

said, by authors at least,—“The faith and morals hold which Milton held,” the interest in the literature of the mother-land remained unimpaired, but the interests of the English authors ceased to concern the New Englander. The result has been the systematic appropriation, for upwards of a century, by the Anglo-American, of the productions of English authorship during one of the most brilliant periods of English literature, in open disregard of every moral claim of rightful proprietorship in the products of literary industry. Nor have the wrongs of the English author been limited to the appropriation and reproduction of the fruits of his honest labour. Other, and in some respects still more vexatious grievances have followed as a consequence of this ignoring of his proprietary rights in the fruits of his own workmanship, and so of control over their reissue through the press. The writings of Scott, Byron, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Keats, as of the Brownings, Tennyson, Morris and other poets of the past and present generation; of Carlyle, DeQuincy, Ruskin, Arnold; of Hallam, Macaulay, Green, Stubbs, Freeman and Gardiner; of Bulwer, Dickens, Thackeray, and the whole array of brilliant English writers of fiction, have been a source of pleasure and profit to hundreds of thousands of readers, without their giving a thought to the wrong done to their benefactors by the traders whose deeds they condone, and who practically act on the assumption that these products of exceptional intellectual power, and in some cases, of rare genius, are the sole work of the compositor and printer's devil.

We have been so long accustomed on this continent to the shameless contempt of an author's rights, and the deliberate printing and selling of his works for the benefit of everybody but himself, that the purchaser of the cheap reprints has come at length to feel himself aggrieved at the idea of the author claiming any control over their issue.

The English publisher who pays the author for his manuscript, or undertakes the risk of publishing an untried author's first work, must necessarily issue it on very different terms from the reprinter, who—safe beyond the protecting powers of English justice—waits till the work has won its way to popular favour, or the author has made for himself a name, and then steps in to reap where he has not sown, wholly regardless of the author's claims. To pick his pocket as he landed in the harbour of New York would be criminal as well as base. To steal his brains and appropriate the profits of his labour, in open contempt of his claims to his own property, under cover of an alien law, is simply “smart practice,” and the certain avenue to such wealth as “covers a multitude of sins.” One of the defenders of such proceedings argues that as “according to the statutory laws of the United States, foreign authors have had no copyright, the appropriation of their works could not be a theft.” But there is another enactment older than either American or English statutory laws; and there are still countries where the appropriation of the author's coat or his purse would as little conflict with any known statutes as the laying of violent hands on his writings. If an American author appropriates even a few choice pickings from his alien confrère's writings, he is forthwith arraigned before the court of Apollo and the Nine, and adjudged guilty of the high crime and misdemeanour of plagiarism, with very grave penalties in reputation and standing. But the publisher seizes the whole in open day, with the full approval of a community of buyers of cheap editions, as a laudable act of legitimate trading. But public opinion is not so absolutely stereotyped, even under the influence of self-interest, as to be beyond all reach of amendment. The Southern planter has ceased to luxuriate on the profits of fields cultivated by