

of an infectious disease hospital is that it be free to any one within the municipality. Should private wards and extra attendance be demanded, of course they might be paid for ; but it ought to be understood that the hospital exists for all who are sick of infectious diseases, and that the public safety is best consulted by having its doors so widely opened that any physician diagnosing infectious disease might, if he thought it necessary in order to prevent the spread of infection, at once telephone the Health Department, as is done in London in the case of the smallpox brigade, for the ambulance to have the patient at once removed, and the Department to take the necessary measures for disinfecting the house.

CACOETHES SCRIBENDI: THE WRITING MANIA.

WHEN one considers for a moment the unlimited number of journals which daily come under his notice, whether voluntarily on his part or perforce, he might, with very good reason, be excused for exhibiting symptoms of syncope at the thought of the hopelessness of the task before him, should he honestly endeavor to search, even by any *cradling* process, for grains of gold in the unlimited amount of *débris*. We are told (and the calculation was made years ago) that more than thirty thousand volumes of history may be found, and one might naturally wonder how any student could ever dream of attempting to climb Parnassus ; or how any honest worker dares, in the face of such a fact, to publish his ideas and opinions before consulting these so numerous oracles. Du Fresnoy, one of the greatest of readers, cheers the historiographer by showing "that a public library is only necessary to be consulted ; it is our private closet where should be found those few writers who direct us to their rivals, without jealousy, and mark in the vast career of time those who are worthy to instruct posterity." What is here said might, with greatly added emphasis, be repeated regarding the hardihood displayed at the present day by anyone who attempts to write on scientific subjects ; for regarding so-called scientific *literati* the lines, of the old Scotch song in which the canny old hills-man characterizes the women, who have grown enthusiastic over Prince Charlie, might often appropriately be quoted, (reversing the gender,) "Thae women hae a' gane wud ;" but knowing that ourselves may perhaps be

classed amongst the *loonies* we hasten to our own defence, and would silence all uncharitable remarks by Daniel O'Connell's method of quoting Latin—" *Tantus amor florum, et generandi gloria mellis.*" There are, however, various reasons why literary composition continues, even at the risk of being designated by the equivocal title *cacoethes scribendi*. The first, and best, reason is that writers believe they have a *mission*. It is true that it may be, as it often is, that of Mrs. Jellyby sending boots and blankets to the Hottentots ; but nevertheless to-day, as in the past, there are Mahomets, and this and the other earnest man has not been wanting who could whisper audibly, "Go to, I will make a religion." Carlyle in "Characteristics" would describe the condition as due to disease since he says, "The beginning of Inquiry is Disease," all science, if we consider it well, must have originated in the feeling of something being wrong ; and those who have developed the faculty of thought, and have Force enough to break the Lilliputian strands of fashion, necessity constrains, even though a voice crying in the wilderness, to adopt the now easily accessible method of preaching their new crusade.

By others, and perhaps a considerable number, literary composition is cultivated as a pleasurable employment. Said Buffon, speaking of the hours of composition, "These are the most luxurious and delightful moments of life ; moments which have often enticed me to pass fourteen hours at my desk in a state of transport : this *gratification* more than *glory* is my reward ;" and Addison neatly points out how those parts of life which are exercised in study, reading and library occupations become a method of "filling up those empty spaces of life which are so tedious and burdensome to idle people."

Viewed from a somewhat different standpoint literary composition is cultivated by some as is music, simply the development of a *faculty*, or in some instances a hereditary gift. For instance Francis Galton points out in "English Men of Science" that through several generations the *Roscoe* family "was characterized by much cultivation, refinement and poetic taste," in the same way in which that of the *Hills* (e.g. Sir Rowland) was active in "social improvements, power of organization, mechanical aptitude," etc. ; or the *Darwins* remarkable for a love of "natural history and theory."