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Pirates, AUTHORS, and CHEAP BOOKS.

The following extract from a letter from the well-known Author and Artist **PHILIP GILBERT HAMERTON** appeared in a recent number of the *New York Publishers' Weekly*:

"I saw by the advertisements in American periodicals that a New York pirate had got hold of 'An Intellectual Life.' We sadly need a copyright law. It would be a benefit to all honest men, including American authors, who would be spared part of the rivalry produced by flooding the States with cheap pirated reprints. Yours very truly, P. G. HAMERTON."

To which I beg leave to reply as follows:

DEAR SIR,—The above note evidently refers to me, as I am the one publisher who has reprinted the work referred to at a low price. Of course it warms the blood, a little, of an honest man, to have another honest man call him a knave. When discussion gets to that point, argument is cut off. I will, however, make a few points on my side of the case.

First.—I am, and long have been, heartily in favor of giving authors the control of their productions upon their own terms, within the limits of the bounds of common sense—it would hardly be practicable for us to pay copyright to Homer, and it may be an open question as to when Macaulay's heirs should cease to receive their tax; there is, of course, some limit; honest "doctors disagree" as to points of equity, expediency, and the best methods of bringing a happy future out of the evil present.

Second.—The laws of this country (and I believe the same is true of all countries) are not as you and other authors desire they should be. Evidently, too, it is quite as useless for authors to expect to get what they want without a CHANGE in the laws, as to hope to reach the result by calling publishers bad names. Where is the common sense of characterizing me as a "pirate" because I multiply (within the bounds of law and of custom since the time of Cadmus) copies of your book from the copy I bought and paid for, more than in applying the same term to one who reads the book aloud to a dozen friends, who consequently do not buy it—or more than applying it to YOU for appropriating the language and thoughts of the patriarch Jos in one of your books without giving him any payment—you give "credit," doubtless, to the authors whom you quote, but you give them no pay,—I give YOU credit, but no "pay" beyond the copy I buy, till we are able to secure a change in the present unsatisfactory laws.

Third.—General Grant once said, "The best way to get rid of a bad law is to enforce it;" that is my theory, and I shall continue to practice upon it; I expect to aid in securing to you by "enforcement" of the legitimate consequences of the present laws, what authors would never get by whining or growling. Some people give to my methods the credit of being, possibly,

the largest single influence which is working in this country to bring about the much desired change in the laws.

Fourth.—While authors certainly have their "rights," readers have some rights also. When I was a boy under fourteen years of age the good literature accessible to me was limited, nearly, to Murray's English Reader, and Josephus' Works. I do not pretend to be the reader's special champion, but I DO look at the question of the "intellectual life" for them from their standpoint as well as from that of the author—and it is amazing to me that an author of your high character, intellectual, humane and Christian (whose inspiring words "The humblest subscriber to a mechanics' institute has easier access to sound learning than had either Solomon or Aristotle," I have placed before millions of readers)—that you should seem to take no pleasure in the fact that the best literature of the world has by my efforts been placed within the reach of millions to whom it was before unattainable: that I give to YOU an appreciative audience (far more appreciative than you find among your wealthy patrons) among tens of thousands, who without my efforts would never have known you. I say readers have rights as well as authors; what they are I will not discuss; I say, simply, let the laws be changed as authors demand; while Homer, Shakespeare, Milton, and Lamb are free to readers, any "monopoly" which living authors can secure upon their own writings will not seriously hurt readers—and, furthermore, folly in law-making, if foolish changes should be made, would be likely soon to work its own cure, in this age of the printing press.

Finally.—Hamerton's "Intellectual Life" ought to sell by the hundred thousand—ought to sell a hundred where it has sold one by the methods of your approved publishers; when the "good time coming" is here, and authors can make their own terms with publishers and the public, perhaps you will give me a little credit and thanks for the LARGER audience you will then have because of my present "piracy." Respectfully, JOHN B. ALDEN.

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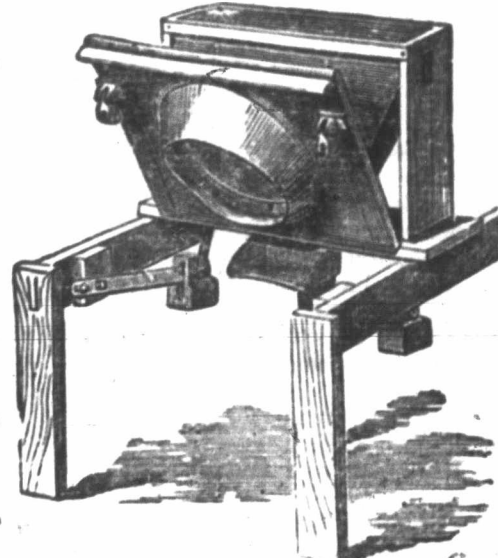
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