

On Writing a Theme

'Tis midnight! (Not on the ocean, but on the first floor of Clewly.) Not a "Steegee" is in sight—and such noises! Slams, bams, hoots, shrieks, squeaks and other articles! I am calmly sitting at my table making a brave attempt at writing my theme entitled "Spooks and Their Shadows," which I had put off for a whole week. The desk light throws a ghastly gleam on the face (white-spotted with zinc ointment) of my roommate, who has surrendered herself to the enfolding arms of Morpheus (a trite expression—2 points off). Just as I am about to embark upon a flight of literary composition, a loud shriek nearby raises the roof of the building. I and a few other inquisitive ones rush down the hall only to find that it was Perry cutting one of her healthy arteries, which end like warwhoops. I re-enter my "boodwar" and try once again to invoke the Muse of Inspiration. But all in vain, for about that time I hear a loud, mysterious whistle which sounds as though it comes from the front of Main Hall. I peer out my window and see a fat, dark figure stealthily creeping down the street. Breathlessly I watch the figure creep along, gradually approaching the building and going around it! Without moving a muscle (all thoughts of my theme having taken wings and flown away) I wait till the man returns. Then I discover that I am no detective after all, because the man is a real policeman. (I can tell by the brass buttons on his coat).

Taking all my powers of concentration in hand, I return to my room and start re-reading the only sentence I had written on my theme: "Spooks are not very often seen, but they may often make known their messages by a series of knockings; a person who is a medium may often thus interpret the direful messages of the spirits." Just then I hear a long, doleful-sounding siren "who-ooing" down the street, which signifies the approach of either the ambulance or the fire-truck (and my instinct warns me that it is an ambulance). I sit perfectly still, not daring to move while the ambulance passes by, and the knocking of its siren family dies away. At that crucial moment a knocking sound disturbs my pleasant thoughts—a knocking on the pipe right behind me. My first thought—the person in the ambulance has died and his departed soul is trying to communicate with me. With my bedroom slipper I knock back, and then breathlessly wait for the message to be communicated. A shout from the "Steegee" in the room above is my only answer and it in an unspoken-like tone: "Lights off down there. One o'clock."

So in a martyred manner I cast aside my pen and paper for a more pleasant occupation—sleep. After all my manly (pardon—no—manly efforts), my theme still remains a thing of the future with only one sentence on which to exist. Oh—whaddacare! Cause—"I think that I shall never dream A thing as wild as a theme. A theme whose maddening titles pass Before me in a jumbled mass; A theme that looks at me all week And often haunts me in my sleep; A theme that may all year engage A group of sp's for each page, Upon whose margin commas lie, And other marks that never die, Rhymes are made by folks that dream, But only a nub can write a theme." (With apologies to Joyce Kilmer). —SARA GRAVES.

The PICTURE TELLS the STORY. PIEDMONT ENGRAVING CO. Printing Plates from Pictures

What and What Not

Throughout the courtroom scene reigned supreme. His Honor, the Judge, was about to make his entrance. He was a magnificent white rat with long, polished whiskers and carefully combed fur. The dignity with which he took his chair gave evidence that he was most worthy of his office and sufficiently able to execute the important duties of one in such a position. He took his polished glasses from a nearby attendant, and proceeded to look over the documents which set forth the business of the day. Sadly he shook his head and struck his whiskers with a manicured paw. These mortals! Was there ever such an animal created more amusing or obstructive?

There was a disturbing squeak from the corner of the courtroom, and the Judge peered over his glasses in time to see Mrs. Whitesides cut little Nibbler Whitesides on his pointed pink ear and tie up his mouth with the tip of his tail to keep him from chewing on the court benches. The judge nodded in approval and resumed his reading—before noticing, however, that Old Rat Blackfoot's daughter was letting her beautiful fur grow out.

With a rap on his desk, he demanded that the first case be presented and the culprit brought to trial.

"The first case, your Honor," squeaked the prosecuting attorney, "is against Sharp Nose. He is charged with bringing the most direful menace of Rationism into the midst of his fellowmen. He has endangered the lives of his fellow citizens, etc."

Sharpnose was immediately sworn in upon the stand and underwent a volley of questions by the nervous little lawyer.

"Why did you bring this rat-trap into the city, Sharpnose?" "Couldn't help it. Well help it, sir." "Couldn't help it? State why."

"My tail was caught in it, sir." After being questioned until he was exhausted, the court finally dismissed with only a \$10 fine.

Now came the most exciting case of the day. A mortal was to be brought before the court for judgment. At a rap from the Judge's hammer, a little door opened and a white and terrified mortal was brought in escorted by the most impressive policemen the court boasted. Whether it was by fear or what—not I know, but it might have been what—not the mortal, a girl she was, appeared no bigger in stature than the medium size rats within the room. She jumped when she was ordered to swear and stammered: "I, I don't swear."

"Swear!" bellowed the policeman in the deepest squeak he could below. She swore—in the legal manner, you understand, gentle reader. He helped her into the witness chair where she squirmed and clutched its arms until the judge growled at her to keep still, which frightened her so she jumped to the floor, and had to be reinstated again.

The rats of the courtroom looked at her with the utmost contempt. The women snickered and nudged each other while the men folded their arms and settled back to enjoy themselves.

"It is known that several inhabitants of this city are devoting themselves to the progress of science at the laboratory of Salem College. For them we have the highest regard and esteem. They are siding in one of the most important fields of work possible as the progress of science undoubtedly is such, and we are proud of the heights to which they have risen. However, news has recently reached us of the death of several of our beloved citizens there, and of the mistreatment which they have received by mortal hands. We have been fortunate in capturing you, mortal, for as guardian of their food, most of the mistreatment has been done by you! You have the stain of life's blood upon your hands! Look at me! Did you not feed dog biscuits to the inhabitants of cage No. 7?" "Y-Y-Yes, I guess I did." "Outrageous! I have never heard

of such cruelty." "W-W-Well, aren't they animal crackers?" At this point the exhausted lawyer fainted, and his understudy must needs take up the situation. How they tortured the poor child with questions and sarcastic taunts. She grew more pale, and her eyes searched the room wildly. Was there no chance of help from any quarter?—Quarter! The word gave her a horrible idea—did they ever resort to such cutting punishments? At last the jury threw in a sponge and retired, only remaining out for

several minutes. After they had revealed themselves, the foreman arose, and carefully pulling on his fur-lined mittens, said slowly, "We pronounce the defendant."

Adelaide Winston, you sleep all the time. Anne Hairston's waiting for you to feed the rats so she can weigh them. Get up! Now I ask you—do you think she took the dog biscuits with her?"

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