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Northwest Review.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 9, 1900

CURRENT COMMENT

"The Review," of St. Louis, in its issue of April 26, after quoting a passage from our editorial of April 11 on "Little Papers," says: "That the NORTHWEST REVIEW itself belongs to the category of the small-sized but solid Catholic journals, may be seen from the synopsis we have made and print in another column of this issue, of its splendid article on the late Dr. Mivart. There are dozens of Catholic blanket-sheets in this country and Canada that do not print anything so thoughtful and meaty all the year round."

That same little paper of Mr. Arthur Preuss's is one that any intelligent Catholic, who is used to it, would leap upon eagerly as soon as it comes. Its information is so varied and piquant; its range, thanks to contributors commanding a dozen languages, so truly world-wide; its spirit so absolutely loyal to the Church. The latest number, May 3, is a particularly bright and cosmopolitan one. And yet we are pained to see Mr. Preuss, in that very number, quoting, with apparent approval, Mr. W. H. Thorne's coarse abuse of the Rev. C. C. Starbuck. Of the latter's exposure of Protestant weaknesses the editor of the Globe Review is quoted as orally declaring that they are "the cheapest hodgepodge of second hand, borrowed and stolen and mended old clothes that any tailor ever foisted on his all too credulous and ignorant customers." This would be bad enough if Mr. Starbuck were as ignorant of the details of history as Mr. Thorne is; but to those who know that Mr. Starbuck is a most accurate and erudite scholar and that Mr. Thorne has neither accuracy nor scholarship this vituperation is contemptible. We have had occasion to test Mr. Starbuck's knowledge on historical questions in which we had inedited and exclusive information, and we have found him marvellously learned. Mr. Thorne may be useful as a watchdog barking at marauders that prowl about the Lord's vineyard, but when he attempts to criticize real scholars he reminds us of a satyr sneering at Hyperion's beauty.

The solemn opening of St. Joseph's Orphan's Home for Boys last Sunday in Winnipeg marks an epoch in the Catholic charities of our western metropolis. The history of the movement for the establishment of this much needed institution demonstrates the perfect harmony between the clergy and laity. His Grace had but to express a wish when the Fathers of St. Mary's immediately offered their own commodious presbytery and the laity took up the project with zeal and generosity. In view of all these recent facts one ceases to wonder that our charitable archbishop was more than usually felicitous in his inaugural discourse. He most feelingly described how those who helped the poor orphan boy shared in God's own divine attributes of mercy and liberality and how Christ, on the last day, would consider as done to Himself whatever was done to the poor. His Grace also praised the devoted Grey Nuns whose special province is works of charity, since their official title is "Sisters of Charity." In appointing Sister Duffin as superior of the new home they have made an excellent choice.

CATHOLIC EDUCATION.

We reprint elsewhere the Bookman's high appreciation of Father Brosnahan's reply to President Eliot, of Harvard, on the standard of Catholic college education. In its article the Bookman calls the reply "very clever and clear-thinking"; it says that "educators have everywhere been talking of it," that it "is one of the neatest bits of controversial literature that has appeared for a long time," it declares it to be "a model of courtesy and urbanity," it adds that "its style is clear as crystal, its logic faultless, and its quotations, illustrations and turns of phrase are apt, piquant and singularly effective," and that "it is, in reality, a keenly critical and thoroughly practical examination of President Eliot's theories about electivism." There is no higher authority on literature in this hemisphere than the Bookman, and in this case its testimony is all the more valuable because it is staunchly, and often aggressively, Protestant.

And now Father Brosnahan comes out with a second paper on the issue raised by the October "Atlantic Monthly" by President Eliot against Jesuit colleges. The Sacred Heart Review of April 28, which publishes this paper, says it "is an answer to the question: Is the standard of education in Catholic colleges lower than that of Harvard? Various fruitless efforts have been made by several persons to induce President Eliot to state precisely in what respect the course of studies in Boston College" (of which Father Brosnahan was for some time Rector) "was defective." In an interview on this subject President Eliot said: "I only hope that the Jesuit colleges will be bettered and that their standards will be raised, so that they can be put on the same footing with other institutions of learning." When asked to specify what should be improved, he merely reiterated his general accusation. Speaking of

the alumni of Boston College, he said: "They know very well why Boston College is not placed"—"the question is not why they were not placed," writes Father Brosnahan, "but why they were displaced from the list"—"on the list of those colleges whose graduates are admitted to the Harvard law school as candidates for a degree, and they know the only way in which their schools can be put on the list. It is for them to improve their course of study." This is as cool and insolent as it is indefinite, and therefore quite in keeping with the usual tactics of the maligners of Catholic schools all over the world. But Father Brosnahan is not overawed by such claptrap. He pins President Eliot down to details. Comparing the Harvard Catalogue with the Boston College Catalogue, he proves that the freshman course of the latter is superior to the most solid freshman course which a Harvard student is allowed to take. This is, on Father Brosnahan's part, an extremely generous comparison, since, in point of fact very few Harvard men choose that solid classical course: in 1898-99 only one out of 471 freshmen pursued that course, and over 70 per cent. of them took, as one fourth of their examination matter, an introductory course on medieval and modern history with lectures three hours a week and no compulsory recitations. The next most popular course is one of elementary lectures on constitutional government two hours a week with recitations one hour a week. To this may be added an elementary half course in meteorology, a course in French prose and a half course in English literature. "Such sets of courses," writes Father Brosnahan, "may be elected in accordance with no principles, possess no unity or coherence, look to no purpose outside the possibility of adjusting lecture hours to opportunities for athletic or other 'wholesome delights of college life.'" These sets of courses are deplorably inferior to the sets of courses in Greek, Latin, Mathematics and German or French in Boston College and most of the Catholic colleges in America. Students may graduate from Harvard with absolutely no knowledge of the principles of logic, psychology and ethics.

Twenty-five years ago a Harvard B. A. degree meant liberal culture and intellectual breadth; at present it may and generally does mean "a thing of shreds and patches," an educational minimum wherein disjointed scraps of knowledge do duty for symmetrical thought. President Eliot prides himself on the continually increasing number of Harvard graduates and attributes this to the great variety of elective courses, "but he has only preserved the shell of the baccalaureate degree, and holds up to the world as an exhibit the number of shells he has turned out in a year. His courses have become so liberal that conferring the B. A. degree upon graduates for such work is like selling oleomargarine for butter." Albeit non-Catholic universities in Canada have not yet reached this extreme limit of electivism they are fast treading this downward path and thereby lowering the standard of educa-

tion, while their curriculum, in so far as it departs from the old standards, makes for dissipation of mind instead of training the judgment.

NOTES BY THE WAY.

The Provincial Legislature is again in session and if all indications do not fail of fulfilment the coming month or six weeks may see legislation enacted which would have a considerable influence on the future of the province. The Hon. Hugh John Macdonald never loses an opportunity of emphatically stating that the party now in power intend to carry out their ante-election promises to the letter and it is, therefore, reasonable to suppose that during this session some steps will be taken towards the government ownership of railways, and that a measure will be introduced to prohibit the sale of intoxicants in the province. As to the railway proposition we have not much to say just now. Offhand we should feel inclined to doubt the practicability of any piecemeal scheme of government ownership, which is the most that can be achieved by a single province situated as ours is; but until we have the government's proposition in all its details before us we would withhold further criticism on this point. As to the other question we have no hesitation in declaring our conviction that a prohibitory law would not only be a failure, but that, whether it worked or failed, it would be an injury to the best interests of the province from every point of view and particularly disastrous to the city of Winnipeg and the other important centres of population.

As a matter of fact we have very little fear of anything so stupid ever coming into force. The present government were not elected to pass prohibition; it is safe to assert that three-fourths of their supporters at the late elections are opposed to prohibition; and it is a fact that in the only constituency in which a prohibition candidate presented himself he was left hopelessly in the rear and the government candidate was elected. It is said that on two occasions a majority of the electors who voted at special elections declared themselves in favor of prohibition, but no level-headed man who knows the province will claim that the voting on these occasions can be accepted as a true indication of the feeling of the electors on this important matter. When the votes referred to were taken the vast majority of our citizens looked upon prohibition as being altogether out of the realm of practical politics, so thousands of them did not go to the trouble of voting at all and hundreds of those who did cast their ballots in favor of prohibition did so merely for the sake of hampering their political opponents by bringing them face to face with a difficult question and one extremely dangerous to handle.

But beyond these considerations there are several others even more weighty which should make our legislators hesitate before adopting drastic legislation of this kind. It is very questionable whether prohibi-

tion would serve the cause of true temperance in our province, and, on the other hand, there is not the slightest doubt that in many ways it would introduce a state of affairs that would seriously impair the moral tone of the whole community. Under our present system, it is true, we have a certain amount of drunkenness, but surely a wise licence law can be devised which, being efficiently and unflinchingly administered, will reduce this evil to its minimum quite as certainly as prohibition would do, for prohibition never yet abolished drunkenness entirely in those countries where it has been tried. We will not go so far as to say, as many do, that there is just as much drunkenness in prohibition countries as in those where licence prevails, but we do assert that this is very near the truth, and to offset whatever little gain is made in this direction there are numerous other evils which inevitably follow in the wake of prohibition, such as illicit and secret drinking, adulteration, false swearing, and smuggling.

Two other points that have to be taken into consideration are the revenue and compensation. A great portion of the money spent in the government of our country comes from the fees paid for licences, and the politicians will find it difficult to make up the amount without imposing burdens on the people which will be felt much more keenly inasmuch as they must take the shape of direct taxation. And added to this burden there is the compensation which would have to be paid to those who have millions invested in the business; for it is inconceivable that any large section of the people would be in favor of coolly closing up all the breweries, the distilleries and the hotels, and practically robbing the owners of the immense amounts of money which are tied up in these concerns. It is preposterous to think that any British legislature would legislate a man out of business after encouraging him to go into that business and after taking his money for years in the shape of a licence, and then refuse to compensate him for the injury done him. If we want to keep a shred of our self-respect we must have no prohibition without compensation.

For these and for several other reasons we do not believe that prohibition is desirable or within the range of practical politics, and it is a matter of regret that it has been brought to the front as an issue of the day. It means agitation and turmoil, a disturbance of business and the introduction of an element of sentimentality into our provincial affairs which could well have been dispensed with. It seems to be the fate of Manitoba to be always worried and annoyed by politicians or by cranks who will not let well enough alone; but we sincerely trust that prohibition will receive an effectual knockout blow in the first round, for should it by any misfortune be put into force it would mean a period of agitation for its repeal, and what Manitoba wants now is not agitation over the liquor traffic, but rest and peace under wise administration.