

that, genius, with its intensified perception, recognizes the artistic possibilities of certain phases of character and uses them, possibly to the very base profit of the individual through whom it works.

Of course this is not the modern realistic way of talking about genius at all. It is much more in accordance with the spirit of the time to deny to the old Latin abstraction even the dignity of an abstraction, except as signifying a "capacity for work," greater than the ordinary, perfectly explicable by certain cerebral theories. And yet, even in this disillusionizing age, there will come a time of year and a lapse, perhaps, from strict intellectual integrity, during which one likes to wonder the old wonders over again in a "sauntering" something like this. SARA J. DUNCAN.

WHERE A NOVELIST TOOK WHAT HE FOUND.

For many years past the writers who have violated their duty to their neighbour by "picking and stealing" his literary property, have defended their misdeeds by a saying that they wrongly attribute to Molière. Even respectable authors have so often misquoted the original words that they are now seldom, or never, correctly cited. The late Abraham Hayward in one of his amusing essays in the *London Quarterly Review* (that on "Dumas," published in July, 1871), wrote: "*Je prends mon bien où je le trouve*," was the unabashed avowal of Molière. . . . If we are to put faith in M. Dumas' assailants, he has pushed to extravagance the appropriation doctrine of Molière; he has rivalled not only the broom-maker who stole the materials, but the one who stole his broom ready made." So, also, in one of his "Echoes of the Week," Mr. Sala said: "Lord Beaconsfield, like Molière, and, in degree, like Dumas the elder, took his property wherever he found it, and that property lay loose in a great many literary pockets." A third writer, Mr. H. Sutherland Edwards, in an article on "Historic Phrases" (*Macmillan's Magazine*, November, 1876), says: "The writer of an extremely interesting article in *Fraser's Magazine* has shown that our author sometimes *prenait son bien*, like Molière, wherever he chanced to find it."

From these, and numerous other passages that might be quoted, the writers evidently believe that Molière's maxim was "*Je prends mon bien où je le trouve*." Molière, however, never said this, and, in fact, never could have said it. "Findings are keepings" is the phrase of a school-boy, not of a great author; and it would have been absurd of the French dramatist to call whatever he picked up "*mon bien*." What he really said has an entirely different meaning, as may be seen by reference to any biography of him. One of his early friends, Cyrano de Bergerac, incorporated in his play *Le Pédant Jové* (act ii. scene 4), a scene written by Molière which had been communicated to him in confidence. It contains the famous question, *Que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère?* Molière, on his return to Paris from the provinces where he had been staying, at once detected the theft, and in *Les Fourberies de Scapin* (where Géronte several times asks the question above quoted), repossessed himself of his stolen property with the words: "*Je reprends mon bien où je le trouve*." The dropping of a single syllable has entirely changed the purport of the phrase, which was in no way intended to justify plagiarism. What Molière said (as Mr. Bent points out at p. 394 of "Short Sayings of Great Men"), was simply a translation of the principle of the civil law, *Ubi rem meam invenio, ibi vindico*.

In a recent number of the *Illustrated London News*, under the heading of "Our Note Book," Mr. James Payn, the well-known novelist, thus discourses on the subject of plagiarism: "A newspaper has been falling foul of a platform orator for applying an old joke to a modern circumstance without acknowledgment. 'Better late than never' is a proverb, I suppose, as applicable to the censure of plagiarism as to anything else; but that the journalist should feign astonishment at the offence, as though he had discovered a new crime, was surely superfluous. . . . Of course, there are a few orators of original wit, but, in front of most platforms one could stand, as Pirin did before the dramatic plagiarist, and take off one's hat twenty times to an old friend. . . . It is not only the platform, however, which plagiarises; the pulpit is almost as bad, and especially in the article of jokes; and it is very hard, considering how 'light literature' is looked down upon from both these eminences, how heavily they lay it under contribution. . . . Of course, literary people are often plagiarists; but their sin is pretty certain to find them out, or to be found out for them; whereas our orators and divines owe their most attractive features—their fireworks—to sources they do not condescend to indicate. I once ventured to point out to one who had made a very telling speech (not on my side) in the provinces, that three of his anecdotes could only have been said to be his own (and, indeed, one of them was mine), in the same sense that Shakespeare has been said to 'convey' things—by divine right of genius."

Mr. Payn is quite right in stating that, when literary people turn plagiarists, their sin is sure to find them out, or to be found out for them; but, whether, when he himself "conveys" the property of another, he does so "by divine right of genius," is another question. The answer to it may easily be found. One of Mr. Payn's latest novels is entitled *A Prince of the Blood*. Even in the opinion of good-natured people who believe that "a book's a book although there's nothing in't," the story, in almost all respects, is distressingly stupid and was in consequence, roughly handled by the critics. The *London Graphic*, to which Mr. Payn was contributing another novel when *A Prince of the Blood* was published, was constrained to remark: "The book has an air of having been written in very early youth—so early that good taste, common sense, and grammar, are still all to be acquired. The excessively mawkish relations between the heroine

and that noble savage, Prince Tarilam, "my Tarilam," as the lady comically calls him) would be particularly unpleasant to read about, but for the school-girl fashion in which they are described."

It is not easy to see in what way the school-girl fashion of description can benefit Mr. Payn's cause; but we are doubtless all willing to damn him with the faint praise of the *Graphic*. When the novel was reprinted by Harper, the Boston *Literary World* wrote thus: "The real entertainment of the book is not in the portrayal of the incomparable prince, but in the account of the voyage of the 'Ganges,' the terrible storms encountered and the wreck. The Island of Breda is a little Utopia, and Mr. Payn gives us a very good idea of its conditions."

Singularly enough it happens that the passages selected for praise by the critic are the very ones that Mr. Payn has carefully, and, in many cases, verbally stolen from an authentic description of an actual shipwreck. The following circumstantial evidence which is amply sufficient to convict any literary defendant, may be found in Vol. VII. of *Lives of the British Admirals, etc.*, by Dr. John Campbell; continued to 1816 by William Stevenson. (London: C. J. Barrington, 1817). At p. 190 of this volume we find a description of the wreck of the "Antelope," a packet of three hundred tons in the East India Company's service. The writer says: "In the morning the sky became overcast, with much thunder and lightning; the man who was on the look-out called 'Breakers!' and the call had scarcely reached the officer on deck when the ship struck. All was now in the utmost confusion and dismay, the captain and those who were in their beds sprang upon deck in an instant; a moment was sufficient to convince them of their melancholy situation, for the breakers alongside, through which the rocks made their appearance, presented the most dreadful scene. The ship taking a heel, she filled in less than an hour as high as the lower deck hatchways. . . . The captain directed that the gunpowder, small arms, bread, and such provisions as would spoil by wet, should be brought on deck while the masts were cut away for the purpose of easing the ship. The boats were hoisted out and filled with provisions; and every precaution was taken to enable the crew to get into them without confusion, when it became absolutely necessary. As the quarter deck lay highest out of water all the crew assembled on it, and the captain addressed them." Let us now see what Mr. Payn writes about the wreck of the "Ganges." I will quote from the Canadian Copyright Edition of the novel. (Toronto: William Bryce). At pp. 133-4 we read: "A little after midnight, and with heavy rain falling, the man on the look-out suddenly cried 'Breakers ahead!' and the call had hardly reached the officer on deck when the ship struck with terrific violence. The horror and dismay were universal. . . . All below, save the two ladies, were on deck in five minutes, and were thronging about the captain. . . . The 'Ganges,' which had survived so much, it was now plain was doomed. Every shock of the sea caused her a damage more or less vital. In less than an hour the water was as high as the lower deck hatchways, and moreover, she was heeling over to one side. The ammunition and provisions were, therefore, all brought up and placed under tarpaulins. The two remaining boats were hoisted out, supplied with arms, food, and water, and kept under the lee of the ship to receive the crew when she should go to pieces. . . . The quarter-deck resting on the rocks was almost clear of water. . . . Here the captain received them, while the crew stood around him in enforced inaction. The speeches of the captains in the two books are to the same purport. The crews are to be obedient to authority and to abstain from spirituous liquors. "After this," says Dr. Campbell, "two glasses of wine and a little bread were given to each individual." "The captain," writes Mr. Payn, "announced that two glasses of wine should be at once administered to every man, with a biscuit between them." Between what or whom? Between the "two glasses of wine," or between "every man?" Dr. Campbell's "given" is surely better than Mr. Payn's "administered."

At page 191, Dr. C. says: "When daylight appeared, a small island was seen to the southward at the distance of three or four leagues, and some other island to the eastward. The boats being put under the care of the chief mate were despatched to the principal island, and as soon as they departed, a raft was constructed, as the ship was hourly expected to go to pieces." Mr. P's account is much the same: "At last the dawn came, and disclosed a small island some miles away, with some larger ones much farther off to the eastward. The two boats were immediately manned, and sent on shore, . . . while, in the meantime, for the ship might at any moment go to pieces, those on board applied themselves to the construction of a raft." At page 192, Dr. C. says: "There was some danger in passing the surf, but that being cleared, they came into smooth water." Mr. P. writes: "When they had once cleared the reef, they found themselves in smoother water." The islands in both narratives have a secure harbour and fresh water; the crew in Dr. C's story "stove every cask of strong liquor," while in Mr. P's novel they "break in the heads of the spirit casks"—a difference without a distinction. Dr. C's natives (page 193): "Were of a deep copper colour; their hair was of a beautiful black colour, long and rolled up behind." Mr. P's savages are not unlike them: "Their colour was a fine bronze—their hair was black, and very luxuriant, though so neatly arranged and confined in braids and plaits that it was difficult to judge of its length." This might have been written by a 'penny-a-liner.'

At page 192, of the book that may be called C, for shortness, we find: "As soon as the natives approached the shore, they addressed them in the Malay language. . . . Soon afterwards, one of them asked in Malay, who the strangers were, whether friends or enemies; to which the captain desired Rose, who acted as interpreter in the ship, to answer, that they were unfortunate Englishmen who had lost their ship." At page 180, of the book of P., the same facts are thus related: "The captain directed the interpreter to address them in Malay. . . . Thereupon the native