

seldom rose above the common knowledge of his day ; but in *Hamlet* there are two exceedingly curious mistakes evidently the result of pure forgetfulness. One is in the speech made by the ghost to Hamlet:—

But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison house,
I could a tale unfold, whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young
blood,

Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from
their spheres,

Thy knotted and combined locks to part,
And each particular hair to stand on end
Like quills upon the fretful porcupine ;
But this eternal blazon must not be
To ears of flesh and blood. List, list, oh list !

If the passage has any meaning it must refer to the story of the murder, which the ghost, in spite of his earnest assertion that he is forbidden to disclose, immediately proceeds to narrate. In a popular novel of recent date the author decided to kill his victim with consumption, and then gave him all the symptoms of pneumonia. Wilkie Collins avoided blunders of this kind by a curiously practical method. When he wished to use sickness as a means of promoting the plot of his story he interviewed the family physician on the subject. In one of Massinger's plays a rival powders a bouquet with poison, a lady takes the flowers in her hand, her lover kisses the tips of her fingers and drops dead. Even Shakespeare is sometimes gravely in error when he undertakes to dispose of his characters by poisoning them, as witness the famous case of Hamlet's father, who, as the dramatist alleges, was murdered by having poison poured into his ears, and died without waking.

The "Count of Monte Christo" is full of slips that could have occurred only through the author's forgetfulness. The fortune with which he endows his hero is enormous, being about 4,000,000 dols. to begin with, and after years of the most reckless expenditure, after money has been scattered with both hands and in lavishly prodigal fashion, the author assures his readers, in calm forgetfulness of the amount with which he started the Count on his career, that the remainder is over 10,000,000 dols. Thackeray, who was exceedingly anxious to get everything right, was perpetually getting things wrong. Any reader who takes the pains to examine critically the works of the great English satirist, will find innumerable blunders, arising for the most part simply from carelessness. The names are mixed—the hero is sometimes called by the name of one of the other characters, and in at least one place an important personage is called by a name from another novel. This was Philip Firmin, whom he called Clive Newcome. Nor was this his worst blunder, for in another story he killed and buried old Lady Kew, and later brought her again on the scene to round off a corner of the story.

George Eliot, whose knowledge of science is highly commended, in "The Mill on the Floss" makes the odd blunder of having the boat overtaken in mid stream by a mass of drift floating at a more rapid rate than the frail craft, a physical impossibility. More than one astronomer has pointed out the mistakes Charles Reade has perpetrated in astronomy and geography. But Reade is not the only sinner in this particular. Howells sometimes makes a parade of his knowledge, and in one place wi "Silas Lapham" alludes to the "rank and file" as synonymous with officers and

men. Dean Swift speaks of Pennsylvania as a frozen, desert plain, a blunder that might be extenuated on the score of the ignorance prevailing in his time, and, for that matter, ever since, in England, of American matters ; while Amelia B. Edwards, in "Hand and Glove," mentions "an overseer on a Massachusetts cotton plantation."

The unlucky author of "Don Quixote," writing in his cellar-gaol, with the stone window ledge for a desk, could not be expected to have the accuracy of a scholar, and the circumstances under which his great book was written no doubt furnish at least a partial explanation of its innumerable oversights and blunders. With regard to Mambrino's helmet—i.e., the barber's basin—we are told that when the galley slaves attacked the Don they took the basin from his head and broke it all to pieces. A little further along Sancho had the basin, intending to get it mended ; still further, it is again mentioned as "broken into a thousand pieces," and the same day the Don comes into the company at the inn with the basin on his head. In one place we are assured that Gines de Passamonte stole Dapper, Sancho's donkey, and a few lines further on it is stated that "Sancho, seated on Dapper, jogged on leisurely after his master." Sancho left his wallet at the tavern where he suffered the blanket tossing, and a little later had his greatcoat stolen by the galley slaves, but a short time after, finding a portmanteau in the mountains, he crammed the gold into his wallet and put the linen into his great coat pockets. So careless was the author that in one place he makes a large party eat two suppers in one evening.

The *Sardanapalus* is an imaginative, not an historical, performance, and when he wrote it Byron must have known perfectly well that the *Sardanapalus* was an entirely different character from the one he is supposed to be in Byron's drama. When speaking of Xerxes' ships, about 1,200 in number, Byron multiplies them into thousands. Nor is he entirely correct in his geography, for he alludes to Taos as an island whereas it is a seaport in Asia Minor. Greene, the dramatist, speaks of Delphos as an island of Greece, but Delphos is an inland city, as he might have learned by consulting any map or other books of reference. Longfellow makes as bad a mistake as any when, in an effort to be classical, he crowns the death angel with amaranth, the flower of life, and the life angel with asphodels. Longfellow simply got the two mixed. The phenomena of the moon's changes are, however, of a nature that seem to befog the poetic mind to an incredible extent. Ridder Haggard, for instance, in his romance, "King Solomon's Mines," tells of an eclipse that took place at the new moon, a blunder that was not much worse than that of Dickens, who speaks of the new moon in the east in the evening, and Besant hardly improves on the situation when, in "The Children of Gibeon," he makes a new moon come above the eastern sky at two o'clock in the morning. So, also, Coleridge gets his ideas of the moon fearfully confused when, in the "Ancient Mariner," he speaks of a new moon rising in the east with a bright star between her horns. Trollope was heartily laughed at by his acquaintances for causing Andy Scott to "come whistling up the street with a cigar in his mouth." Annoyed at their

gibes, he claimed that the thing was quite possible, that anyone could whistle with a cigar in his mouth ; but after vainly making the attempt to achieve the feat, he yielded the point, and in the next edition left out the cigar.—*Globe Democrat*.

CORRESPONDENCE.

GEORGE HERBERT.

To the Editor of The Week :

Sir,—The true authorship of the wise saying ; "The mills of the gods grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly small," is as yet unacknowledged.

The editor of one of our city newspapers waxes warm on the subject ; he is indignant that it should be imputed to Matthew Arnold and scouts the claim of Julia A. Kellogg. He drags forward Longfellow as the author, and quotes triumphantly his stanza.

"Though the mills of God grind slowly

Yet they grind exceeding small ;

Though with patience He stands waiting,

With exactness grinds he all."

Now I am opposed to granting Longfellow's claim. His taste in the use of language is the chief cause of his success. He is wise and useful in the use of his materials but lacks richness or originality. The same thought occurs in Bailey :

"God worketh slowly ; and a thousand years
He takes to lift His hand off"

J. G. Holland says :—"The great soul that sits on the throne of the universe is not, never was, and never will be in a hurry."

The simile contained in the aphorism must be as old as man himself, i.e., as old as the custom of grinding corn. Sophocles records another simile, showing forth the same idea : "Faith hath a shuttle of adamant, and weaveth therewith innumerable counsels ; and from none thereof is there any escaping." Hear Euripides : "The gods are slow to anger, but their anger moveth very surely." And again : "Though the gods make long tarrying, yet in the end they will come."

In Faber's, *Thesaurus* we find under "Mola" : "Sero molunt deorum mola, idest ; Qui peccant, etiamsi serius, tamen aliquando dant poenas Exstat inter Sibyllinos versus et iste."

Nam mola postremo pinset divina farinam."

Job says : "The triumphing of the wicked is short."

Voltaire writes : "Et des dieux quelquefois la longue patience. Fait sur nous à pas lents descendre la vengeance."

Metastasio sings "I see well, O heavenly Father, why thy thunderbolts do not hasten to destroy the impious. Thou art slow to punish, either that bad men may have time to repent, or that the righteous may be made perfect through suffering."

But the man who struck the note which has resounded in the ears of the poets ever since, was George Herbert, the English Pastor. He was a burning and a shining light in his own time, and he still sheds a softened lustre over ours, which our local editor must not quench. With a conscience tender as a child's, and a heart loving as a woman's, his intellect is none the less powerful. There is a graceful humor which adds much to the charm of his prose and poetry. He puts me much in mind of Oliver Wendell Holmes. They both employed greatly the proverbial philosophy of common sense. In reading portions of "The Temple," by Herbert, one almost fancies he is reading Holmes' "Urania, or a rhymed lesson." In an edition of the works of George Herbert, edited by the Rev. Robert A. Willmott, and printed in New York, in the year 1854 (my copy was a prize given to me when in the High School in the city of Quebec, at page 326, among the "Jacula Prudentum, or outlandish Proverbs, Sentences, etc." I find the following : "God's mill grinds slow, but sure." The