

An Attic.... Salt-Shaker

CHATTY WEEKLY
BUDGET OF
STORIES ABOUT
FAMOUS PEOPLE

— BY —
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TEWSON

INSPIRATION is a very wayward friend and does not treat all writers alike, as we know. When Dickens was writing "Dombey and Son," in Lausanne, he wrote complaining that he was handicapped by the absence of the hustle and bustle of London's street life. They were meat and drink to his brain. A couple of weeks in country quiet, then a day in London was necessary to him as a mental stimulant. His long night-walks in town helped him to many an inspiration.

THACKERAY, on the other hand, could write anywhere and any time. Could break off in the middle of a piece of work at home; go out and about; pick up his pen at the club in the afternoon, and so on. But then he did not work himself into such a fret and fume over what his characters said and did.

HAWTHORNE worked in solitude and silence. As for Carlyle! His writing room was padded! Noise drove him to rage. Conrad's writing room in his Kent home looked out on trim grass, box hedges and splendid trees. Yet when a friend told him how he envied him writing there, Conrad said he was tired of the view. It was tame after the stormy seas he had sailed.

H. G. WELLS writes a new book while most people are reading his last. He has a table by his bedside, and if the spirit moves him will get up in the middle of the night, make himself a cup of coffee, write a chapter or so, and then go back to sleep again.

THOMAS HARDY always took off his boots before starting to compose, poems or prose. Zola used to darken his apartment at midday and write in artificial light.

"I could look at these mountains a hundred years," said O. Henry to his wife in Asheville, "and never get an idea; but just one block down town, and I catch a sentence—see something in a face—and I've got my story."

AND that reminds me of a story about Maurice Maeterlinck and his wife. Working late one evening he found himself at a loss for just the right word he wanted and so consulted his wife. They discussed the matter for some time and then went to bed leaving it unsettled. During the night the poet roused his sleeping wife.

"Get up, dear!" he exclaimed. "I've just thought of a really good word." "Get up yourself!" she replied, indignantly. "I've just thought of a very bad one."

AN amusing correspondence between James Ford Rhodes, the American Historian, and Dr. Henry S. Pritchett—mentioned in M. A. De Wolfe Howe's biography of Rhodes—reveals that in the original edition of Bret Harte's famous poem on the "Heathen Chinee." Ah Sin was made to conceal in his flowing sleeves "twenty-four packs" of playing cards! As a matter of "historical accuracy" the Chinaman had concealed in his sleeves not twenty-four packs but twenty-four jacks. Merely a printer's error.

DURING a visit to Oxford, Rhodes was shown through the University Press where the Bible, Pray-

er Book and the great Dictionary are printed. He was much interested in the famous India paper used for all three books and inquired of the Superintendent: "Is the India paper all rag?" "No," said the Superintendent, "and I am not going to tell you what it is made of."

THEN he told Mr. Rhodes a story:

"When Gladstone was Prime Minister he made us a visit, and in showing him about he asked, 'What is the India paper made of?' 'Mr. Gladstone,' was my reply, 'you are Prime Minister and the most powerful man in the United Kingdom, but you can not know this secret.' When Gladstone ascertained that it was a secret he worked hard afterwards to discover it but he never found out."

THE hurdy-gurdy—one is serenading me as I write, bless it—has its place in literature. But for it, we should never have had Calverley's lines:

Grinder, who serenely grindeth
At my door the Hundredth Psalm,
Till thou ultimately findest
Pence in thy unwashed palm.
Bang goes a nickel.

AT a literary club dinner one night, Stephen McKenna, the novelist, who was in the chair—spoke of a critic who had said in cold print that there were no modern novelists. Said Anthony Hope Hawkins when he rose:

"If that be so, sir, then what am I doing proposing your health?"

WHILE addressing a public meeting the late Bishop Boyd-Carpenter—quoted as a wit—was interrupted by a skeptic, who asked him if he really believed that the whale swallowed Jonah. He replied that if he reached heaven he would try to find out.

"Ah!" said the questioner, "but suppose Jonah is not there!" Instantly came the reply: "Then you will have to ask him yourself!"

IT WAS the eminent Archdeacon Wilberforce who believed in the future existence of dogs.

"What!" asked a friend, "do you think it possible that I may meet my favorite terrier in heaven?" "Yes," he replied, "if you are good enough."

THE strange, revelatory power exhibited in many of Sargent's portrait paintings did not always please the sitters. In 1888 Sargent's portrait of Henry Irving, then fifty years old—Irving, not the portrait—was displayed at the Royal Academy. It was described as wonderfully clever, albeit somewhat painful, owing to an expression that was suggestive but indefinable.

IRVING himself hated it. Later all trace of it was lost. Years afterward, while dining with Squire Bancroft, noted actor, (who prints the story in his memoirs "Empty Chairs"), Irving told how he had hidden it in a garret and finally hacked it to pieces with a knife.

ANOTHER story told by Bancroft and vouched for by Edwin Abbey and Alma Tadema, both famous contemporaries of Sargent's, is this:

A young and beautiful American heiress, whose condition had long been an insoluble problem to her physician, was sent on a European trip for her health and while in London, sat to Sargent.

THE picture was greatly admired and was the central object of interest at an "at home" in New York given in honor of her return. The physician, who was present, gazed at it earnestly and departed horror-stricken. Later he warned the girl's father that it revealed unmistakable indication of insanity. Soon afterward the subject died in a madhouse.

BARRIE relates that on one of his last visits to Thomas Hardy, at Max Gate, Dorchester, Hardy, showed him a letter from a radio concern which had presented him with a broadcasting set. It said they were delighted to hear from him that it gave pleasure, but that they were rather damped to learn from another source that it was not he who listened, but his dog.

AFTER Mollere's death many poets bused themselves in writing epitaphs for him. One of them showed Prince Conti what he had composed. After reading it attentively, Conti said: "My dear man, I should prefer if Mollere had shown me your epitaph."

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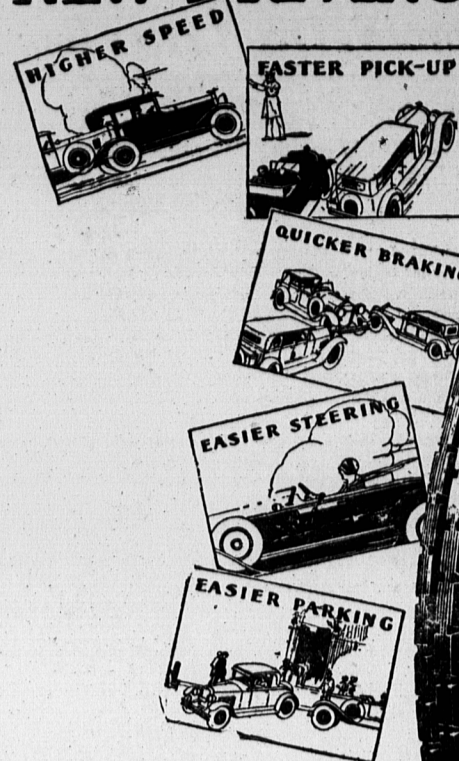
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