

# THE SATURDAY READER.

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FIVE CENTS.

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Continued from week to week, the NEW STORY,  
"HALF A MILLION OF MONEY,"  
written by the author of "Barbara's History" for  
*All the Year Round*, edited by CHARLES DICKENS.

## NOTICE.

ALL the back numbers of the READER are now in print, and we shall be happy to forward them to any subscribers who may need them to make up their sets.

ANY person getting up a Club of five will be entitled to a free copy of the READER, during the existence of the Club; and if a yearly Club of ten, to a free copy of the paper, and a handsomely bound copy (two volumes) of Garneau's History of Canada, which is published at \$3 00 by R. Worthington, Publisher and Bookseller, next door to Post Office, Montreal.

## THE DOCTOR AND HIS FOOLMETER.

SOME innocent reader will ask "what is a foolometer?" According to Sydney Smith, who was the first to classify the species, a foolometer is a man,—or woman,—who embodies and represents the general opinions of the multitude. Moliere's foolometer was his house-keeper, and Dr. McKay, poet, politician, and correspondent of the London *Times*, has found a foolometer in the person of a writer in one of our city journals. This contributor to the *Herald* accuses us of acquaintance with the learned Doctor's poetical works, which he poetically describes as "passports to immortality." We plead guilty to the indictment. We once attempted to read some of them, but found the task too difficult for achievement. An ardent admirer of the poet lent them to us, and assured us that they contained "nectar fit for the gods;" we imagined that they smacked of treacle, a liquid we abhor, even as Falstaff abhorred death by water. It is certain that the specimens produced by the correspondent of the *Herald* have not led to a change of our opinion in that respect; and if these bricks be a fair sample of the building, we suspect that the Doctor's passports will not be vis'd by posterity on his road to immortality. His friend advises him to eschew politics and the *Times*, and to return to his first love, the Muse. We doubt the wisdom of this suggestion; the

*Times* pays its laborers handsomely, and the prizes in the poetical lottery are few, meagre, and far between. There is the laureateship, it is true; but though the Doctor might claim to be a worthy successor to Cibber and Pye, he can scarcely hope for an office which has more recently been filled by Southey and Tennyson, and which was offered to Scott and Wordsworth. We do not wish it to be supposed that we are indulging in mere meaningless detraction, or that we cannot support by evidence the views we express. We believe we can so support these views. For instance, we find in the *Herald* some selections from Dr. McKay's poems, and to which our admiration is challenged. Here is the first of these literary tit-bits:

"And here.—Oh! shame to Freedom, that boasts with  
tongue and pen,  
We took aboard a cargo of miserable men;  
A freight of human creatures, bartered, bought and  
sold,  
Like hogs or sheep, or poultry—the living blood for  
gold;  
And then I groaned remorseful, and thought, in pity  
strong,  
A curse might fall upon us for suffering the wrong,—  
A curse upon the cargo, a curse upon the ship,  
Panting, moaning, groaning, down the Mississippi."

This is "the regular butter-woman's trot to market," and by way of test we would recommend the lines to be read as if they were prose, forgetting the jingle of the rhyme for the moment.

We contend that they are not poetry at all, or if they be, that it is of very poor quality. Most young men of a literary turn write stuff of the same sort, while in their teens; but few of them, if not very silly indeed, continue the practice after they arrive at years of discretion. In our green days of spoonyhood, "when we used to come a courting to Jane Smile," we ourselves could spin such effusions by the ell, good Flemish measure; and we did it too, heaven forgive us!—a sin over which we have since mourned in confusion of face, and sackcloth and ashes. In the lauded specimens of Dr. McKay's poesy there are, undoubtedly, rhyme, rhythm, and sentiment, each good enough of its kind; but these do not constitute poetry, although necessary or useful adjuncts to it. Hayley was in his day the smoothest and most musical of poetasters; that brilliant butterfly, poor Letitia Landon, has poured forth more sentiment in her poems than can be traced in those of all the great English masters, from Chaucer to Byron. Shakespeare's finest passages often exhibit wisdom and sentiment of the highest order, but the spirit of poetry breathes over all; Tupper is wise and McKay is sentimental, but the poetical element is wanting, or is supplied in such minute particles, that the prosaic leaven remains intact. Enough, however, of the Doctor's poetry, with which we have less to do than with his politics; and yet the injuries he seems desirous to inflict on us might lose some of their force from a more just appreciation of the intellectual calibre of

our enemy; for as our enemy we Canadians must regard him, whatever he may regard himself.

But however deeply we may resent the mischievous course pursued by Dr. McKay in his interference with the affairs of this country, we should regret that he deserved the character given of him by his advocate in the *Montreal Herald*. We only insist that he is a bad poet and a bad politician; this advocate more than intimates that he is still more worthless as a man. He tells us that the Doctor has sold himself to his present employers, and now repudiates in the prose of his communications to the *Times* the principles which he sang in the poetry of his former years. The charge is a grave one, coming from such a source, and we give his accuser's own words: "I deeply regret," he says, "that he should have fallen into bad company, not alone on this side of the water, but also with his present employers in Printing House Square;" again, he is declared to be "in a false position by getting into bad society;" and still again, that "Mr. McKay's connection with the *Times* led him to excuse slavery, if not indeed to argue in favour of it." These are deep offences, truly. "Call you that backing your friend," most sage Foolometer? "a plague on such backing." A strange accusation this, to bring against "the genial Charles McKay," as his libeller elsewhere styles him, and which, we trust, nay, we believe to be as unfounded as it is disgraceful.

But it may be said that we write more harshly on this subject than is our wont. Well, it may be so; for we think that Dr. McKay has been guilty of gross injustice to the people of Canada and British North America. Almost a stranger amongst us, he has presumed to sit in judgment on us, and denounce us to the British nation and the world as a mean, false, selfish race, who belie in our acts the sentiments we profess, and who only cling to England for the benefits, pecuniary and otherwise, we derive and hope to derive from the connection. A leading correspondent of the London *Times* is almost a power in the state, and his utterances carry with them an influence often out-weighting their intrinsic value. When his predecessor, Dr. Russel, was in the Crimea and the United States, his florid and sometimes vulgar but vigorous sketches of passing events commanded public attention to such an extent that the ablest generals of England, France, Russia, and America scarcely loomed larger in men's eyes. It is Dr. McKay the correspondent whom we blame, and not the man. The last task we leave to his admiring friends.

BRIDGE was hired in a female boarding-school, and was told to ring the first bell at six in the morning. At half past six o'clock the pupils were required to attend prayers; but for several mornings after Bridget commenced her labours, many were unusually tardy, giving as an excuse, that they did not hear the rising bell. "Sure, marm," she replied, "I never rings it very hard, for fear I might wake the young ladies!"