

Correspondence

Pseudo-Original Articles—The Case of Dr. Arthur E. Gue.*

LIBRARY OF THE SURGEON GENERAL'S OFFICE,
WASHINGTON, D. C., July 30, 1907.

To the Editor:—The library of the Surgeon's General's office of the War Department endeavors to index all original matter in medical periodicals, unless of an absolutely trifling nature. As a matter of course, memory can not be relied on to determine whether an article has already been marked, and its inclusion by the editor of a periodical among "original articles" is, therefore, accepted. Occasionally a paper appears in several journals marked as "original" in each, with no note to show that it has appeared or is to appear in any other. As this practice causes useless work in carding until it is detected, and also smacks somewhat of disingenuousness, it is thought that a particularly glaring example will be of interest to your readers and to the editors of many medical journals. The article in question is entitled "The Mechanical and Chemical Effect of Milk on the Human," by Arthur E. Gue, of Detroit.

Before the title became familiar to the eye and so instantly distinguished among the hundreds of articles marked daily for carding, the above named production was noted here during the last few months in the following publications, always included among "original articles":

1. *Chicago Medical Times*, 1907, xl, 204-207.
2. *Colorado Medical Journal*, Denver, 1907, xiii, 45-48.
3. *Louisville Monthly Journal of Medicine and Surgery*, 1906-7, xiii, 367-369.
4. *Medical Bulletin*, Philadelphia, 1907, xxix, 168-171.
5. *Medical Council*, Philadelphia, 1907, xii, 138-140.
6. *Milwaukee Medical Journal*, 1907, xv, 76-79.
7. *Physician and Surgeon*, Detroit and Ann Arbor, 1907, xxix, 120-123.
8. *Toledo Medical and Surgical Reporter*, 1907, xxxiii, 161-163.
9. *Virginia Medical Semi-Monthly*, Richmond, 1907, xli, 33-35.

As soon as the opening words "Milk is the normal secretion of the mammary glands of mammals," etc., became as familiar as the first words of Genesis or of the Declaration of Independence, the weary examiners ceased to affix the mystic sign calling for carding, and so it is believed the article has escaped record in at least as many more journals as I have already named.

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[COMMENT: Some time ago THE JOURNAL, under the heading "Cumbering the Record," editorially called attention to this same evil which was then rather prominent in medical literature, both here and abroad, viz., the reprinting of the same article in different medical publications, some in identical form, sometimes disguised in title.

The instance of multiple publication referred to above by Major McCaw is not comparable in the number of journals utilized by many authors. Some five years ago we called attention to an article written by a Dr. H. Plympton of Brooklyn, which appeared as original in some twenty-eight different journals, including four weeklies. However, the above paper was offered to THE JOURNAL and was refused, and probably Dr. Gue sent his remarkable contribution to many journals that did not accept his offer and publish it.

Undoubtedly this practice insures a wider circle of readers, but each needless repetition—and almost all such repetitions are needless enough—diminishes the value of the aggregate of the medical literature of the day, and it makes matters uncomfortable for the bibliographer. If the titles are slightly changed, as is sometimes the case, a fraud is practically consummated on the medical reading public. Most of the transgressors are not among the eminent of the profession, but there are some honored names that are not specially honored by their multiple appearances in this way. If an article is really valuable it will command attention and secure a wide circulation by reproduction in honest reprints and excerpts much better than by this multiplication of spurious first appearances. It is also an imposition on medical editors and publishers, who are not desirous of publishing as original mat-

*According to the American Medical Directory Dr. Gue is a graduate of the Chicago Homeopathic Medical College, 1891.

ter what has already appeared elsewhere. The amount of set up matter that has to be "killed" on this account is not insignificant. In fact, the practice is morally inexcusable. As matters are and as our correspondent shows, it is still one of the standing evils in medical periodical literature.—EDITOR.]

Personal Surgical Errors.

NEW YORK CITY, Aug. 8, 1907.

To the Editor:—It is doubly gratifying to read such an article as that with the above title in THE JOURNAL, July 20. The world is full of honest men, but not so full of brave men, for it takes such a man to own and proclaim his mistakes publicly. Among these errors is one to which I desire to call particular attention; namely, the employment of the catgut purse-string suture in dealing with the stump of the amputated appendix. The patient died suddenly on the third day. The postmortem showed that the suture had given away, and that the bowel contents had escaped into the peritoneal cavity, causing the patient's death. The author continues: "I then commenced to use linen thread; many of these patients, however, complained so bitterly of pain in the region of the stump for several months that I later made use of two separate catgut sutures, the outer strand hardened either with formalin or chromic acid." In my opinion the operator has gone from one danger to another. There is already a long list of accidents, a number of them fatal, from the use of this purse-string suture method. Since I read my paper before the Association in June, other cases have come to my knowledge. If every operator were as courageous as Dr. MacLaren, I doubt not that I could swell the list of accidents to a considerable extent.

I earnestly call the attention of surgeons to what I believe to be a grave error in technic. The simple silk or linen ligature applied to the stump, one-quarter of an inch from the cecum, with disinfection, by carbolic acid, of the small bit of mucosa beyond the ligature, does away with the danger of hemorrhage, and, so far as I can inform myself, the danger of leakage. I have failed to find a list of accidents from its employment. As yet I have not a single one, and I have made wide inquiry, and I would be greatly obliged for any reports of such cases. I am of the opinion that any method which requires the traumatism of a suture in the cecum, or in the stump of the appendix, is faulty in that it is entirely unnecessary, as well as unsafe, when compared to the ligature.

JOHN A. WYETH.

Dr. Knopf and Morphin in Tuberculosis.

NEW YORK, July 30, 1907.

To the Editor:—On the day following the meeting of the National Association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis there appeared in the *Philadelphia North American* a sensational article, reporting that I advised the killing of dying consumptives quickly and painlessly by heavy doses of morphin, and that I admitted that it was my daily practice to do so. It was furthermore said that there had been a bitter debate and that the session adjourned in confusion. These false statements were copied by nearly all the newspapers in the United States, were cabled to Europe and made the rounds in the papers and magazines of England and the whole European continent. In spite of explanations and denials I sent to the Associated Press, in spite of a strong letter written by Dr. George Dock, the presiding officer of the meeting, and sent to the leading medical journals of America, giving the true version of my remarks, the false statement has continued to be published and republished and commented on to the great detriment of the anti-tuberculosis crusade all over the world. For example, ignorant consumptives in St. Louis, who had read the sensational lie, refused the visit of the nurses sent to them by the Society for the Relief and Prevention of Tuberculosis. The *St. Louis Republic*, which published this item, said: "Consumptives, since they read that report, apparently have a dread that the visit of the nurse may mean morphin to end their suffering." It thus became necessary to issue the following statement, by order of Prof. Frank Billings,