

BRIEF LITERARY NOTES.

[Carefully selected from various sources and compiled specially for THE OWL.]

It is well to form a definite idea of the term "literary originality," and of all that it implies. There is a common impression in the mind of even the educated public that the novelists' work is wholly creative, that he evolves the plot from the depths of his imagination and creates the characters who play their part upon his stages. This idea is a mistaken one. According to the testimony of the authors themselves, when they condescend to explain their modes of operation, they really create little, save the outline the story. This, the frame work, once set up, the portraiture of character, the descriptions of scenery, are all, or at least in great part, taken from nature. In other words, the novelists do not, as a rule create, but describe character; as a general thing, they indicate in description and conversation the manners, modes of thought, and actions of individuals whom they perhaps have known. And so as to places where they locate the scene of story; the novelists do not create localities, but simply describe what in all probability they themselves have seen. The best novelists are not great creators, but great describers.

Concerning the words *Roman* and *Romish* Mr. W. J. Macdonnel, of Toronto, writes: These words, both derived from "Rome," are not synonymous, as can, I think, be shown by examples. Everybody has heard of the "Roman Catholic Church," in fact the designation is recognized by Act of Parliament, but who ever speaks of the *Romish* Catholic Church? Again we hear of *Romish* practices, *Romish* tendencies, and so forth. These are not Roman practices or tendencies, but approximations. "*Tendimus in Latium*," that is, we have not yet arrived there. The words Roman and Romish are often used indifferently by people who know no better and mean no harm, but I never knew a Catholic who did not consider the quasi-hybrid epithet *Romish* as an insult. Even lexicographers are beginning to view it in the same light. The Rev. James Stormouth in his Dictionary of the English language" (Harpers, N.Y.,

1885,) defines *Romish* as "a term offensively applied to the adherents of the Roman Catholic Church." It may not be generally known that John Walker died a Catholic; we need not therefore be surprised that in the last edition of his dictionary (Peter Brown, Edinburgh, 1838), the word *Romish* does not appear. The very sound of those hissing epithets, *Romanist*, *Romanish*, *Papist*, *Romish*, &c., indicates their origin; they are the brood of the old serpent, and as such should be eschewed by every Christian and relegated to the place whence they emanated and where they belong.

Guy de Maupassant once said: "If you wish to develop imagination, saturate yourself with facts—facts found in the latest wonders of science."

The editor of the much-talked of De Quincey memorials, Robert Francis Japp, was born in 1848, at Dundee, Scotland, and educated at schools in Dundee and St. Andrews, and at the Universities of St. Andrews, Edinburgh, Heidelberg and Bonn. Since 1881 he has been lecturer on chemistry in the Normal School of Science, South Kensington. In 1885 he received a fellowship from the Royal Society. Three years later the University of St. Andrews honored him with the degree of Doctor of Laws.

Lord Randolph Churchill intends to write a book about his journey to Mashonaland, in South Africa. It will first appear in the form of twenty letters to the *London Graphic*, for which he will be paid \$10,000, or \$500 each.

The unpublished novel by Carlyle, found by the *Fall Mall Gazette*, is pronounced fearfully stupid. It is called *Wotton Reinfred*, but has been re-named by the *Hartford Courant*, "*Wotton Inflection*."

Speaking of James Whitcomb Riley, the Hoosier poet, William Dean Howells says: "His *Rhymes of Childhood* take themselves quite out of the category of ordinary verse, and refuse to be judged