

STARTING A TRAIN OF THOUGHT

Many Ways of Doing It—Slow Workers Might Take a Hint.

Non-literary people are given to wonder occasionally at the perennial flow of ideas clothed in appropriate language, which is apparently possessed by journalists and men of letters. But while it is true that continual practice produces a remarkable degree of facility in composition, it is also a fact that fertility of ideas and fluency in expression are gifts by no means so common amongst authors as is commonly supposed.

This applies more especially to creative work for the press, for in these high-pressure days the average writer cannot afford to wait for the "divine afflatus," and the mind has to be spurred into action by whatever means the literary person finds most effectual. Being curious to ascertain some of the methods adopted, the writer recently canvassed the matter amongst the literary people of his acquaintance.

A veteran journalist, the greater part of whose life has been spent in Fleet Street remarked that he regarded his pipe as the greatest thought-provoking contrivance he had ever discovered. "At the best of times," he said, "I have found composition a difficult process for my brain works very slowly, and I have no facility of expression; but without my pipe I am sure I should have been lost altogether. Next to that, as a stimulus, I find the hurry and bustle of the City. I can write best in close contiguity to the printing works."

A well-known lady writer declared that nothing promoted a flow of ideas like early rising. "The best part of my work," she said, "is done in the early morning, in my bedroom. I must have absolute quiet and the further I am from town the better."

Another journalist who, in the intervals of editing a paper, produces short stories and topical articles, finds nothing so stimulating as the reading of some standard author—preferably Shakespeare, Tennyson or R. L. Stevenson—before starting work. "I sit down," he said, "generally in a condition of mental vacuity, but after reading a few pages out of a favorite author some idea is sure to attract my attention; my mind begins involuntarily to work out a sequence, one idea suggests another, and soon the mental machinery is in full operation."

Less innocent were the devices adopted by some other writers whose views were taken. One protested that nothing could bear comparison with the stimulus afforded by black coffee; another swore by strong tea, without milk or sugar; while a third has found that a little neat whisky "produces a glow of the mental faculties highly conducive to literary composition."

It is to be feared that such stimulative agencies are likely to do more harm than good in the long run. This objection (though in a minor degree) will also apply to the case of a gentleman whose principal work is the production of jokes for the comic papers. "To get ideas, as a rule," he writes, "I find it necessary to adopt a sort of 'forcing house' method. I do my work in a room which is heated like a furnace. I have a roaring fire made up, keep the door and window strictly closed, and when the temperature is something over summer heat my mind begins to expand, and the ideas begin to thaw out. And this habit of mine serves a double purpose. For I am tolerably certain to be allowed to work undisturbed."

Quite intelligible from a scientific standpoint is the method employed by a young magazine-writer, who is accustomed to quicken the fecundity of his brain by having his hair vigorously brushed before commencing work. If he cannot prevail upon one of the feminine members of his family to yield him this useful service, he resorts to a hair-dresser, and has a brush by machinery. This, of course, stimulates the flow of blood to the brain, which is half the secret of good mental work.

No doubt there is a good deal of what hypnotists call 'suggestion' in some of the devices adopted. A writer will insensibly get into the habit of regarding some particular thing as an essential to his productive faculty, and what was at first a casual aid ultimately becomes indispensable.

Small and Large Horses.

The Marquis Carsano, an Italian nobleman, owns the smallest horse in the world, which is named Leo. This Lilliputian Bucephalus is 21 in. high, and is a beautiful, well proportioned chestnut, whose tail sweeps the ground. He was bred on the marquis's stock farm. The same nobleman's four-in-hand of Shetland ponies, tiny creatures, though they are much bigger than Leo, have taken the first prize, for the past five years, at some of the leading horse shows in Europe.

The greatest size to which a horse has been known to grow is 20½ hands high. This is the record of a Clydesdale which was on exhibition in 1889 in New York. The animal weighed nearly 3,000 lb., and although only five years old, measured 32 in. round the arm, 45 in. round the stifle, or knee-joint, 95 in. girth, 34½ in. round the hip, and 11 ft. 4 in. in length. It was of perfect proportions, with a head 36 in. in length, or 11 in. longer than an ordinary

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flour barrel. A British dray-horse has been known to stand 18 hands high, and weigh nearly 18 cwt., while one of Wombell's menagerie horses was once shown at a fair at Oxford, measuring 17 hands 3 in. high. It is stated that a resident in Illinois has a horse that has never been broken in or shod. It weighs 2,500 lb., and is 20 hands high.

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A Battle Incident.

There is some quality in the inhabitants of the British Islands, which not only leads them to become good soldiers, but makes it a point of honor for those of them who are officers to render brave personal services to the men under their command. It is seldom that one hears of any such incident among European Continental armies as the following which is related in connection with a recent fight in the Khyber Pass, in Afghanistan, the Continental officer feels himself under no obligation to carry wounded soldiers on his back. Colonel Plowden's command formed a part of General Hamilton's rear-guard, and had to cross a bit of exposed ground swept by the tribesmen's fire. Here three men were struck by bullets; two of them could walk, but the third was disabled. No surgeon was present, and Colonel Plowden himself dressed the man's wounds. After this the men had to retire across the exposed ground, and Corporal Bell was killed. Colonel Plowden, Lieutenant Owen and Lieutenant Fielden carried the dead man up a hill; and by and by the command had to cross another exposed spot. Somebody was sure to be hit now; it happened to be Private Butler, and the ball struck him in the leg, so that he could not walk. Captain Parr dressed his wound, and Lieutenant Carter took the wounded man on his back and carried him. But alas! midway of the exposed ground poor Butler, as he lay on the lieutenant's back, was struck again, and the force of the ball knocked the heavily-laden young officer down. He got up and once more shouldered his burden, when Lieutenant Fielden came to his aid, and together these officers carried Butler to a place of safety. Then it was found that he was dead as the result of the second shot. Meantime Colonel Plowden and Lieutenant Owen were carrying Corporal Bell's body across the dangerous ground, and both of them were wounded in doing so. They struggled on in spite of their wounds, and reached cover with their sad burden. Such incidents bring the soldier near to his officer, and make him readier even than he might otherwise be to lay down his life for his country and his commanders.

For the Babies.

It is not necessary to buy corn cures. Men and Women should remember that Putnam's Painless Corn extractor is the only safe, sure and painless corn remover extant. It does its work quickly and with certainty. See that the signature N. C. Polson & Co. appears on each bottle. Beware of poisonous imitations.

Swamps Their Salaries.

Some of the leading Viennese actresses have been spending so much money on stage dresses that they are in a sad condition pecuniarily. Competition has worked the mischief. When the leading lady of the People's Theatre appears in a sensational gown, her rival in the Carl Theatre is perforce compelled to 'go one up' and appear in the latest triumphs of

the sartorial art. Competition ends only when the diva of the Theater an der Wien, after many sleepless nights, finally hits on the idea of astonishing her admirers before the curtain with a selection of 'confections' that absorbs a whole half-year's salary. For 'Madame Sans-Gene,' Frau Odillon paid more than £200 for her costumes. For the Vienna stage, where no actress is her own manager, this is an exceptionally extravagant outlay.

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER CURED.

Mrs. Lydia A. Fowler, Electric Street, Amherst, N.S., testifies to the good effects of the new specific for all heart and nerve troubles: "For some time past I have been troubled with a fluttering sensation in the region of my heart, followed by acute pains which gave me great distress and weakened me at times so that I could scarcely breathe. I was very much run down and felt nervous and irritable."

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STRANGE MEETINGS.

Pathetic and Dramatic Scenes Enacted on the Stage of Life.

It is a trite saying that 'truth is stranger than fiction.' Indeed, many of the facts of daily life would, if introduced into fiction, be scouted as improbable, if not impossible and among them are cases of meeting under the most strange circumstances of time and place. That such meetings, however remarkable, are at least possible, the following stories, taken from real life, will show.

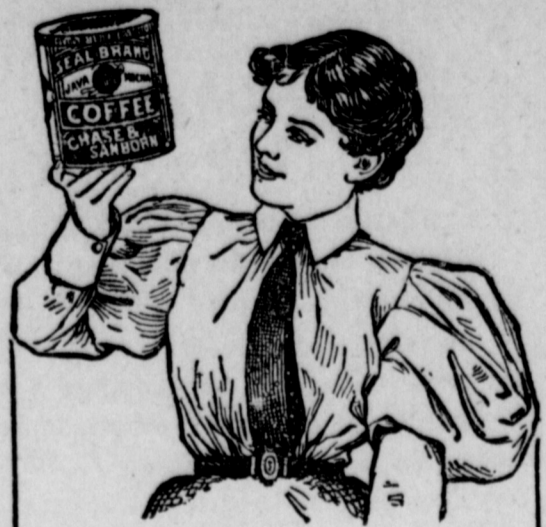
A few months ago a lady of wealth and fashion in Berlin was lying on her death-bed. Her nearest relatives were a son-in-law and a younger daughter who had made an unfortunate alliance twenty years ago, during which time her mother had steadfastly resisted her pleas for reconciliation. The son-in-law was lavish in his attentions to the dying woman, and surrounded her with every comfort in the expectation that she would make him her sole heir. To make matters absolutely sure, he gave strict injunctions that the disgraced daughter was, under no circumstances, to be admitted to her mother's presence; and he engaged a special nurse, to whom he offered a large sum of money to see that no one from outside had access to the patient. On returning home one evening he was astonished to find a lawyer and two witnesses seated by his mother-in-law's bedside, engaged in drawing up a will in favor of the daughter. His rage was beyond all bounds, and he so far forgot himself as to abuse the patient and notary, and to make very scathing remarks about his absent sister-in-law. At this stage the nurse, who had been a silent spectator of the scene, rose quietly and informed him that she herself was the lady he was so ungraciously criticising, and described how, by his very method of excluding her from her mother's presence he had furnished the means of defeating his purpose and affecting her own.

Dramatic as this scene was, it was less strange and tragic than the meeting of a M. Potier and his son Pierre. M. Potier was a prosperous lawyer of Rennes, the ancient capital of Brittany. He had one son to whom he was much attached, and who, he intended, was to succeed to his practice. Pierre, however, preferred idleness and low companions to honest work, and wound up a discreditable youth by robbing his father of a large sum of money with which he escaped. For years M. Potier sought his son in vain. His practice and his old surroundings grew distasteful to him, and he retired to Coutances, where he led a lonely, unhappy life. One evening, as he was returning in the dusk from one of his solitary rambles, he heard stealthy footsteps behind him. Before he could turn round he received a violent blow on his head, and fell stunned to the ground. His assailant was rifling his pockets when M. Potier's eyes fell on him. Dark as it was, he recognised the evil face bending over him. 'Pierre! my son!' he cried, in horror, as he half raised himself into a sitting posture. Then, with a groan, he sank back into unconsciousness, from which he never recovered. Pierre was so smitten with remorse that he gave himself up to the authorities, confessed his crime, and suffered the last penalty of the law.

A very pathetic case of meeting after long years of separation came recently under the writer's observation. A handsome young Scotsman called Gregorson, a bank clerk in a Scotch town, was engaged to be married to the daughter of a local merchant. They were passionately devoted to each other, and the wedding was drawing near when Gregorson, rightly or wrongly, was accused of embezzlement. He shrank from facing the charge, and disappeared as mysteriously as if the earth had swallowed him. It was variously reported that he was in South America, Australia, and London, but no reliable trace of him was ever found. Ten years passed, and his fiancée, true to his memory, was now one of the most skillful and devoted nurses in one of our chief London hospitals. One evening last spring a man was brought in a dying condition to the accident ward of which she had charge. In the pale, suffering features and mutilated form the nurse recognized the man she had loved for so many years, and had met at last, under such strange conditions, in time to make his last moments happy.

Submerged Mountain.

A submerged island has been found 1,000 miles due west from Gibraltar which offers a curious problem for geographers. It was discovered by the Prince of Monaco, and will soon be placed on the charts issued by the Hydrographic office at Washington. The sunken island was discovered quite by accident by the Prince while making soundings from his yacht Princess Alice, and the formation was accordingly named after the yacht. The island is supposed to have been at one time a huge volcano. Its shape, which has been determined by careful soundings, is much the same as that of a huge cocked hat. The island is in no danger of interfering in the least with navigation, since its highest point is some fourteen fathoms below the surface of the sea.—New York World.




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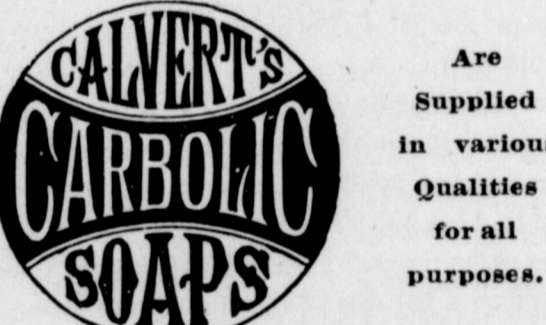
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