

It needs but the master tones to set the wild echoes flying, and yet how few the master voices are. If we look to literature, we find this only too true. Every writer seems to borrow from his favorite authors, and if we read his authors we find that they, too, have borrowed. Tasso sounds of Virgil; Virgil echoes Homer; and Milton's Paradise Lost reflects them all. And so the debt ever increases, or as Emerson has said, "There is imitation, model, and suggestion to the very archangels, if we knew their history."

The borrowing may be conscious, or unconscious; but it is there. A thought comes to the author's mind, and, if it expresses just what he wishes to say, he does not stop to question where he obtained it, he clothes it in words and gives it to the world as the child of his brain. Or he may quote with intention because he wishes to give his expression weight and force, or because some one else has already expressed his thoughts in words which he cannot hope to improve.

But are we, then, to accuse all authors of a sort of Chinese imitation? It does not seem so. Great assimilating power is but the co-function of original power; it proclaims the author's susceptibility to the voices of others, and his sympathy with their feelings. For a great mind often reads far deeper than the writer knew, and hears far more than the orator proclaims. If then he clothes these deeper thoughts in living words, and gives us the former rough expression, beautified, the jagged diamond, cut and polished, who can but praise him? Would you discard Shakespeare because some one has accused him of borrowing from other writers? No, you would say with Landor, "And yet he is more original than his originals." For if a single voice can awake a thousand echoes, so can a thousand voices arouse a single one; and if all these kindred voices are in sympathy and accord, then will the echo be a new and perfect song.

And yet as Emerson has said, "The divine never quotes, but is, and creates;" but how often we dismiss our own thoughts as worthless, just because they are our own. We fail to realize that we have been endowed by a Divine Creator with an individual intellect, that, although we are a part of a great social organism, yet we are different from every other part. And so we live on, ever belittling our own ideals and thus, by not living up to the best that is in ourselves, we do not perform our part of the social organism, and fail to fulfill the Divine Ideal.