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Queer Blunders Made by Famous Authors.

Few writers, even those of the greatest genius, have been free from lapses at times and some of their blunders are both remarkable and ludicrous.

Take Shakespeare, for instance, who in "Julius Caesar" refers to clocks some fourteen centuries before they were invented, and who makes cannon thunder in "King John" and introduces a pistol in "Henry V."

Shakespeare, who was not a scholar in the strictest sense, made many mistakes of this character, which, however, are chiefly mere anachronisms of the introduction of persons or events out of their proper time.

He, for example, speaks of turkeys in plays the times of which long antedate the importation of the first turkeys from America. In "Henry IV," the carrier complains that "The turkeys in my pannel are quite starved," although Henry IV. reigned a hundred years before the discovery of America. In "Henry V." Gower says to Fluellen of Pistol, "Here he comes, swelling like a turkey cock."

Worse than these is the anachronism in "Julius Caesar," in which Brutus says to Cassius, "Count the clock." To which Cassius replies, "The clock hath stricken three." Striking clocks were unknown to Caesar's time, and for many centuries afterwards.

An eminent ornithologist has pointed out that many writers have blundered in referring to the nightingale. It seems that both Shakespeare and Milton made the mistake of causing the female bird to sing. Shakespeare in this relation said:

"Nightly she sings on yon pomegranate tree," and "The nightingale, if she shall sing by day, . . . while Milton speaks of the wakeful nightingale, "who all night long her amorous descant sung."

Milton's blunder. Milton in "Paradise Lost," wrote: "Thick as leaves in Vallombrosa." "As a matter of fact," comments Palmer, an authority in such things, "the trees of Vallombrosa, being pines, do not strew the brooks in autumn with their leaves."

An odd slip was that of Browning in his use of the word "slughorn," which the author of "Pippa Passes," evidently took to be a musical instrument. "Dauntless the slughorn," however, is merely a corruption of the Scottish "slogan," a battle cry! But Browning errs in good company, for Byron, in "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," committed a bad blunder when he wrote:

"I stood in Venice, on the Bridge of Sighs,
A palace and a prison on each hand."

It is scarcely necessary to point out that, as we read the couplet, the implication is that there were two palaces and two prisons; but Byron meant, of course, that there was a palace on one hand and a prison on the

other. Every reader of Herrick knows the lines "Her eyes the glowworm lend thee." The confusion of ideas is natural enough, but naturalists stake their reputation on the glowworm's being, in fact, sightless.

Sir Walter Scott's Haste.

The haste in which Sir Walter Scott found it necessary to produce the great number of his novels in order that he might quickly wipe out a great indebtedness doubtless accounts for the numerous blunders such as these pointed out by his literary kinsman, Robert Louis Stevenson.

In "Rob Roy" two horsemen, riding on urgent business, are made to take six days to cover a distance of 100 miles, whereas on another occasion the same persons cover fifty miles in a single day. Stevenson also called attention to Sir Walter's glaring mistake in "The Antiquary," where the sun is actually caused to set in the eastern heavens. But, careful worker that he was, Stevenson himself, to use his own words, "came to grief over the moon" in "Prince Otto."

In "King Solomon's Mines" Rider Haggard accomplished an unsurpassed feat in eclipsing a moon when it was new instead of full. Sir Walter Besant also juggled with the full moon when, in "The Children of Gibeon," he caused his new moon to rise in the east at 2 o'clock in the morning.

Thackeray is almost as prolific of errors as Shakespeare or Scott. In "Newcomers" Clive asks in a letter dated 183—: "Why have we no picture of . . . ?" The question is answered by which one reason might be attributed to the fact that the Prince Consort did not appear until 1840. Similarly in Rachel Esmond Warrington's Preface to "Henry Esmond," which Thackeray dated 1778, he had her refer to Rochambeau's visit to America. As a matter of fact the French soldier did not come until 1780.

In "Henry Esmond," too, Thackeray causes the venerable Dean of Winchester to write, in chapter nine, a certain letter, whereas in chapter six, the good dean dies!

French Writers, Too.

Victor Hugo puts into the mouth of Charlemagne, in "Aymallot," the words, "You dream like a scholar of Sorbonne." That famous institution was founded in 1254, four hundred and fifty years after the days of Charlemagne.

Errors of geography in fiction are numerous enough. That graceful romancer Sir A. T. Quiller-Couch in his first published story "Dead Man's Rock," placed Bombay on the east coast of India, in the Bay of Bengal, while geographers agree in locating it on the western shore.

Even Schiller the German poet, was careless. In his "Piccolomini" he speaks of a "lightning conductor," although the period of the piece is at least one hundred and fifty years before that invention.

Certain of the literary errors were

committed, not through ignorance, but in down-right absent-mindedness. At times they are ludicrous. Trollope made his Andy Scott come whistling up the street with a cigar in his mouth, and Defoe assures his readers that Robinson Crusoe before taking off his clothes to swim to the wreck took the precaution to fill his pockets with biscuits. Later, in "Around the World in Eighty Days," Jules Verne brought his hero to his club in triumph just as the clock of London were striking ten minutes to twelve! Cervantes allowed his Sancho Panza, in "Don Quixote," to ride a certain ass after having volubly lamented that creature's decessa. Lever, in "Charles O'Malley," gave to Portugal Andalusia as a capital.

Miss Marie Corelli has enriched the world of zoology with the eight "Highland bullheifers" appearing in her "Treasure of Heaven."

The list might be added to indefinitely, but the above is sufficient to show that even great writers are liable, at times, to make mistakes.

Coal Strikers in Early Days.

Probably the earliest coal strike on record was a Scottish one. In 1620, a conference of coal-owners decided that they would raise the price of coal by 1s. per horse load, viz., from 3s. to 4s., and also that they would export coal. This decision involved action by the Privy Council, which decided against the coalowners, and thus the first coal strike was prevented by Government intervention.

In 1572, the City of Edinburgh was probably for the first time faced with the inconvenience resulting from the cutting-off of her coal supplies. The Queen's supporters were in Edinburgh, and the Regent Mar, who was at Leith, felt it necessary to institute a strict blockade. He accordingly stopped the working of all the surrounding coal pits, and got the Privy Council to pass a decree that no coals or victuals were to be sent from Leith to the "rebels" in Edinburgh, "except on such reasonable portion quilibet as be thought sufficient for the men of war lying in the palace of Holyroodhouse." One wonders whether Mr. Smilie will make a similar exception in favor of the popular regiments which now garrison Edinburgh?

In 1604 a coalowner, David Bilmure, obtained from the Privy Council an act "for taking cordour with his workmen and laying the offenders in the stocks if their offence be small, and if it be great, to take thame and present thame to the Counsaill." Halcyon days indeed for the coalowner of the seventeenth century! But it must not be supposed that the early coal-owner failed in his responsibilities towards his colliers for there is a record in connection with the forfeited estate of the last Earl of Winton, that in 1720 James Forrest, chirurgion of Tranent, received a salary of £300 Scots for his attendance on the Earl's coal-hewers—a quite early instance of medical benefit for employees, without a National Insurance Act.

The question of the exportation of coal is one which naturally arose early. Coal mining was one of the great Scottish industries, and by 1531 the coal and salt industries together occupied 12,000 persons, men and women; and at that time, according to the estimate of the late Professor Henry Brown, half of Scotland's shipping was employed in the export of those commodities. But the export of coal had in the previous century been illegal. In the sixteenth century there were frequent enactments against it; however, in 1565, an Act was passed modifying previous legislation, and showing that "it could nocht be again the commonweill althocht smiddy coll ever carrit away." And so the export trade grew year by year; but it is satisfactory to note that as a nation, Britain did not approve of the encroachment of foreigners into this home industry, for in 1597 the King and the Estates, understanding that the grite burne coll" is transported not only by the lieges, but by strangers, to the great hurt of the commonweill, proclamation is ordered to be made against the transportation of the same.

Puzzles in Precious Stones.

Story writers talk of the sky being as blue as a sapphire, or of a wild beast's eyes glowing as yellow as a topaz.

Most of us are under the impression that we can recognize gems by their colours, and that certain colours belong definitely to certain stones. Quite a mistake. There is precious stone which is always true to colour. Diamonds, of course, vary greatly. The famous—or should we say infamous?—Hope diamond is a real and most beautiful blue.

Green diamonds are found; and others of a lovely crimson, but these are very rare. Black diamonds are common enough.

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that has been exposed to the light will be decidedly paler than the other.

Similar results may be observed with both emeralds and sapphires. Garnets also will turn lighter, while in the case of the topaz, sunlight ends by dimming and dulling the colour of this pretty stone.

A Memorable Bale of Cotton.

Although no ordinary business was done on the Manchester Royal Exchange on November 12, 1918, on account of the Armistice being signed, the members were determined that the day should not be unproductive, and so a bale of Texas cotton—the first of the season's crop—was put up to "auction" and realised £8,000, in aid of the British Red Cross Society. The bale had previously been sold in New York, and was then presented to the Liverpool Cotton Association, who raised £2,670 for it, and afterwards presented it to the Manchester Cotton Association. There had been a certain amount of anticipatory consultation in the various Lancashire districts in view of the sale. Thus, when Mr. G. Norris Midwood took up the role of auctioneer he was joyously conscious of some good bids to come. Blackburn had evidently done well, for the bale was knocked down to a gentleman of that town at £2,100. Then came Manchester with a bid of £1,450 for a re-sale. (The auctioneer had already pointed out that the buyers could only hold the bale momentarily if a new buyer came along), and at that figure it was knocked down to a gentleman of Manchester. Oldham was the next largest bidder, then came Bolton, then Burnley, and some one shouted, "Good old Burnley" as the total passed £6,000. Mr. John Charneck, of Bolton, came forward next with a bid of £560 from "Parker's corner table in the Square," and to this mysterious ownership the bale was momentarily consigned. Then to a Liverpool buyer at £500. It was not until the £7,000 figure had been passed



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Templeton's

ed that bids of £100 were accepted, and these were readily forthcoming. Bids of £50 were then invited, and several flowed in, but one donor—responding to the auctioneer's genial suggestion—added another £50 for his son. When it came to "tenders," it was merely a matter of collection, and in that way £8,000 was realized.

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