

THE DÈNÈ SYLLABARY AND ITS ADVANTAGES.

Picture-writing is the most ancient, if not the first parent or original root, of all the known graphic systems. American aborigines hardly ever went beyond this stage in the art of permanently expressing ideas; but the Semitic and prehistoric Turanian races began early to tire of this slow and indefinite process and, by shortening and conventionalizing the original pictographs, they introduced hieroglyphic systems each character of which expressed an idea or a word.

This was still very cumbersome, inasmuch as the number of symbols required was of necessity very great. Hurry in writing or engraving gradually caused rough derivations thereof to be taken as the expression, not of whole words or ideas, but of sounds, and this was the origin of the various syllabic systems whereby the number of necessary signs was greatly reduced.

A further disintegration of these and a demand for a still more limited number of graphic signs originated the first alphabet from which all those now used by the different nations of the old world were derived.

Such, in a few words, is the history of the graphic systems known in Europe and Asia. Now as to our own continent.