

who had entered at a time when Profs. Wright and Howard began their work. Their zeal, energy and influence, he said, still stimulated him, and he would ever be grateful for having been brought in contact with them. There are many such. From 1853 to 1859 Dr. Wright edited with Dr. McCallum the *Medical Chronicle*, in which appear many valuable communications from his pen, as well as able editorials. In the Hospital he was a good clinical Instructor, and an able and dextrous operator.

Since 1875, the date of Dr. Gardner's appointment, no special changes have taken place in the teaching staff of the Medical Department. The resignation of Dr. Craik was followed by the appointment of the Professor of Practical Chemistry. For the vacancies left by the resignation of Drs. Wright and McCallum, the Faculty have, we hear, made the following recommendations: For Materia Medica and Therapeutics, Dr. James Stewart, of Brucefield, Ont. The chair of Midwifery and Diseases of Children, will be divided into one of Midwifery and Diseases of Infants, and one of Gynaecology. For the former Dr. A. A. Browne has been chosen, for the latter Dr. Gardner. Dr. Wilkins, of Bishop's College, has been asked to take Medical Jurisprudence, vacated by Dr. Gardner, and Dr. R. L. MacDonnell will take Hygiene.

In the recommendation of Dr. Stewart, the Faculty have taken a step which augurs well for the future. They have gone outside the city and the Province and have chosen the best man obtainable under the circumstances. Dr. Stewart is an alumnus of McGill ('76), and, though he practises in a small town in Ontario, has the reputation of being one of the best trained physicians in the Dominion. He has spent long periods abroad on three separate occasions, and has been in Vienna for the past seven months. His work and tendencies have been strongly therapeutical, and he has studied in the laboratories of some of the great experimental teachers of this subject. He will be an acquisition to the Profession of the city, and we predict for him a brilliant career in the University.

The establishment of separate chair of Gynecology will be greeted with satisfaction by all students.

Dr. Gardner has given up general practice, and will be able to devote a large part of his time to the practical teaching of this subject.

Dr. A. A. Browne graduated in Arts in 1866 (Medallist in Literature) and in Medicine in '72. For four years he has been assistant to the Professor of Midwifery, and has taught clinical obstetrics at the Lying-in-Hospital. We believe he has one of the largest practices in the city in his special department. His introduction this summer session of the practical course on Obstetric Operations, has given general satisfaction.

Dr. Wilkins is a graduate of Toronto (M.B. 1866), and has been Professor of Pathology and Physiology in Bishop's College. He has the reputation of being an enthusiastic and able worker, and is one of the ablest microscopists in the country.

Contributions.

(We are not responsible for any opinions expressed in this column.—EDS.)

A FEW WORDS ON ORIGINALITY.

Originality is put prominently forward as the greatest merit in writings of every kind. This is, of course, correct to a certain extent; but, when we come to examine the question closely, it will perhaps appear that authors have at least as frequently erred while engaged in the pursuit of this greatest merit, as when following in the beaten track of thought and discovery.

In the world of science how many a blunder can we trace to this source: how many a vain hypothesis, how many an ill-digested theory! We would assuredly not have people too subservient to opinion, too fond of the wisdom of the ancients, especially when these are possibly opposed to truth. For, thus the world would have lost a Luther, a Galileo, a Bacon, a Kepler, a Newton; superstition and conventionality would still be sitting on their cloudy throne; astronomy and chemistry would be scarcely yet dawning on the distant horizon of knowledge. But the lot of making great discoveries does not fall to everyone, and there can be no greater mistake than to suppose truth can be attained only by perpetually overturning present opinions.

The undue pursuit of originality in literary compositions is apparently less dangerous, but not really so. The blame of many a mistake on this score seems to lie at the door of a certain class of critics. The world begins to tire of reading the oft-repeated complaints made by some on the subject

of plagiarism. It would seem as if they wished to establish a monopoly of ideas and thoughts. The fortunate author who has hit upon one path is to claim it as his own property—to prohibit all others from using it. We need not insist on the ultimate consequences of such a proceeding. What would become of modern poetry if Homer had thus taken out a patent for every simile, and registered every metaphor? The greatest and best of writers would have had no choice but to throw down their pens, and abandon authorship in despair.

Consider the matter as a question of right. Is it not possible that the minds of two people may be similarly constituted and fashioned, at least in many particulars? Are we all to be regarded as so many Chubb's locks, each with his own particular impress, partaking in no respect of the qualities of another? Does each stream flow along always in its separate channel? Is each man surrounded as with a fence of his own peculiarity, caring not for other men, and thinking not with other men? Undoubtedly not. Then, why should we not, in the circle of thought, arrive oftentimes at the same point where others have been before us? The experience of everyone shows that we do. It may be that the process has been the same—or the paths may have been different—as two travellers may arrive at the Indies, though one has pursued his voyage on the pathless ocean; and the other followed the track of the dromedary across the sandy desert. In this case, the innocent and unconscious author is suddenly accused of having pilfered from an author whom he has never read. If he tries another road to avoid suspicion of the most distant imitation, his studied pursuit of originality may lead him into culpable or absurd eccentricities.

Again, suppose that an author does think fit to avail himself of that which has been suggested by another; may it not rightly belong to the subject of which he is treating, and fitly amalgamate with his own ideas? Or, may he not put the matter in a new light, and bring it out with additional advantage for the use and benefit of mankind? If some *suave* license were granted, then the works of great authors would in few cases outlive their own era—their expressions would become obsolete—and they would be lost to the world.

It must not be supposed by anyone that we are attempting to apologise in the slightest degree for those literary jackals, every one of whose ideas and sentences is pirated from the brains of others. Such men do not know how to apply, or to improve. If they alter at all, they do but soil that which they touch. But there are others who lay not up their talent in a napkin, but employ it to advantage; and, for the sake of such, for the sake of mankind in general, we would like to see established a republic of ideas—a commonwealth of thought. We would have every author regard his works as a drop in the universal ocean of knowledge—as a mite contributed to that treasury from which every man may borrow, who knows how to use his loan well.

As the subject of originality and the allied topic of borrowing have been frequently discussed by the greatest writers, we may be allowed to quote a few of their opinions. From a host of passages that occur to us, we will cite the words of an American Philosopher—of a German Poet—and of an English Archbishop.

Emerson is, we think, far too outspoken on the subject. Writing of Chaucer, he says: "He steals by this apology—that what he takes has no worth where he finds it, and the greatest where he leaves it. *It has come to be practically a rule in literature, that a man, having once shewn himself capable of original writing, is entitled thenceforth to steal from the writings of others at discretion.* Thought is the property of him who can entertain it, and of him who can adequately place it. A certain awkwardness marks the use of borrowed thoughts: but, as soon as we have learned what to do with them, they become our own."

Farther on in the same essay, Emerson continues: "It is easy to see that what is best written or done by genius was no one man's work. Our English Bible is a wonderful specimen of the strength and music of the English Language. But it was not made by one man, or at one time; centuries and churches brought it to perfection. There never was a time when there was not some translation existing. The Liturgy, admired for its energy and pathos, is an anthology of the piety of ages and nations, a translation of the prayers and forms of the Catholic Church—these, too, collected in long periods, from the prayers and meditations of every saint all over the world. Grotius makes the like remark in regard to the Lord's Prayer, that the single clauses of which it is composed were already in use in the time of Christ, in the rabbinical forms. He picked out the grains of gold." With much more to the same purport, which is well worth reading.

Let us now turn to the witty and satirical Heine. "Nothing," says he, in his *Lettres on the French Stage*, "nothing is more foolish than the reproach of plagiarism. There is no sixth commandment in his work: to lay his hands upon whatever material he finds necessary for his work: he may even appropriate whole pillars with their sculptured capitals, if only the temple is magnificent for which he employs them as supports. Goethe well knew this: aye, and Shakespeare himself before him. Nothing can be more absurd than to insist that a poet must find all his materials within himself, and that this only is originality. I am reminded of a fable in which the spider conversing with the bee, makes it a reproach against the latter that she collects materials from a thousand flowers for the construction of her honeycomb, and the preparation of her honey. "Whereas I," says the