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Joe Vitolo

W. E. Dennis on the Delicate Art of Flourishing

You see I am now on my vacation and I wouldn't make a swan, bird, or any other crazy thing for a hundred dollar bill. As to this fame (?) as a flourisher, I wouldn't give a row of pins for that, you understand, In fact I am inclined to think that it is a sort of stigma on a person's character; he's a sort of leper in the eyes of right-minded people. Time was when I considered a fellow who could flourish a swan, a bigger man by far than any monarch that ever sat on the throne, but now I will be blamed if I do not think he is about the smallest vegetable that grows. If I had a boy and caught him flourishing a bird or any other thing, I'd ship him on a three years' whaling voyage and give him a good whaling before he started. If he learned to flourish a harpoon and stab a whale in a tender spot, then I'd spend my last dollar to set him up in a soft snap where he could make an easy living.

Perhaps we can come to a deal somehow. I will tell you what I should like to do for you, and that is, to set up some work similar to what you see in my diploma circular. I could fix up something that would be very showy I know, and practical as well. If at the same time I can make a bird fly around some good practical text writing, all right, let him fly.

Flourishing is all right when used in its proper place, and no penman who does work for the public can get along without it. It is indispensable in the ornamentation of lettering and in many places in engrossing work, but to lead a boy or girl to think that the ability to flourish swans, eagles, antelopes, (or cantaloupes) is a skill worth striving for, is in itself a crime. Good business writing first-writing without any superfluous strokes whatever, 'and based upon easy, rapid, light, elastic movement, just the thing you have been advocating. That is what the boys and girls of America should have. Then if they wish to learn ornamental writing and even bird flourishing as separate and distinct branches of penmanship, just for the sake of entertaining themselves and making their friends sit up and take notice, I have no fault to find.

You will remember with regret, perhaps, as I do, the months and months of valuable time you and I spent in flourishing birds and things back in Manchester, NH, when we ought to, have been studying. Both of us later learned the lesson that ought to have been learned then, I shall, however, lift my voice to protest against the inane principals involved in starting pupils at the wrong end of this penmanship business;-teaching them, ornamental before they are taught to write practical hands.

What on earth started me off on this subject in this sizzling hot weather is more than I can discover but here it stops.

Sincerely,

W. E. DENNIS.

Brooklyn, N. Y. July 18, 1907.

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Our friend Dennis wrote the above just at the close of a season of heavy work, and we may well imagine at a time when nothing but shaded retreats, babbling brooks, and cool breezes seemed worth while. He has perhaps done more and better offhand flourishing than any other living penman, and its practice has probably helped in the development of the delicate skill he possesses in many other directions. Mr. Dennis has no time for the fascinating but unremunerative art of bird flourishing, but he earns hundreds of dollars annually with that amazing skill in offhand flourishing that is at once the envy and admiration of aspirants to skill in ornate penmanship.

In future numbers of the Penman Mr. Dennis will tell and show our readers how to turn skill in offhand flourishing into money, by using it in adorning lettering and in some branches of engrossing.