

PLAYFAIR'S SCIENCE AND PRACTICE OF MIDWIFERY.

BY
ROBERT BARNES,
London.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF OBSTETRICS.

LONDON, 81 Grosvenor Street, Sept. 24, 1877.

SIR :—In your journal for January last (1877) is a memoir by Dr. Reimann, of Kiew, "On the Simultaneous Entrance of

both Heads of Twins into the Pelvis (*with two wood-cuts*).” The opening paragraph runs thus: “None of the older text-books on obstetrics mention the fact that both heads in twin labors may occasionally enter into and occupy the pelvis at the same time, and only a few of the more recent writers on the subject, such as Braun, Hohl, Chailly-Honoré, Meigs, and Joulin, refer to the possibility of such an occurrence.”

I need not stop to point out how far this is from being an adequate representation of the actual state of obstetric literature. It will be enough here to call to mind that the varieties of this complication are fairly pointed out in Rainsbotham, whose book was published many years ago. An author of his mark and authority ought not to be overlooked by any one who is studying a practical point in obstetrics. Again, in the best of recent English text-books (Leishman's), this complication is carefully portrayed; and it was described from observation by pen and pencil in the first edition of my “Lectures on Obstetric Operations,” published in 1870. Reimann appears entirely ignorant or neglectful of English authors.

But the thing that startled me most in Dr. Reimann's memoir was the seeing it illustrated by two wood-cuts, representing the varieties of head-locking, “*from Playfair!*” Now, these wood-cuts are very old acquaintances. They are my own production, and are actually engraved in the “Obstetric Operations,” 1870, in the two subsequent English editions, and in the French and Norwegian editions. I am informed that they are not in the American edition. I have never seen a copy of this edition. I never sanctioned the publication of it. This fact, and the omission of the illustrations in question, justify me in disclaiming it as a spurious production.

But how did these wood-cuts become “Playfair's?” This is a matter which, in the interest of medical literature, it is important to explain. This is the explanation: Dr. Playfair, in the preface to his book, thus sets forth his creed and practice: “Many of the illustrations are copied from previous authors. The following quotation from Tyler Smith's ‘Manual of Obstetrics’ will explain why the source of the copied wood-cuts has not been in each instance acknowledged: ‘When I began to publish I determined to give the authority for every wood-cut copied from other works. I soon found, however, that ob-

stetric authors of all countries, from the time of Mauriceau downwards, had copied each other so freely without acknowledgment as to render it difficult or impossible to trace the originals."

Even the genius of Tyler Smith cannot consecrate wrong. Is it decent to plead ignorance as an excuse for appropriating the property of others? Ought not an author to take some trouble to find out the owners? Dr. Playfair's is the creed of the humorous French plagiarist: "*Le bon est mon bien que je réclame partout.*"

But even the plea of ignorance, backed by indolence, will not cover such a case as provokes the present remonstrance. Dr. Playfair, when constructing his book, wrote to ask me for the blocks of several of my illustrations. Amongst these are the two innocently assigned to him in Dr. Reimann's memoir. I cheerfully acceded to the request; but assuredly I never dreamed of thus conveying to him my right of authorship.

This reclamation will, I trust, be useful by proving, by a flagrant example, what wrong may be done to original workers by compilers who neglect the plainest canons of literary morality.

Yours very truly,

ROBERT BARNES.

P. S.—I am informed by Dr. Reimann that the wood-cuts were not inserted by him, but by the editor. I am happy to acquit Dr. Reimann of all blame. But you, Mr. Editor, will, I hope, pardon me for urging that the fact of *your* being deceived into the belief that the wood-cuts were Playfair's (doubtless because you possess the American, in which those cuts are omitted, and not the English edition of my book), greatly strengthens my argument, and the necessity for this reclamation.

R. B.

THE BARNES-PLAYFAIR CONTROVERSY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF OBSTETRICS.

LONDON, 31 George Street, Hanover Square, W., January 28th, 1878.

SIR:—I have read with considerable surprise what seems to me a very unnecessarily angry letter from Dr. Barnes in your January number. Dr. Barnes' grievance is that I have not acknowledged, in every instance, the source from which the illustrations in my book were taken.

When I followed Dr. Tyler Smith's example on this point, it was because, to quote his words, "obstetric authors of all countries, from the time of Mauriceau downwards, had copied each other so freely without acknowledgment as to render it difficult or impossible to trace the originals." It never occurred to me that any mistake could arise as to wood-cuts so recent and so well known as those of Barnes. That you, sir, should have fallen into the error of supposing them to be mine I regret as much as any one; but those of your countrymen who have done me the honor of reading my book—and I am proud to know that their number is not small—will, I am sure, acquit me of wishing to mislead as to what is or is not my own.

I have frequently the advantage of meeting Dr. Barnes, and had he ever hinted to me his dissatisfaction, I should have had much pleasure in apologizing for any annoyance I had caused him, and should have assured him of my willingness to alter the plan I had adopted in any future edition. This, indeed, I had determined to do with regard to the edition now passing through the press, before I saw Dr. Barnes' reclamation.

The illustrations are, after all, not very important ones, and it may well be doubted if they are worthy of being written about in the tone Dr. Barnes adopts. In the course of one short letter, he hints pretty plainly that I have intentionally taken credit to myself for the work of others; he accuses me of ignorance, indolence, and of lack of originality; and he likens me to a Frenchman whose morals are not of the strictest, and

who goes about appropriating the good things of others whenever they suit him.

Writing such as this is fortunately a rarity in our profession, and I shall not insult the good taste of your readers by making any comment upon it.

I am, yours truly,

W. S. PLAYFAIR.

THE AMERICAN EDITION OF BARNES' OBSTETRIC OPERATIONS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF OBSTETRICS.

NEW YORK, 8 East 15th Street, March 14th, 1878.

MY DEAR DOCTOR:—Dr. Robert Barnes, of London, in a letter published in the last (January, 1878) issue of your journal, in reference to certain illustrations in Reimann's and Playfair's obstetric works, which he claims should be accredited to him as their author, has seen fit to make some unjust (to use a mild expression) remarks about the American edition of his "Obstetric Operations," because the same wood-cuts do not appear in the latter.

Dr. Barnes' lectures were first published in the London *Medical Times and Gazette* for 1868. At the suggestion of Prof. T. G. Thomas and the late Prof. George T. Elliot, I proceeded, at the end of the same year, to edit the lectures for the purpose of making them available to the medical profession of this country. Deeming it but courteous to inform Dr. Barnes of my intentions, and thus afford him an opportunity to make any objections or suggestions, I accordingly addressed a polite and flattering letter to him on the subject, and especially asked if he objected to my proposed issuing of his lectures in book form. Knowing, however, that in name I was then unknown to Dr. Barnes, Prof. T. G. Thomas kindly gave me an introductory letter to inclose with my own, and Prof. Elliot said he would write direct to him in my behalf. Presuming naturally that Dr. Barnes would readily concede to the compliment offered, I proceeded with my task without waiting for his expected assenting reply.

Weeks and months passed without any notice or communication of approval or objection being received by myself or Profs. Thomas or Elliot in reply to our letters. Feeling, very justly, and with the approval of my friends, that Dr. Barnes' silence gave consent, and that his apparent want of courtesy in not taking the least notice of letters from two at least equally distinguished obstetricians as himself, entitled him to be wholly ignored in turn by me, I proceeded with my nearly completed task, placing the material in the hands of the Appletons for publication in 1869, by whom the volume was issued early in 1870. So much for Dr. Barnes' equivocal statement, "*I never sanctioned it.*" He should have said, "*I never objected to it.*"

In the mean while Dr. Barnes also published his lectures in book form in London, making a few additions to the original lectures. Obtaining an early copy of the English edition, I added to the American one, then in press, all the new matter excepting the two wood-cuts referred to, which were omitted solely to avoid further delay in the issuing of the book. The latter appeared but a few weeks later than the English edition, and was as complete as the latter, excepting the wood-cuts referred to above. These wood-cuts were never published in the original lectures in the *London Times and Gazette* from which the American edition was compiled, of which latter fact Dr. Barnes is well aware, his lectures appearing in the medical journal in 1868, and his volume in 1870, after I had communicated with him. So much, then, for his "*disclaiming it as a spurious production.*"

In conclusion, Mr. Editor, I will simply quote Dr. Barnes' own language, with a slight transposition of three words italicized for the purpose. "This reclamation will, I trust, be useful by proving by flagrant example what wrong may be done to *compilers* by *original workers*, who neglect the plainest canons of literary morality," and, I will add, the commonest rules of courtesy. Apologizing for occupying so much of your valuable space, I am, my dear doctor, sincerely yours,

B. F. DAWSON, M.D.