

On Writing Essays

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It is a very simple job to write an essay. Three things only are needed. First, there must be a lack of time. Secondly, there must be a list of subjects to choose from, the list being wholly inadequate. Thirdly, there must be a group of fellows in the room to distract one's attention from his work. We shall consider the three necessities in detail and then you will understand why English professors play golf during the summer instead of settling down to three months of continuous study.

Our first qualification is lack of time. This, of the three, is probably the most easily secured. If you are asked to pass in an essay in, say, two weeks time, all you have to do is promptly to forget about it. On the twelfth day, after a bid of seven no-trump, while your opponent, who has only one ace, is deciding whether to double or not, someone is sure to ask, "Say, have you got your essay written for Monday?"

Like a flash you will remember, and immediately the first necessity comes into being.

Now about the list of subjects. Without this you could never begin an essay. On the morning of the fourteenth day you decide that it is about time to begin. Of course you look for the list of topics; a mad scramble follows. The paper on which they were written cannot be found anywhere. After twenty minutes of feverish searching, the elusive little scrap of paper is found in a corner of your hip pocket or in a coat which has been hanging in the closet for two weeks. Now you are ready to start, except for the fact that the pen lacks ink, and that you cannot find your essay book. You begin to look over the subjects.

"No, that's too long; — I don't know anything about walking tours." Thus do you go down the list. It is again inspected, then with disgust is flung into the waste-basket. In exasperation you start your pen to write on the first subject that crosses your mind. You keep on writing and at the same time pray that the bell does not ring until the manuscript has attained sufficient length.

The third necessity is not so hard to get either. Your room-mate and the fellows next door finished their essays

yesterday, so they all assemble for a little game of bridge, while the prefect of discipline is in the old building.

There is nothing so conducive to clear thinking as to have, "three no-trump" or "double" or "five diamonds" ringing in your ears. Then again it may be that they are having a game of cribbage with its "fifteen two" or "thirty-one for two" assisting your mental processes.

About every five minutes someone asks, with exasperating solicitude, "How's the essay coming, Jack?"

Oh, for the life of a hermit!

Hurray! You are finished. The homicidal gleam fades from your eyes. You read it over. Yes Sir! the best essay you ever wrote.



With aching hands and bleeding feet
We dig and heap, lay stone on stone;
We bear the burden and the heat
Of the long day and wish 't were done.
Not till the hours of light return
All we have built do we discern.

—Arnold

The soul of man is larger than the sky,
Deeper than ocean, or the abysmal dark
Of the unfathomed.

—Hartley Coleridge

