

To attempt to criticise Dr. Sheard's valedictory is impossible, because it was excellent and eloquent 'all through,' however, we will say that it was humorous in parts, earnest in others, encouraging the students to keep up a society which is doing all so much good.

The songs by Messrs. Gordon, Brown, and Carruthers were well rendered, and all received *encores*, which were happily responded to. The instrumental music, supplied by Messrs. Woody, Hall, Veitch and Brown, was very much appreciated and was also *encored*.

Readings were given by Messrs. Bell, Edmison, and Cale, being in each instance of the humorous character; these were excellently rendered and afforded much amusement to those present, who again called for *encores*.

Dr. McFarlane, being called upon, made a few remarks, and complimented the students on possessing so much talent.

The meeting concluded at a late hour.

General College Notes.

The Persian language has been added to the curriculum at Cornell.

President Porter, of Yale, is preparing a book on the *Ethics* of Kant.—*Ex.*

The Princeton Faculty now numbers thirty professors besides a corps of tutors, instructors and lecturers.

The Michigan *Argonaut* will henceforth devote part of its editorial columns to subjects outside the range of College news.

The freshman class of Cornell University has representatives from Russia, Spain, Brazil, Central America, Germany, Austria and Canada.—*Ex.*

Prof. Sylvester, of John Hopkins University, has accepted the chair as Savilian Professor of Geometry, at the University of Oxford, Eng.—*Ex.*

At a recent Harvard debate, on the subject, 'Resolved, that Wendell Phillips's course in regard to slavery was that of a true statesman,' the negative won by 38 to 25.—*Ex.*

McGill has appointed a committee to compile a new song book. It is meeting with great encouragement in its labours, as several hundreds of dollars have already been guaranteed for the purpose.

Queen's University will be represented by its Chancellor, Mr. Sandford Fleming, C. E., C. M. S., and Harvard by James Russel Lowell, at the Tercentenary celebration of the University of Edinburgh, in Easter week.

The De Pauw University, in Greencastle, Ind., is to have eight more buildings—a law college, a medical college, a theological college, an observatory, two dormitories, and other structures—to be erected without delay.—*University Gazette.*

At the last annual commencement of the University of Tokio, Japan, which was held October 27, 1883, there were 67 graduates, representing the departments of law, civil engineering, chemistry, physics, medicine, literature and pharmacy.—*Ex.*

Yale College, which was about a year ago the recipient of \$50,000 from A. E. Kent, of San Francisco, has received \$25,000 more from the same person. The whole amount is to be used in the erection of a chemical laboratory for the Academical Department.—*Ex.*

A meeting held at McGill on Saturday, 23rd February, to discuss the advisability of organizing a University Club, decided that steps should be taken at once to carry out the proposed scheme. For this purpose two committees were appointed to see after suitable rooms, etc. It has not yet been decided whether undergraduates will be admitted to the advantages of the Club or no.

Dr. Charles Walderstein, a member of the the junior year of the class of 1883 at Columbia College, is the newly-elected director of the Fitzwilliam Art Museum, Cambridge University, England. There were six competitors for the place left vacant by Professor Sydney Calvin's transfer to the British Museum, and the cry against the choice of a foreigner was raised in this case as with Mr. Lowell.—*McGill University Gazette.*

The McGill University *Gazette* complains of the inanition and want of interest manifested in their Literary Society. We

would advise them to make some approximation to parliamentary procedure as has been done with so much success in our own Society. The appointment of permanent leaders from each year charged with the responsibility of bringing out members and providing speakers has worked well with us. The only difficulty experienced is in hitting upon a principle of division. Most would object to political lines being drawn; but perhaps as politics are never discussed, that mode of dividing is the best that offers. The division made, and leaders from each year being chosen, an emulation at once arises which infuses animation and earnestness into discussions.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

III.

HIS SERIOUS POEMS.

In a paragraph, purporting to be a criticism, which appeared in the *Week* a short time since, and with which I have already ventured to disagree, it was stated of James Russell Lowell that in his serious poems he scarcely displayed the 'originality of genius.' Now, without especial reference to the editor of the *Week*, I observe that this remark is a stock phrase among magazine hacks and newspaper critics, and has probably been used by some member of their doubtful profession against every writer that ever lived. There have been those who would have us admire Shakespeare and Milton less reverently because they were not always original. But I have no sympathy with such professional cant. Furthermore, I much doubt whether the majority of those who habitually use this expression could give us an intelligible exposition of what the term 'originality of genius' really signifies. Let us endeavor to throw a little light on the question. And first with regard to originality. Speaking from a psychological and scientific standpoint, and with reference to the primary elements alone, there is no such thing as originality. The absolute creation of thought, no less than its absolute annihilation, is impossible to man. Moreover, the primary elements of thought are probably the same in all men of normal intellects, and the only possible originality is therefore originality of combination. This may be called creation, but it is rather the re-arrangement into novel forms of pre-existing elements. It is evident that both in variety and complexity of composition, the possible combinations of these primary elements are infinitely various. The combinations made by some minds are less numerous or less complex than those of others. However, all men make some of these combinations for themselves, and all men are so far original. Originality, therefore, is a matter of degree. Now, in the second place the question arises:

What degree of originality entitles a man to be called a genius? Here we are met with a difficulty, which is practically insurmountable if we are seeking for an absolute standard of genius. For it is clear that, as it is impossible for any mere man, however clever a critic he may be, to know but a very few of all the thoughts of men that have ever found expression, so it is impossible for him to pronounce affirmatively upon the originality of any given expression of the writer he is reviewing. And it is equally impossible for him to pronounce negatively. For as he does not know the secrets of the author's mind, he cannot say whether the author effected the given combination himself, or accepted it ready-made from another. The author himself is the only authority; and he is quite fallible, since he may have originally obtained the idea from another, and yet have entirely forgotten this fact subsequently. It is, of course, not sufficient to prove an author's lack of originality and of merit in a given case, to show that the thought he has expressed was previously expressed by someone else. For it is not only possible, but highly probable, that the same mental combinations may be made by two or more persons in entire independence of each other.

Furthermore, he who takes the simple thoughts of others and adds his own by way of illustration or ornament, is fairly entitled to be considered original as far as his illustrations or ornaments go, and, these, indeed, frequently constitute the most valuable part of the total thought. Indeed, strictly speaking, the use of different words to express a thought alters the thought, and gives originality to the expression; for words derive all their meaning from association, and it is probable that the associations in connection with no two words are precisely the same.

We conclude from all these considerations that the standard of originality and of genius cannot be absolute, but is strictly relative to the individual critic's mind, and that it will vary even in his mind according to the stage of intellectual advancement to which he has attained. If, therefore, Mr. Lowell does not appear to the editor of the *Week* to possess that degree of originality which would entitle