

**LITERARY BLUNDERS: A
CHAPTER IN THE "HISTORY
OF HUMAN ERROR"**

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Literary Blunders: A Chapter in the "History of Human Error" by Henry B. Wheatley

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HENRY B. WHEATLEY

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OF HUMAN ERROR"**



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LITERARY BLUNDERS

A CHAPTER IN THE
"HISTORY OF HUMAN ERROR"

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PREFACE.

EVERY reader of *The Caxtons* will remember the description, in that charming novel, of the gradual growth of Augustine Caxton's great work "*The History of Human Error*," and how, in fact, the existence of that work forms the pivot round which the incidents turn. It was modestly expected to extend to five quarto volumes, but only the first seven sheets were printed by Uncle Jack's Anti-Publishers' Society, "with sundry unfinished plates depicting the various developments of the human skull (that temple of *Human Error*),"

and the remainder has not been heard of since.

In introducing to the reader a small branch of this inexhaustible subject, I have ventured to make use of Augustine Caxton's title; but I trust that no one will allow himself to imagine that I intend, in the future, to produce the thousand or so volumes which will be required to complete the work.

A satirical friend who has seen the proofs of this little volume says it should be entitled "Jokes Old and New"; but I find that he seldom acknowledges that a joke is new, and I hope, therefore, my readers will transpose the adjectives, and accept the old jokes for the sake of the new ones. I may claim, at least, that the series of answers to examination questions, which Prof. Oliver Lodge has so kindly supplied me with, comes within the latter class.

I trust that if some parts of the book are thought to be frivolous, the chapters on lists of errata and misprints may be found to contain some useful literary information.

I have availed myself of the published communications of my friends Professors Hales and Skeat and Dr. Murray on Literary Blunders, and my best thanks are also due to several friends who have helped me with some curious instances, and I would specially mention Sir George Birdwood, K.C.I.E., C.S.I., Mr. Edward Clodd, Mr. R. B. Prosser, and Sir Henry Trueman Wood.



LITERARY BLUNDERS.



CHAPTER I.

BLUNDERS IN GENERAL.

THE words "blunder" and "mistake" are often treated as synonyms; thus we usually call our own blunders mistakes, and our friends style our mistakes blunders. In truth the class of blunders is a subdivision of the *genus* mistakes. Many mistakes are very serious in their consequences, but there is almost always some sense of fun connected with a blunder, which is a mistake usually caused by some mental confusion. Lexicographers state that it is an error due to stupidity and carelessness, but blunders are often caused