

## **Behind the Nib - by Lou Metcalf**

Installment #5

### **Nib adjustment – Practice, Practice, Practice**





We all have to start somewhere and learning to adjust nibs is no different than any other skill. It takes a lot of practice. That being said, I strongly urge those of you who are now selling fountain pens on a regular basis to work on adjustments and even grinding. Do yourself a favor, though.

Do NOT practice on 18 karat gold nibs.

Before you ever attempt to adjust an 18 karat gold nib, you should be well-versed in adjustments by practicing on steel nibs. The feel is different, but you will find that the learning curve is a lot less expensive!

In the first photo, after adjustment, the tines are no longer side-by-side. In this (mis-) alignment, it is impossible to obtain any capillary flow, so you will not be laying any ink on your paper. To correct this condition, carefully pull the one tine on the nib straight out at the tip and gently bend it downward toward the feed. Do the same to the other tine. Examine the two tines to insure that they are on the same plane and that they are very slightly separated. Dip the nib and test the writing. Continue to adjust until you have the desired ink flow.

In the second photo, after adjustment, the tines are now lined up overlapping each other. With this (mis-) alignment, the slight amount of pressure when applying pen to paper will not cause contact with both tines resulting in the application of the ink. At best, the ink will not be delivered to the paper at all. At worst, the ink may blob uncontrollably onto the paper. Correcting this problem is very similar

to correcting the first problem, only there is an added step required. First, bend one tine backwards slightly, then bend the other tine backwards until the tines are beside each other and roughly on the same plane. Check to see that the inside edges of the slit are parallel to each other. If not, adjust the wings slightly until the edges are parallel. Then, continue with the adjustment by carefully pulling one tine on the nib straight out at the tip and gently bending it downward toward the feed. Do the same to the other tine. Examine the two tines to insure that they are on the same plane and that they are very slightly separated. Dip the nib and test the writing. Continue to adjust until you have the desired ink flow.

The third picture shows a dent in the nib along the outer edge of the wing. This typically happens when an inexperienced person attempts to adjust the ink flow by tightening the wrap of the nib wings around the feed. Note: The nib wings do not need to wrap around the feed. Only the centerline of the nib and the centerline of the feed need to be in contact for the capillary action to work. The wrapping of the nib wings will often cause the edges of the nib slit to separate and lose their parallel-ness to each other. Correcting this requires that the wings be carefully unwrapped and re-flattened until the slit edges are parallel. The dent or crease in the wing can be straightened by nib meisters, but this is not a simple task for the uninitiated. For the most part, a dent or crease, once created, is likely to remain that way.