

Toronto Star Weekly
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Condensing the Classics

They have nearly finished with their job of condensing the classics. They are a little group of earnest condensers, said to be endowed by Andrew Carnegie, who have been laboring for the last five years at reducing the literature of the world into palatable morsels for the tired businessman's consumption.

LES MISERABLES has been cut to ten pages. DON QUIXOTE is said to run to about a column and a half. Shakespeare's plays would be cut to eight hundred words each. The ILIAD and the ODYSSEY might reduce to about a stick and a half apiece.

It is a splendid thing to bring the classics within range of the tired or retired businessman, even though it casts a stigma on the attempt of the colleges and universities to bring the businessman within range of the classics. But there is a quicker way to present the matter to those who must run while reading: reduce all literature to newspaper headlines, with a short news dispatch following, to give the gist of the matter.

Take DON QUIXOTE for example:

Crazed Knight in Weird Tilt

Madrid, Spain (By Classic News Service) (Special).—War hysteria is blamed for the queer actions of "Don" Quixote, a local knight who was arrested early yesterday morning when engaged in the act of "tilting" with a windmill. Quixote could give no explanation of his actions.

William Blake would reduce well.

Big Cat in Flames *Heat-maddened Brute Terrorizes Jungle*

Rajputana, India, June 15 (By Classic News Service) (Special).— William Blake, widely known English poet, arrived here today in a state of nervous collapse after a series of nerve-racking adventures in the Rajputana jungle. Blake was lost without food or clothing for eleven days.

Blake, still delirious, cries, "Tiger, tiger, Burning bright in the forest of the night."

Local hunters have gone out in search of the beast. The "forest of the night" is believed to refer to the Nite River, a stream near Rajputana.

Then there is Coleridge:

Albatross-Slayer Flays Prohibition

“Ancient” Mariner in Bitter Assault on Bone-dry Enforcement

Cardiff, Wales, June 21 (By Classic News Service) (Delayed).— “Water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink” is the way John J. (Ancient) Mariner characterized the present Prohibition regime in an address before the United Preparatory Schools here yesterday. Mariner was mobbed at the end of his address by a committee from the Ornithological Aid Society.

Operas are much too long—there’s *Pagliacci*—it doesn’t even merit a large headline.

Riot in Sicily, 2 Dead, 12 Wounded

Palermo, Sicily, June 25 (By Classic News Service).—Two are dead and half a score wounded as the result of a brawl started in the local opera house here last night. Giuseppe Canio, a ring leader of the rioters, committed suicide.

Shakespeare was obviously verbose and his plots are too sensational. Here’s the gist of Othello:

*Slays His White Bride
Society Girl, Wed to African War Hero, Found Strangled in Bed*

Jealousy, fanned into fury by primitive jungle rage, is believed by the police to have caused the death of Mrs. Desdemona Othello of 2345 Ogden Avenue.

It was just a little over two years ago that Captain Frank Othello stepped off the transport at Hoboken. On his breast glittered the decorations bestowed by an admiring sovereign. His dark face gleamed with pleasure as he saw the lithe figure.

There would be more—much more—perhaps. Shakespeare wasn’t so verbose after all. The Othello case would fill almost as much space in the newspapers as the Stillman case. Special articles, psychoanalysts’ reports, discussions of intermarriage by women feature writers would flood the papers. Perhaps Shakespeare is pretty well condensed as he is.