

speech which have most engaged the attention of specialists. Its position in the general series of idioms is now well defined. It is an agglutinating and incorporating language, with tendencies towards polysynthetism. It consequently belongs to the second great morphologic class, between the Finnic dialects and the languages of America."

"Here, therefore," writes Dr. Daniel Wilson, in his paper on "The Lost Atlantis," read before the Royal Society of Canada, "is a tempting glimpse of possible affinities; and Professor Whitney accordingly remarks, in his 'Life and Growth of Languages,' that the Basque 'forms a suitable stepping-stone from which to enter the peculiar linguistic domain of the New World, since there is no other dialect of the Old World which so much resembles in structure the American languages.' But this glimpse of possible relationship has proved, thus far, illusory."

Dr. Wilson does not doubt, however, that the Norse sea-rovers, after discovering and colonising Iceland and Greenland, "made their way southward to Labrador, and so some way along the American Coast. How far south they actually explored the New England shores is matter for dispute, but that does not, in any degree, affect the present question." Mr. Charles G. Leland, author of "The Algonquin Legends of New England," claims in that work to have found abundant traces of Norse influence in the "Myths and Folk-lore of the Mic-mac, Passamaquoddy and Penobscot tribes." "It may," he writes in his Introduction, "very naturally be asked by many how it came to pass that the Indians of Maine and of the farther north have so much of the Edda in their sagas; or, if it was derived from the Eskimo tribes, how these got it from Norsemen, who were Christians. . . . Is it not likely that they listened to the Northmen?"

JOHN READE.

#### SOME SAYINGS OF THE EARL OF BEACONSFIELD.—I.

At page 772 of the *Nineteenth Century*, for May, 1884, in an article on "Wordsworth and Byron," Swinburne, the poet, writes as follows:—"It was Augustine, I believe, who invoked, in jest or earnest, a curse on those who had anticipated him in the utterance of his ideas." Men as well-read as Mr. Swinburne have ere now made mistakes about this saying. Mr. James Russell Lowell, in his "Biglow Papers," page 195 (Macmillan's Edit.), writes: "We might well exclaim with Austin (if a saint's name may stand sponsor for a curse), '*Pereant qui ante nos nostra dixerunt*.'" Mr. Lowell here misquotes, besides attributing the saying to Saint Austin or Augustine. The original sentence has the last word *dixerunt* in the indicative, not *dixerint* in the subjunctive, though the latter would have been equally good Latin, as giving the reason for the anathema. Singularly enough, another famous American author slightly misquotes the saying, and apparently thinks that it is a line of poetry. At page 129 of "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table," we find mentioned "That familiar line from Donatus, '*Pereant illi qui ante nos nostra dixerunt*.'"

In St. Jerome's exposition of Ecclesiastes, i. 9, he quotes a saying which is found in Terence (Eun. Prolog. 41): "*Nullum est jam dictum, quod non sit dictum prius*," i.e., "There is no saying now that has not been said before," and continues: "*Unde præceptor meus, Donatus, cum ipsum versiculum exponeret, 'Pereant,' inquit, 'qui ante nos nostra dixerunt.'*" See, also, Warton's "Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope," Vol. I., p. 88, where he relates the same anecdote, and refers, in a note, to "Ante-Baillet, Tom. II., p. 207." Lord Jeffrey thus utilised the dictum of Donatus: "In our own times, all the higher walks of literature have been so long and so often trodden, that it is scarcely possible to keep out of the footsteps of some of our precursors. The ancients, it is well known, have stolen most of our bright thoughts, and not only visibly beset all the patent approaches to glory, but swarm in such ambushed multitudes behind, that when we think we have fairly gone beyond their plagiarisms, and honestly worked out an original excellence of our own, up starts some deep-read antiquary, and makes it out, much to his own satisfaction, that heaven knows how many of these busybodies have been beforehand with us in the *genus* and *species* of our invention."

In the seventeenth century the Chevalier d'Aceilly expressed himself more tersely in the following epigram:

"Dis-je quelque chose assez belle?  
L'Antiquité tout en cervelle  
Prétend l'avoir dite avant moi.  
C'est une plaisante donzelle!  
Que ne venait-elle après moi?  
J'aurais dit la chose avant elle."

Alfred de Musset, also, in "Namouna," Chant II., says:

"Il faut être ignorant comme un maître d'école,  
Pour se flatter de dire une seule parole,  
Que personne ici-bas n'ait pu dire avant vous—  
C'est imiter quelqu'un que de planter des choux."

Burton, in a passage of the "Anatomy of Melancholy," which has actually been plagiarised by Sterne, thus expresses himself on the subject: "As apothecaries we make new mixtures, every day pour out of one vessel into another; and, as the Romans robbed all the cities in the world to set out their bad-sited Rome, we skim the cream of other men's wits, and pick the choice flowers of their tilled gardens to set out our own sterile plots. We weave the same net, and still twist the same rope, again and again."

It was a consciousness of the truth of such assertions as these that led Lord Lytton to say in "The Caxtons" (Part III., chap. 2): "One could not open one's lips, if one were bound to say what nobody else had said." Hence, also, some Frenchman declared: "*Tout est dit*," and Voltaire adopted the maxim that "originality is nothing but judicious imitation."

None of these sayings, however, are intended to palliate deliberate plagiarism. Let us see what ingenious excuses have been urged in its defence by professional authors. A well-known English writer sophistically pleads in *Macmillan's Magazine*: "The works of unsuccessful, or only partially successful, authors, do not wholly perish. Whatever seems good in them is reproduced by some successful author, who does or does not put his own distinctive mark upon what he has taken. Not one of the numerous tribe of unsuccessful authors can repay such attentions as these, or he would be held guilty of plagiarism—an offence which can be committed with impunity only by the rich towards the poor, and by the strong towards the weak. Indeed, if an unsuccessful author, from whom a successful one had borrowed, were to make any fuss on the subject, he would probably be condemned as an impostor, and would, in any case, be told to hold his peace. There is no harm in this, so far as regards the general interest of readers. If ideas, expressions, passages, personages, possess value in themselves, their origin need not be too closely inquired into. They belong to him who has used them with most effect, as, in the industrial arts, inventions belong to those who have known how to apply them. The first discoverer has every right to pity himself, or to be pitied, for being deprived of the honours of his discovery. But if it has been taken into better hands than his, and better presented than he could have presented it, the public are gainers by the transfer, in however arbitrary and unjust a manner it may have been effected." It is useless to controvert such language. Its rank injustice and want of reason must be obvious to every one.

Similarly, Emerson, in his essay on "Shakespeare," writes thus of Chaucer: "He steals by this apology—that what he takes has no worth where he finds it, and the greatest where he leaves it. It has come to be practically a rule in literature that a man, having once shown himself capable of original writing, is entitled thenceforth to steal from the writings of others at discretion. Thought is the property of him who can entertain it, and of him who can adequately place it. A certain awkwardness marks the use of borrowed thoughts; but as soon as we have learned what to do with them, they become our own."

I cannot but think that Emerson's apology for plagiarism, which simply amounts to saying that "stealing is no theft," is far too outspoken—calculated, as it is, to encourage a literary crime which is usually and deservedly condemned.

This somewhat long preface has been occasioned by the following paragraph from a recent number of Laclede's "Ephemerides," in the *Montreal Gazette*:

"An English essayist has just written quite a long paper to prove that Disraeli's famous sneer in 'Lothair' about literary critics being mostly literary failures, was a plagiarism, and he cites passages from many authors, chiefly French, and one Latin epigram, embodying the same thought. The best of all these, however, is the following from Dryden, in the prologue to the 'Conquest of Granada':

"They who write ill, and they who ne'er durst write,  
Turn critics out of mere revenge or spite."

In the June number of *Temple Bar*, the saying in question is briefly discussed, but this is probably not the article to which "Laclede" alludes. Without trespassing at all on the manor of any other writer, I wish to add from my note-book some illustrations of the Earl of Beaconsfield's paradox, and to subjoin further proofs that it was his habit to convert *meum* and *tuum* into *suum*. He fully recognised the fact that, if the same remarkable phrase is used by different men, the most celebrated will have the sole credit of it. Accordingly, he has frequently done less famous men the honour of borrowing their *mots*, and has used them with such effect that they may be said to have become his personal property. No doubt, this is hard on the plundered men, but there seems to be no help for it. The "survival of the fittest" is an inevitable law.

"To-morrow," exclaims Mr. Phœbus to Lothair, "To-morrow the critics will commence. You know who the critics are—the men who have failed in literature and art." A devoted admirer of Earl Beaconsfield writes thus, in *Macmillan's Magazine*, of "his lightning wit that flashed off a short sentence, or an apt reply." "Here," he says, "there is scarcely need to quote. Every one knows his aphorisms—'the hansom cab,' 'the gondola of London,' and the critics, 'the men who have failed.'" These, and many other instances that the reviewer quotes from the speeches and writings of the Earl of Beaconsfield are unfortunate as specimens of his "lightning wit," for the simple reason that there are not *his* at all. The phrase about the critics, besides being untrue as regards the present century, is as old and hackneyed a saying as can be found, and occurs in at least twenty authors of different times; while the 'gondola of London' existed long before the date of "Lothair," in the pages of writers whom Disraeli had probably read.

"Laclede" has cited a distich from Dryden, which anticipates the phrase about 'the critics.' Here is another quotation that occurs in Dryden's dedication of his "Translations from Ovid" (1693): "Ill writers are usually the sharpest censors; for they, as the best poet and the best patron (*i.e.*, Sackville, Earl of Dorset, in his address to Ned Howard) said:

"When in the full perfection of decay,  
Turn vinegar, and come again in play."

Thus the corruption of a poet is the generation of a criti