learned that the Post-office Inspector, having been written to by Mr. Tardivel, inquired last Saturday at the Free

Press office and was then told that the missing letter had not come. It has since turned up, as the following editorial note in yesterday morning's Free Press shows:

A letter addressed to the editor of the Free Press by Mr. J. P. Tardivel, of Quebec, dated Aug. 20, reached its destination yesterday. The miscarriage was the fault of one of the employees of this office. As we stated recently that the letter had not been received this explanation is made. The letter has in the meantime been published elsewhere, which precludes further publication.

How many tricks up his sleeve hath the heathen Chinees!

The promised prize for the best English translation of a Latin passage from the "Vox Urbis" goes to Mr. Ludwig Erk, late of Gretna, now of Roseport, Man. Mr. Albert Dubuc is a good second. The others who tried committed too many mistakes to deserve honorable mention. Had we allowed the translations to be in French, we might have secured a more thoroughly accurate translation than Mr. Erk's. This latter, though really very fair, overlooks the words "ab anglicis portibus," (from English ports), inserts the word "almost" before the translation of "quotidie," and translates the conditional clause, "quodsi eam impossibilem reddissent" as if it were an absolute assertion. The promised book will be mailed to Mr. Erk to-morrow. His translation, together with the original, is printed elsewhere.

**A WINNIPEG GEOMETRY.**

"Introductory Geometry" by H. S. Maclean, the able and genial Assistant Principal of Manitoba Normal School, is, viewed as a whole, a credit to western pedagogy. Part I., which comprises 161 pages, is an introduction to the study of geometry and explains all that need be known, at this stage, of solids, surfaces, straight lines, angles, circles, triangles, areas, symmetry, analysis and synthesis. Part II. gives the first book of Euclid, with the proofs shortened though never weakened. The author excels in clear, mathematical demonstration. The Copp, Clark Company, Toronto, deserve credit for the attractive appearance of this neat little volume. It is a pity that it contains no table of contents giving a bird's eye view of the whole work, though the index is helpful to those who are looking for one particular point.

A distinctive feature of this text-book is the prominence given to analytic exercises. The opening exercise of the first chapter reads thus: "Point out three objects that are very different from one another in shape. Make a list of the names of objects which resemble in shape a football. A chalk-box. Describe as fully as you can the shape of the objects lying on the table, viz.: (i) A cricket-ball. (ii) A box. (iii) A flat ruler. (iv) A new lead pencil. Is it necessary to say anything about the material of which an object is composed in describing its shape?" [Better: In describing the shape of an object is it necessary to say anything about the material of which it is composed?] "Give reasons for answer."

This sort of thing is very much admired by popular pedagogues of our day and country. It crops up everywhere in Merchant and Fessenden's "High School Physical Science." We are told by those who habitually use this latter book that these analytical exercises are far from being a success in practice. They suppose that all minds are similarly constituted. Intended as suggestions to the teacher, they may be useful, although a really efficient teacher would hardly need them; but, taking up so much space as they do in Mr. MacLean's small book, they are, we cannot help thinking, a mistake.

Take, for instance, that first exercise which we have reproduced in full. Its concluding requirement "Give reasons for answer" is an extremely difficult one for a boy or girl of thirteen or fourteen, such as this work is written for. The children might give one reason, which would be to the effect that the material of an object does not affect its shape; but to give reasons, in the plural, would be very hard, unless the teacher helps them; and if he helps them, why these exercises with all their childish details? From our point of view the "explanations," which follow the "exercises," are vastly better than the latter. It was discovered a couple of thousand years ago that the synthetic is far better than the analytic method for the purpose of imparting knowledge. that the shortest cut to science is the explanation, not the playing at a re-discovery, of principles; and, in despite of the present fad for plying the child with suggestive questions all cut and dried in a text-book instead of suiting those questions to the almost infinitely varied idiosyncracies of the pupils, we still think that the old way is the best.

Another point in which we join issue with the distinguished author of this otherwise admirable primer is his treatment of the syllogism. It is far from accurate, philosophically, to say that mathematical reasonings are like the syllogism he gives as an example. This is a qualitative syllogism, one in which qualities with all their many-sided possibilities are compared, whereas mathematical syllogisms are quantitative, that is to say, syllogisms in which the terms, when they differ at all, differ only in dimensions. Mr. MacLean's typical syllogism is "All Canadians are British subjects; Jones is a Canadian; therefore, Jones is a British subject." He says this syllogism "may be regarded as a type of geometrical reasoning," and then he gives as an example of the latter: "All radii of a circle are equal; OP and OQ are radii of a circle; therefore, OP and OQ are equal." Now, to a trained logician, there is about as much resemblance between these two types of syllogism as there is between a strait-jacket and a Roman toga. The only relation in the geometrical syllogism is that of equality or inequality, while the relations of Jones to Canadians and British subjects are as various as the hundred languages, three hundred religions and thousands of different human types that make up the British Empire. In the one case the only rule needed is,

that there be three terms and three propositions, the position of the terms is absolutely immaterial; in the other case, owing to the numberless degrees and varieties of inclusion or exclusion, no less than six or eight well known rules must be observed, or the syllogism is valueless.

**NOTES BY THE WAY.**

The rapid advance of the fall season heralds the approach of winter and the people who for several months have been finding their recreation and amusement in outdoor sports and pursuits will soon be seeking indoor entertainment. The two great centres of amusement for the next six or eight months will be the theatres, known as the Winnipeg and the Grand, and as a large percentage of the Catholics of the city are to be found amongst the patrons of the drama and the number would be larger than it is if our people were fully satisfied as to the character of the performances that are to occupy the boards during the season, we think it not out of place if we say a word or two occasionally about what is going on in this line in Winnipeg, so that those of our readers who take a legitimate interest in such matters—and that is nearly a hundred per cent of the whole—may have reliable information as to those performances which it will be best for them to witness and as to the character and ability of the various companies engaged in the performances. It is well known that some of the travelling troupes that visit Winnipeg come here with plays which are anything but elevating, and often barely escape being positively indecent, and as these companies rarely make more than a couple of appearances they are here and away again before the people have time to show their disapprobation of such performances, and it often happens that owing to lack of accurate information people attend exhibitions which they would not be seen at did they know beforehand what they might expect. On the other hand there are occasionally performances given in the city which really deserve the support of the people, but do not get it either because of some defect in the method of advertising or because they come here at a time when the people have by bitter experience reason to be wary of believing all that the posters or the newspapers may have to say. It will be our object to let our readers know as well as we possibly can where they can find really healthy entertainment, and also to warn them against plays of a trashy nature which are not only unwholesome, but often absolutely meaningless and tiresome.

We are glad to be in a position to state that at the present moment there is a company performing in Winnipeg which is in every respect worthy of the encouragement and support of all lovers of the legitimate drama. We refer to the Valentine Stock Company at the Grand Theatre. It is a great thing for a city like Winnipeg to get a thoroughly good stock company. Legitimate work and thorough