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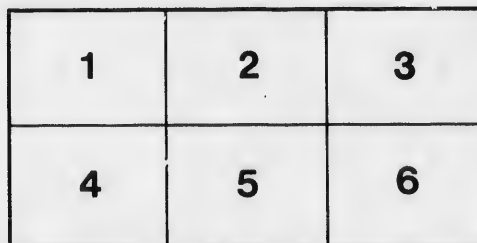
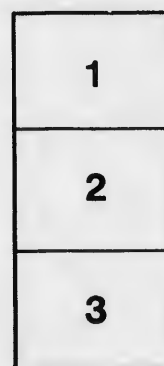
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ORIGINALITY.

A LECTURE,

BY PROFESSOR J. D. EVERETT, M. A.

ORIGINALITY:

A LECTURE

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

Halifax Young Men's Christian Association,

ON TUESDAY EVENING, JANUARY 15th, 1861.

BY

PROFESSOR J. D. EVERETT, M. A.,

OF KING'S COLLEGE, WINDSOR.



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ORIGINALITY.

THE word which forms the title of this evening's lecture, expresses a quality which universally commands admiration, and even a certain mysterious reverence. There is something divine and heroic about the man who, untaught by living voice or printed page, spins the web of truth from his own mind — through the dense clouds of ignorance which veil the vision of ordinary mortals, sends his piercing gaze into the orbs of beauty that glitter in the vault of heaven — or like Prometheus, pitying poor mortals in their misery, brings them aid from heaven, in the shape of inventions that will minister to their daily wants. Standing between the common herd of mankind and those higher intelligences who people the angelic world, he occupies a position which seems to elevate him above the sympathy of his fellow-men into a world of his own, where he feeds his mighty thoughts upon things too hard to be understood, — things which it is impossible for man to utter. As we look upon a NEWTON, a SHAKESPEARE, and a DANTE, we say "there were giants in those days;" — an immeasurable gulf seems to separate their transcendent genius from anything that we can ever hope to attain. We feel that it is for us to lie low before such imposing presence, rather than to attempt treading in their footsteps, or in any way availing ourselves of their example. Such things are too high for us; we may understand a little of their achievements — but we look upon

them as upon "the king in his beauty," and "the land that is very far off."

And while such is our implicit reverence for the mighty minds that stand so high removed above their fellows, some portion of their majesty is reflected upon every individual of whom we can say that he has become an originator,—that his brain has given forth to the world something which it never saw before, but which it now beholds with admiration, or uses with thankfulness. Whether he be a speech-maker, a book-maker, or a mechanician, if he be original in his department, we regard him as possessing a mysterious source of power which is unattainable to ordinary mortals.

There is at least, then, something to excite our curiosity in the subject proposed; and I trust also that its discussion will afford opportunity for a few hints which may be of practical service.

In the outset, I can imagine an objector meeting us with the denial that there is any such thing as "Originality,"—at least in these "degenerate days." Solomon said of old,—
"The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.—Is there anything whereof it may be said, See this is new?—It hath been already of old time, which was before us."

Nevertheless it has been the constant ambition of rising geniuses, from Solomon's day to this, to do and discover new things. That which is old is put down as "weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable," and the new is regarded as the germ of man's hope and happiness. It is the natural tendency of mankind—at all events of the European races—to be continually pressing forward in progress to ultimate perfection,—to make every day better than the last—to build up every year upon those which have gone before it, and never to rest till heaven itself is scaled. What a gloom will be thrown over the aspi-

rations of the ambitious, the schemes of the wise, and the expanding hopes of every well-wisher to his species, if we are compelled to accept the dictum—that there is no progress possible for man except in a circle—that fret and fume as he may he cannot escape from his prison walls, but must pace and repace the same weary round which bygone generations of prisoners have beaten before him.

Many departments of enquiry furnish a remarkable confirmation of the wise man's dictum. Many of the great controversies in Religion and Philosophy have sprung into existence again and again among different nations, and in different stages of the world's history. Questions which naturally arise from man's constitution and circumstances have obtruded themselves upon his notice in every thoughtful epoch, and have received the same contradictory solutions from different classes of minds; while a third class, founding on the interminable controversies thus evoked, have cut the Gordian knot by declaring that true knowledge is impossible for man, and that nothing but doubt remains for him upon all the points which he is most anxious to know.

Thus there has been progress from root to stem, from stem to leaf and flower, from flower to seed, and the seed has remained buried in the earth to go through the same changes again in due season. Each step appeared at the time to be an advance upon that which preceded it, but in truth there was only a cycle of change, the phases recurring every time in the same order of succession. "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth forever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the South, and turneth about unto the North; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again."

In spite, however, of the phenomena to which I have just alluded, there is good reason for maintaining that even in the domain of Mental and Moral Science there has been, upon the whole, an onward progress, just as a cyclonic storm advances at the same time that it rotates.

And whatever opinion we may entertain regarding this department of Philosophy, we cannot but admit when we turn our consideration to the *Material Sciences*, that *here* at least there has been progress and discovery, to an extent which would probably astonish even Solomon himself.

Yet even here it is remarkable how much difficulty is generally found in tracing any important invention to its originator. In nearly every case competitors are to be found who personally or through their biographers dispute the claim.

ARKWRIGHT, who is called the inventor of the spinning jenny, and who made his fortune out of the invention, is said to have borrowed the design from another man who is comparatively unknown. The steam engine was brought into being by a number of inventors, successively improving on one another, though the most important improvements were made by JAMES WATT; and several forms of the locomotive had been constructed before GEORGE STEPHENSON rendered it available for profitable use. There are several claimants for the invention of steam navigation, and the reputed inventor of the "screw" has not been allowed to hold his claim without dispute. No single name stands before the public as the inventor of the Electric Telegraph. The safety lamp was invented independently by DAVY and STEPHENSON. The sextant was invented independently by NEWTON and HADLEY. The invention of the stereoscope is sharply contested to this day by BREWSTER and WHEATSTONE. DAGUERRE, whose name is almost a synonym for photography, was not the inventor of that art. Three great names, CAVENDISH, WATT, and LAVOISIER, have been put forward as the discoverers of the compo-

sition of water, and it is only within this last year or two that the controversy has been decided in favour of Cavendish.

To go further back, the invention of printing is stoutly contested by two or three claimants in different countries of Europe. The composition of gunpowder, which is generally ascribed to SCHWARTZ, a Monk of Cologne, is said to have been known before his time—indeed Roger Bacon tells us that a mixture of nitre, sulphur, and charcoal was in common use among boys in his own day to produce explosions. There are two claimants for the invention of the telescope; but long before either of them the same Roger Bacon had published an account of the manner in which such an instrument might be constructed.

It would be easy to adduce other illustrations; but these are sufficient to exhibit the uncertainty which frequently attends the origin of important inventions, rendering it difficult to distinguish between a true inventor and one who has grown rich on other men's ideas.

How is this uncertainty to be accounted for? One would have thought that the admiration and gratitude of mankind would have assuredly marked the individuals who entitled such benefits upon their race, and that their names would have been enshrined in everlasting remembrance. Is it that rogues are so numerous that an honest man is not allowed to retain an undisputed claim to his own ideas? Or is it not rather that invention is generally a gradual work, which requires the labor of many minds to elaborate it. Stone upon stone the edifice is reared by successive workers; and it is difficult to pronounce at what precise stage in its erection it first deserves the name of a house. Often too the labours of the thinker and the worker are distinct, and yet both are necessary before the idea can become a fact. One man describes in general terms how a thing may be done, but does not take the trouble to do it, or perhaps does not

see his way clear to overcome some difficulties in the details of execution. Another man does it, and rests satisfied with having practically proved it possible. A third, with less ingenuity but more energy and worldly wisdom, discerns the use of the invention, and from a private curiosity turns it into a public benefit. The particular circumstances of each case must determine which of these three men has the greatest claim upon public gratitude. It is not always the man who first throws out the idea, for this is frequently the easiest part of the undertaking. It is much easier to make shrewd guesses at truth than to prove any one of the guesses to be correct; and a thing is not discovered when it is suspected, but when it is proved. HOOKE suggested the possibility of universal gravitation; but Newton proved it to be a fact. Many persons expressed their belief that lightning was identical with electricity; but FRANKLIN devised and executed an experimental test. The earth had been familiarly spoken of as a globe—in fact it was usually called by the Romans *orbis terrarum*—(the globe of the lands)—a thousand years before the time of Columbus, who was the first to venture upon the attempt of proving its globular form by sailing round it—an attempt which issued in success of a different kind from that which he anticipated, leading not to a shorter passage to India, but to the discovery of a new Continent. A courageous spirit, and unwavering faith were the qualities which constituted his greatness, and made him one of the heroes of discovery.

Sometimes an invention has lain at the feet of men for years, only waiting to be taken up and used; and has been neglected because its utility was not perceived. For instance, Bookbinders had been in the habit of stamping titles upon book covers by a process which was virtually printing, long before printing was applied to books themselves.

Sometimes a discovery seems to be evolved from the gradual progress of human knowledge, which has advanced so near to its borders that it cannot long escape detection; and though in such cases the men of keenest intellect may be the first to detect it, the merit of the discovery belongs in great measure to the age in which they live. Hence it often happens that the same discovery is made contemporaneously by different persons, and suspicions of piracy are entertained without any foundation in fact. Thus it was with the calculus which has proved so mighty an instrument in the hands of modern mathematicians, and respecting whose discovery a fierce war of words was carried on between English and Continental savans, the method having been elaborated independently and contemporaneously by Newton, under the name of Fluxions, and by LEIBNITZ, under that of the Differential Calculus. In like manner (excepting the disputes) our own age has witnessed the discovery of the planet Neptune by calculations conducted independently by ADAMS in England, and LEVERRIER in Paris, their numerical results agreeing closely, and being obtained within a few months of the same date.

On the principle that "to him who hath shall be given," tradition has ever been prone to ascribe to heroes more than their due; and discoverers are frequently credited by popular opinion with that which does not belong to them. For instance in speaking of HARVEY as the discoverer of the circulation of the blood, many persons entertain the erroneous belief that before his time the blood was supposed to stand still in the vessels, and that he was the first to discover that it flowed—a belief which certainly gives our forefathers small credit for intelligence, as if, with the beating of the heart and the throbbing of the pulse, patent to their observation, they could possibly have rested in the assurance that the blood stood still. Harvey's discovery was not the fact of the blood

flowing, which was well enough known before, and could hardly have escaped the attention of the most unobservant, but the manner and direction of its flow. There are two sets of blood-vessels in the human body, each set consisting of large vessels opening into the heart, and branching off into smaller and still smaller vessels till they permeate the whole body. One set are called arteries, and the other veins. The opinion before Harvey's time was that the blood flowed backwards and forwards in each set of vessels, first flowing out from the heart to the extremities, where both veins and arteries are contracted to almost insensible dimensions, and then reversing its course and returning by the same way that it came. Harvey discovered that instead of flowing backwards and forwards, it *circulated*—flowing out by the arteries and returning by the veins; a position which medical men were slow to accept, because they could not detect any communication between the two sets of vessels, the channels of communication being in fact so minute as to be only visible under the microscope.

Let us not be too ready, my friends, to impute folly to our ancestors. In many of those cases where we are accustomed to do so, we should see reason to change our opinion if we were more fully informed. The more we know, the more liberal we shall become.

The illustrations thus far given, which have all been taken from the material sciences, on account of the peculiar definiteness and tangibility which belongs to them, will serve to familiarize us with what may be called the natural history of inventions, and prepare the way for remarks upon originality generally.

Perhaps I cannot better introduce my views than by laying down at the outset the two paradoxical maxims,—

First, That nobody can be original.

Second, That everybody can be original.

They are, of course, not both true in the same sense of the terms. In what senses they are respectively true we shall now proceed to explain.

The enemies of a great man sometimes endeavour to decry his genius and deny his inventive faculty, by showing that he has only re-constructed old materials—that he has invented no new power, but has only brought old powers to serve his uses—that he has discovered no new principle, but has only applied an old and well known principle to the attainment of a new end—that the wisdom which he puts forth as new, is only a collection of scattered fragments from the wisdom of the ancients—that he is merely an editor and compiler, who selects, arranges, and puts together—not an original thinker or worker.

Now, the first proposition which I wish to establish is, that if such objections as these are to be allowed validity—if the true meaning of the word Originality be that which these objections imply—then no man is, has been, or can be, original. Man cannot create, like the Almighty; he can only build with the materials which God has given him. The most original man that ever lived did no more than put together single things which God has given to mankind in common.

The Poet borrows his images from the broad page of nature which lies open to the view of all. The Mechanician can only produce adaptations and new combinations of old and well known mechanical appliances. The Novelist composes his plots of incidents which have occurred singly in real life. Most of the plays of Shakespeare, the most original of Dramatists, are founded either upon real history, or upon stories which had been worked up into plays by other poets before him; and if you analyze any one of his characters, even those which belong to the fairy world and the regions of imagination, you will find that though the character *as a whole* may strike you as unique, there is no *single feature* of it that is so.

In fact, as it is impossible for one born blind to have a conception of colour, just so it is impossible for any human genius to conceive of the impressions of a new sense; and when we attempt to conceive of supernatural forms and manifestations, the figures, movements, and voices,—in short all the phenomena which constitute the conception, are borrowed from the natural world. You may imagine a spiritual body to be light as air, or altogether destitute of weight, like a shadow,—you may attribute to it the pure transparency of glass, or the more imperfect transparency of vapour,—you may conceive its eyes as glowing with a pale ethereal light, like the trace left by a match rubbed in the dark—you may fancy you hear its voice, hollow as the wind sighing among the aspens,—you may even conceive of it as vanishing suddenly from view like a falling star, or melting gradually away, like a mist beneath the rising sun; but all those forms of your thought are borrowed from the world of mortals in which you dwell.

It has often been remarked by writers on mental philosophy, that the faculty which is called “creative imagination,” and which is most conspicuously displayed in the works of the greatest Painters and Poets, is really not creative but constructive. The genius of the artist or author is shown in so selecting and combining his images as to give a unity to the whole which they compose. He intuitively seizes upon the elements which are requisite for producing the desired effect, and brings them together like the dry bones in the valley of vision, bone to his bone, till order is brought out of confusion, and the dead limbs become instinct with life. He works as nature works in building up animal and vegetable life. The flowers whose gaudy hues adorn our gardens,—the hemlocks and pines whose graceful tresses wave in the forest, have all been elaborated by her wondrous chemistry, out of the vile earth beneath our feet, and the universal air that

blows over our heads. The vital forces which she bestows, have drawn from these common materials the elements of nutriment which they require, and have disposed the borrowed particles in root, stem, leaf, and flower, every particle to its own place in the organic structure. The elements which unite to form a tree are very various in their character and composition ; but there is a fitness of part to part which stamps a unity upon the whole ; and we regard the tree not as an aggregation of atoms but as one living thing. And such must be the characteristics of every true work of art. When a man without genius tries to compose, he produces patch-work—you might remove any piece and replace it by another without marring the design ; but the compositions of genius are living wholes,—you cannot remove a limb or alter a feature, without mutilating.

The foregoing considerations will serve to correct an error into which inexperienced thinkers are apt to fall, with regard to the means necessary for preserving and cultivating originality. For since invention consists in the re-combining of old materials, it is evident that an *extension of our knowledge* must increase our means of invention. In order, then, that a man should be original, it is not necessary that he should shut himself up alone, or refuse to work with tools which others have used before him. Such stubborn isolation would be affectation and conceit, not genius. The best aid to invention is to familiarize yourself with all that has been done by your predecessors—to put yourself in the humble position of a learner who is anxious, like the bee, to gather honey from every flower. Make yourself master of all the means and appliances which have already been devised for the attainment of the end which you propose ; then watchfully select the best among these, and where you find a deficiency, exercise your own ingenuity to supply it. It is thus that the greatest men have ever proceeded, not wilfully

departing from the beaten track to obtain the empty boast of novelty, but doing the best thing that offered itself, whether new or old;—for the highest genius forgets *itself*, wrapped up in the all absorbing pursuit of the object in view.

God has linked the ages together, bidding each generation reap the fruits which have been sown by their ancestors, and scatter fresh seed that shall bear fruit for posterity; as TENNYSON sings—

“Yet I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns.”

Life is short, but art is long—each generation can carry it only a certain distance, where they must leave it to be continued by their successors and brought to a consummation in due time. We must build up on the foundations of those who have gone before us, as the coral insect builds its house over the deserted abodes of its progenitors. That such has been the growth of all the arts and sciences, is a fact too well known to need any instances for illustration.

Spontaneous thought is often stimulated by contact with the thoughts of others. Listening to other people's thoughts helps you to produce fresh thoughts of your own; and while some writers have recourse to books for the purpose of plagiarising, others read for the sake of furnishing material to the suggestive faculty, that they may be assisted to produce thoughts which are not to be found in the books.

So much, then, for our first proposition—that there is no such thing as absolute Originality—that it is not in man's power to make a beginning, but only to elaborate materials which he finds prepared to his hand.

But there is another sense—in fact several senses—of the word, in which Originality is possible. And, to begin at the lowest step, there is a sense in which every one can be

original. Every one who has a character of his own, and does not live by copying other people, is original.

Many of the customs of society are observed mechanically; and there are some persons whose only rule of action is indicated by the questions—What is usually done? What will people say? The first step to practical knowledge is to be genuine—to seek the truth, and act the truth—to live intelligently, not mechanically—to inquire seriously, What ought I to do? and then to set to work in good earnest to do it.

Some writers are fond of telling us that this is an age of shams. Doubtless the tendency of that refinement which accompanies the progress of civilization is to hide rude feeling under a smooth exterior, and to make the conventions of politeness supersede the genuine expression of feeling. And whatever be the character of this age as compared with those which have gone before, it must at least be admitted that there are many shams abroad—shams which from their prevalence, and the toleration they meet with, may be in danger of absorbing us. Of all pests to society the hypocrite is the least original, the most despicable, and the most pestiferous. It were well, then, to shake oneself free of the slightest vestige of the character, and if we cannot be great, to be at least honest—truthful—genuine.

Young men who possess any ambition—and those who have none might be wiped from the page of existence without much loss to those who would be left behind—are generally anxious to be original. Here then is a very simple and effectual way of attaining the character. What is Originality, if it be not acting from the reason that is in you, as distinguished from a blind unreasoning compliance with the forms and habits by which you find yourself surrounded:—to shine like a star with your own light, and not to glow with a radiance borrowed from an external source? How many there are who have no depth of character, but according to the position.

in which they are placed, and the fleeting circumstances of the moment, will cry one day "Hosanna to the Son of David," and the next, "Crucify him, crucify him." A simple, upright, consistent man, who will act conscientiously whether in fashion or out of fashion, is nobler, stronger, more original, and every way more respectable, than the most brilliant of those who lack this element of greatness.

To adopt this course is simply to act in accordance *with the fact*; for, ignore it as we may, it is nevertheless an inevitable necessity that "every man must bear his own burden." Companionship may do much to lead us out of ourselves—sympathy may come very near us, and penetrate deep into the recesses of our being; but there is always an inner depth into which our dearest friend cannot enter—there is always a corner of the heart where we are friendless and alone. No man completely understands his most intimate acquaintance; there are no two characters exactly alike, and though you may unbosom yourself to a certain extent to those with whom you take sweet counsel, you cannot tell all—language has its limits—perhaps you would not tell all if you could—and for these reasons, if for no others, there must always be in every heart depths which are secret to human ken—which God only can see—there is a void in every human heart which God alone can fill.

Since, then, the Creator has given you a character of your own, distinct from that of any other person, where is the use of your trying to shape your course without reference to your individuality?

And not only so, but every man is *responsible* for himself; and however closely his nature and position may resemble those of other persons, he is at least entrusted with his own keeping, and must answer for the manner in which he disposes of himself. It is not self-conceit, but self-respect that is implied in regarding this charge as a weighty one; and

until an individual has awoke to the sense of that dignified responsibility which has been conferred upon him in making him his own master, he is still in the land of slumber—the realms of dreams—which will turn out to be, as Bunyan calls it, the City of Destruction.

I would appeal, then, to the ambition, the laudable ambition, of every young man before me, and would call upon him to be original—to act as one who has the gift of reason to guide his own conduct—to act intelligently, not mechanically—to be genuine—to be a MAN, and not the ghost and shadow of a man.

Rising now a step higher, we find that many men have attained a commanding position in human affairs, and earned for themselves, *par excellence*, the credit of Originality, by carrying out to a remarkable degree this same principle of action.

LUTHER, the Reformer, HOWARD, the Philanthropist, CLARKSON, the first and leading opponent of the Slave-trade—what was it that distinguished these men from the common herd, and made their names famous in history? Chiefly that moral characteristic called earnestness of purpose. In the cases of the two last, there was no remarkable intellectual power; but evils were glaring conspicuously before their eyes, which no one else volunteered to overthrow, so they offered themselves for the work, and carried it on to completion. An intense realization of the evils, and a resolute purpose to put them down, were the characters which distinguished these men from their fellows; and so you will often find that men of marked character and original design are simply those who try to realize what others dream of, and who act while others content themselves with talking. The heroes of the world have been men of faith—men whose beliefs and purposes did not sit lightly upon the surface of their minds, but worked within them as all-pervading, all-

powerful principles. It is *by faith* that men have subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

Such intense realizing faith, I call one of the sublimest kinds of Originality. The men who possess it may not be the first to think, but they are the first to act; and other men will bow before them, take the impress of their purposes, and submit to their leadership as master minds.

Our remarks under the last two heads have had reference to what may be called *moral* Originality; but *intellectual* Originality is also to a certain extent within the power of every person, as I shall now attempt to show.

There are two senses in which the word original is employed with respect to inventions. Sometimes it is used to denote that the invention was never made before—sometimes to denote merely that the inventor did not learn it from other persons, but found it out for himself. In this latter sense an invention may be made several times over, and nevertheless be original in every case. In this sense every person who thinks out a conclusion for himself must be admitted to the honour of Originality—everyone who can put ideas together, and not confine himself to borrowing his reasonings from other people. Inasmuch, then, as we are all gifted with the faculty of reasoning, we have all the opportunity of exercising original thought; and I may further observe that any person who accustoms himself to look at things as they are, and set down in plain terms his own genuine thoughts, will, in the natural course of things, acquire a style marked by freshness and raciness.

The kind of Originality which is most requisite for preachers, lecturers, and teachers of all names, is clear apprehension and vigorous masterly grasp of the subjects they treat of. It matters not to the hearer where or how the teacher obtained his ideas—whether he invented them himself or learned them from others, but only how he presents them. There is a vigour and raciness about the manner in which a man states those ideas which he has hit upon and discovered in the course of his own thoughts, which strongly contrasts with the tameness and pedantry of one who retails at second hand the thoughts of other men which he only half understands. But anyone who can express himself in such a manner as to show that he enters into the spirit of his own discourse, will confer as much benefit upon his hearers as if the matter of his discourse were his own discovery. Such a man will generally obtain credit for more Originality than he possesses; and the credit is not altogether undeserved, if measured by the benefit which he confers upon the public. Some of the deepest thinkers have written in a style which renders their works useless for popular reading. They require an interpreter who can amplify, illustrate and explain; and the interpreter, though not original in the highest sense, deserves the credit of a masterly thinker, whose office is honourable both in itself and in its uses to the public. The greater part of what passes for Originality in popular books and popular discourses, is only the popular presentation of thoughts which are trite and familiar to the initiated in the particular department to which the writer or speaker belongs. A preacher who should take a few paragraphs from that masterpiece of reasoning, BUTLER'S Analogy, and state their contents in such a manner as to render them intelligible and interesting to a popular audience, would receive credit for a profound and original sermon; and the credit so obtained would be well earned, the only mistake being that it is given

for the wrong thing—for new thoughts, instead of for teaching power. So it is with science and learning in general,—that mode of statement which is most convenient for the learned between themselves, is not the best adapted for popular discourse.

Just as the raw material raised by the producer goes through the hands of the manufacturer before it is available to the public, so there are two distinct kinds of labour requisite for popular instruction. It is one man's work to investigate and discover, and another's to present the discoveries to the public. The qualities of mind required for these two kinds of work are very different, and it seldom happens that they combine in the same individual. The successful prosecution of discovery generally demands such complete devotion to one pursuit as to isolate a man from ordinary modes of thought. He becomes so familiar with the more difficult parts of his own subject that he cannot sympathise with those who are ignorant of its elements; and he becomes so habituated to the use of technical terms that he is unable to convey his meaning in the language of common life.

In order to attain to a high position in learning or science, a man must submit to a large amount of toilsome and patient plodding, and must acquire the habit of fixing his attention for a length of time on dry details. The consequence generally is that while acquiring strength he loses suppleness. You cannot expect from the same class of persons, the endurance of the navvy, and the gracefulness of the accomplished dancer. Let us then give honour to whom honour is due—to the great thinkers for discovering the materials of our knowledge, and to the great teachers for rendering these materials available for our use.

There is one character who stands alone in history for the combination of the highest degree of intuitive discernment with the fullest power of public teaching. As it is the attri-

bute of Omnipotence to be present equally in the greatest things and in the least—in the quivering of an insect's wing, and in the motion of the worlds through space, so He who represented Omnipotence under the veil of flesh and blood, was able, from his perfect sympathy with human weakness, to be the instructor of the ignorant—the guide of those who were groping in darkness; and while He spake as one having authority, the common people heard Him gladly, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.

While acknowledging, then, as unquestionable, that the highest Originality is that which not only sees for itself, but seeing in advance of its age and predecessors, grasps truths which have never been attained before—a distinction which from its very nature can only be possessed by minds of the most gifted order—I nevertheless claim for every person who thoroughly understands a subject, the merit of some degree of Originality. And I support the claim by this consideration—that as one man can lead a horse to water, but ten men cannot make him drink; the act of drinking being the spontaneous effort of the horse; so, while the vehicle of thought may be presented from without, either in print or orally, no amount of reading or listening can make a man think unless he spontaneously exerts himself. Moreover, from the imperfection of language it generally happens that however carefully a truth may be stated there are loopholes through which errors and misconceptions may creep in, so that a correct conception of the truth cannot be formed without a little independent thinking.

With regard to that higher kind of Originality which consists in the discovery of things not found before, it may conveniently be divided into two species according to the department in which it is exercised;—including under the first head—

Useful inventions and discoveries in matters of fact.

Under the second—

Original conceptions of the beautiful—in poetry, rhetoric, and the fine arts.

Inventions of the former kind require strong intellect; those of the latter kind require vivid imagination and a keen sense of the beautiful.

We have already devoted so much space to the former class of inventions that we need not resume their consideration now; but to the second class—those which are produced by the poet and the artist—we have scarcely alluded, except to shew that what is called *creative* imagination in these arts is merely *constructive*—that all the forms and characters which are conjured up are merely new combinations of old ideas derived from the senses and from the experience of real life.

But here the question arises—How is it that these elementary conceptions are put together so as to form those harmonious and natural designs for which the great poets and artists are celebrated? How is it that out of universal nature a man of genius will succeed in selecting those forms and images which when combined will produce a beautiful and perfect picture?

Are we to suppose that he makes all kinds of trials, and selects those which are most successful? This is the course which would suggest itself to an unimaginative person, but it can never lead to anything better than patchwork. A man of fine imagination will find his conceptions taking the required form, the parts falling into their proper places, and a gorgeous structure arising before his mind's eye spontaneously, like a dream, or a revelation from some higher power. Such, at least, must be the case with the leading features of his design, though the details may admit of further elaboration.

There is something mysterious in the connection between the artist's will and the creations (as they are called) of his genius, which has in all ages led men to speak of his work as divinely inspired.

With regard to the obligations of poets to their predecessors, it will be allowed without dispute that those of modern times have learned much from this source. Even those who may not have borrowed phrases and images, have caught something of spirit and manner from their predecessors. And with regard to the poets of Classic Antiquity, it can scarcely be doubted by anyone who surveys the general history of literature, that the same thing is true, even of the most ancient of them—that even old HOMER, the oldest of them all, has not only taken the main features of his story from prevailing traditions, but has borrowed from preceding poets a great number of epithets similes, and happy turns of thought and expression, which had been so often bandied about as to become the common literary stock of the bards of his day.

There is a great deal in poetry, as well as in every other department of human work, that is conventional, and follows the fashion of the time. Every great master in literature is sure to be followed by a host of imitators—whose productions will be caricatures of his, exhibiting his mannerisms without his excellences.

Young writers, whose style is not yet formed, should avoid excessive devotion to any one author, as such devotion will inevitably lead them to imitate, perhaps unconsciously, the peculiarities of his style, thus sacrificing their own individuality, and borrowing another man's aspect instead of their own. It is not possible to set up any one model as a pattern for all writers, inasmuch as every man's individual bent of mind fits him for a certain style of his own, which being natural to him, will sit with greater ease, and be more effective than any other which he could adopt, for the expression of his thoughts.

It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that the proper style will show itself in the first attempts of a young composer. It requires development, and this will be favourably assisted by the observant perusal of the works of good writers—the more various their styles the better. He should read, not for the purpose of imitating, but to obtain command of language, so that he may the more easily find such phrases, or adopt such a construction for his sentences, as the particular sentiment which he desires to convey may require. There will necessarily be a certain amount of imitation taking place involuntarily; but if he avoids affectation and studies nature, he will be led to adopt from each author, those characteristics which best harmonise with his own turn of mind; and the result will be to draw him out, and enable him with greater freedom and force to give expression to his own natural character.

Study of one model, whether in literature, sculpture, or painting, is calculated to bias the taste, and weaken the power of Originality—indeed this effect will be produced by every kind of narrowness in education. But the study of many models, sufficiently diversified in their characteristics, will tend, like liberal education of every kind, to enlarge the mind, give susceptibility to the taste, produce activity in the man's ideas, and strengthen and mature whatever Originality he may possess.

The scales of custom and prejudice often blind men to the distinction between intrinsic beauties and those which rest entirely upon fashions and fleeting conventions. It was once thought necessary to begin every great poem with an invocation of the Muses—heaven goddesses who, according to the Greek Mythology, presided over literature and gave inspiration to poets. The custom continued long after the Mythology on which it was founded had ceased to be believed; and its ghost appears to have haunted MILTON when he indited

that grand opening sentence of his *Paradise Lost*, which, with all its eloquence and rotundity, borders closely on the blasphemous, being something between a playful imitation of the old Greek invocations, and a solemn prayer to the Almighty. Indeed, it may be said of Milton generally, that while his classical knowledge furnished him with abundance of ornament and elegant allusion, it often ran into pedantry, so that we find him looking at the facts and doctrines of the Christian religion through the spectacles of an old Heathen.

In like manner the great epic poet of the Romans, VIRGIL, often goes out of his way to imitate Homer, translating whole lines from him word for word, copying his exclamations and reproducing his similes, in a way which to a modern reader appears slavish, and not only uncalled for, but sometimes forced and inconvenient.

A reaction against fictitious tastes has set in among our modern poets, beginning with WORDSWORTH, based upon the axiom that a healthy mind will find a sufficient store of beauties in Nature as she presents herself to modern eyes, without pretending to look at her with the eyes of bygone generations—yea more, that Nature herself presents aspects more beautiful than the distorted likenesses of an Art which tries to flatter her.

It is charged against Wordsworth that in avoiding one evil he rushed into the opposite, and in his aversion to the unnatural and exaggerated, fell into the error of being weak and childish. This charge, however, cannot be brought against Tennyson, who is in some respects a follower of Wordsworth, and who, whatever may be his faults, has certainly the merit of rendering genuine modern sentiments into vigorous and elegant verse.

Wordsworth was the leader of a school who avowedly sought to depose false and conventional beauties, and restore Nature to the throne which they had usurped; but before

Wordsworth there was a Scottish Poet, the Bard of the Scottish people, who of all men deserves the title of a natural Poet. No critic can charge BURNS either with affectation or with twaddling; and no one has described more sweetly than he the beauties of nature's meanest works.

In drawing to a conclusion, let me now, by way of warning to all whom it may concern, mention some spurious kinds of Originality.

And first there is Self-will which, ignoring the mutual dependence of the human race, and the limits which must exist to the knowledge of any individual, asserts an independence that is essentially impossible. A wise man will not be unwilling to avail himself of the advice and instruction of others, but will be swift to learn, even, it may be, from an inferior; and when he is obliged to turn a deaf ear and go in the teeth of his advisers it will be from duty and necessity—not in the spirit of boasting. True firmness waits for the day of trial and does not parade itself needlessly. There are times when a conscientious man will feel himself compelled to pursue a course that appears headstrong, and in the spirit of Job when he said “miserable comforters are ye all,” will seek better sources of guidance than his friends afford; but to act from a mere spirit of opposition, and a desire to show one's own importance, is weakness and silly conceit. Before we strike out new ways of our own, let us make ourselves acquainted with those which already exist. Before honour is humility; and he who will not condescend to learn will remain ignorant as well as proud.

Secondly. Eccentricity is sometimes confounded with Originality; and many a young man affects singular habits, because he has persuaded himself that he is a genius, and he thinks eccentricity necessary to keep up the character. Depend upon it, a genius which requires such means to make

itself recognised is of a very questionable order. Indeed the mark sometimes attaches to those who are underwitted, as well as to those who are overburdened with sense ; and while the excessive development of certain faculties out of proportion to others may make a clever man appear awkward, it must be borne in mind that an under-development may produce a very similar deformity—just as a man may limp in his gait either from having one leg too long, or from having the other leg too short ; and it is a deformity, not an ornament, in any case.

And there is yet another mistake, more fatal than any—the mistake of supposing that Originality requires a departure from ordinary modes of morality—that genius is allied to licentiousness, and that regular habits, steady perseverance, and a sober, industrious life, are incongruous with the possession of great abilities. The man of abandoned character sometimes thinks himself entitled to despise those steady-going people who submit to be ruled by the moral law. He flatters himself that it is the brilliancy of his parts—the restless energy of his spirit, that spur him on to break through the trammels of law and order—that he is of too noble a nature to be bound down to regular work ;—just as warriors in semi-barbarous countries despise those who are engaged in trade. Idleness is ever ready to prop itself with adventitious supports ; but, reason it as you will, there is no nobleness, no superiority of mind, in folding one's hands and lazily submitting to be carried whithersoever the stream of passion and the breath of excitement may happen to waft you. The mightiest minds, the most original geniuses, have been distinguished by the intensest application. Newton, whose name fills the world, said that genius seemed to him to be nothing more than the power of application. Certain it is that men of genius have always been distinguished for the intense zest with which they engaged in their work ; they have gone on

the principle "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." And though it may sometimes happen that the violence of their impulses may lead them into habits of irregularity or excess, it is not the excesses that mark or constitute their superiority. For one man who goes astray from the intensity of passion that genius gives there are a thousand who go astray from meaner causes ; and so far from disorder and excess fanning the flame and brightening the lustre of genius, they have in too many instances dimmed its light and quenched its flame, amid reeking and noisome exhalations.

And now, lest any one should be discouraged, let me, in conclusion, address a word to patient workers, who cannot boast of discoveries or novelties. Think not that you are useless members of society—drag-weights upon the advancing ear of human progress. There is work to be done in strengthening and keeping in repair the fabric that exists, as well as in adding thereto. If you liken mankind to one vast living creature, there is not only growth in stature, but also the continual replacing of daily waste ; and this latter operation is the more important of the two, both as being more essential to the preservation of life, and as requiring by far the larger share of labour and material. All things are in incessant change, and if the hands of the labourers were to stop their working, all would go to confusion and ruin. Let us then be content to perform diligently our portion of labour, whether it consist in maintaining the old, or in building up the new.

