

Out of the Shuffle

A NEW DEAL. By STUART CHASE. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1932.

Reviewed by ERNEST GRUENING

WHAT will happen? What lies ahead for all of us? Is the old America gone forever? Is the promise of American life irretrievably broken? Is the depression a mere passing phase from which we shall emerge as we always have? Will there be revolution in these United States?

Such questions are being asked from Eastport to San Diego, wherever two or three are gathered together in hope or apprehension, as America nears the third anniversary of that fatal October day which wrote finis to the turbulent 'twenties.

Stuart Chase, who for some years has been casting a coolly appraising eye on the scene, now adds his bit to the swelling autopsical literature. He begins by asking "what is an economic system for?" It is a fair question—and pertinent. Under our system Mr. Chase lists sixteen ways of getting rich: (1) Creating an artificial monopoly; (2) tying up a patent or secret process; (3) usurious practices (within the law); (4) manufacturing a useless, adulterated, or even vicious product; (5) akin to the preceding, forcing a high price and big sale for an unimportant product; (6) creating new fashions or fads; (7) promoting dubious stocks and bonds; (8) speculating in securities; (9) speculating in natural resources; (10) speculating in commodities; (11) promoting parasitic industries (such as factories in a region where child labor constitutes the profit margin); (12) graft in politics; (13) graft in business (see book of that title by John T. Flynn); (14) racketeering (obviously illegal), but how does it differ, asks Chase, save for legal technicalities, from the rest: "I do not see why one's conscience should not be as clear protecting beer runners . . . as selling the bonds of an about to be defunct government of Peru or putting over the horrors of Athlete's foot on a defenseless public." Dumping surplus production abroad; (16) rushing blindly in to compete when excess capacity already threatens industry, viz. gasoline stations, of which 71% are unnecessary, involving an annual waste of half a billion dollars.

Pointing to the obviously anti-social nature of this "whole vicious pecuniary complex" Mr. Chase riddles the assumption that in playing this kind of a game one is somehow contriving to grease the wheels of industry and to serve a social purpose. It is this system which has exalted the worst side of human nature—greed and acquisitiveness! "What has hitherto been called a vice, and what you and I know is a vice, was rationalized into a virtue. Money became a moral force, and the whole Western world was forced to substitute pecuniary standards for human ones." And he pays his respects to the pharisees who sought to prove that Jesus himself was a hustling entrepreneur.

Becoming graphic, Mr. Chase droops his eyelids over penetrating optics and sees our once fair land "a gigantic hopper, engulfing virgin forests, rich soils, coal seams, pools of petroleum . . . to spew out after prodigious labor, billboards, tabloids, jerry-built apartment houses, confession magazines, Coney Island, half-rented sky-scrapers, squeaking radios, paper boots, filling stations, brown derbies. . . ." For this *illth* our children must pay e'en to the fourth generation.

Mr. Chase gives a thrilling newsreel of how and why the whole gaudy edifice collapsed . . . it was cracking while political leaders were prophesying the abolition of poverty, and scribes were lyricizing the "American Omen." Properly, he recalls his own animadversions—his 1928 publication "Prosperity: Fact or Myth." Though we have entered into the economy of abundance its practical effects "must be confined to certain classes in certain periods called 'prosperity'" unless the distribution, the consumption, problem is solved. Too much money in the upper brackets and not enough in the lower helped to bring on this depression. And

now warehouses bulge and children cry for food.

Well, Mr. Chase is emphatic that our laissez-faire capitalism with its insecurity has outlived its usefulness and that its epoch is ended. Yet no one could be more cheerful about it than he. He foresees more and more collectivism with planning from the top. Already he sees the terms of a new deal beginning to emerge—an economic system that will permit us to live.

But not with our late, and still vocal, colossi, shuffling the deck. Our business men and politicians have failed us. The current programs of the elder statesmen are without light, hope, intelligence, or imagination. The same cultural laggards who got us in are presuming to extract us from the mire, promising to get us back on the old road. It will not do. The new road leads to the left. Two of its sharp forks leading toward red revolution and communism, or to the dictatorship of fascism, Mr. Chase rejects as most unlikely for America. There is however a gradual left turn on the road we have

Still, the advice is not wholly theoretical. Only recently Mr. Shlink and Mr. Chase established "Consumer's Research" a non-profit making organization, membership costing but \$2 a year, designed to liquidate "the new illiteracy"—the Lynds' phrase for describing the ignorance of the consumer—and enable him in the face of high pressure salesmanship to get his money's worth in the modern market. The organization has already secured, without commercial promotion, 40,000 members. At its present rate of growth it will have 100,000 in two years. Suppose, Mr. Chase asks, it should grow to a million.

Well, why not? Three years ago, retired radicals had long since taken jobs in advertising agencies. Today it's a very different America. With four more years of—whoever it may prove to be—Americans may begin again to think for themselves, to refurbish their long forgotten "e pluribus unum" and, mayhap, to act. As Mr. Chase asks in conclusion: "Why should Russians have all the fun of remaking the world?"

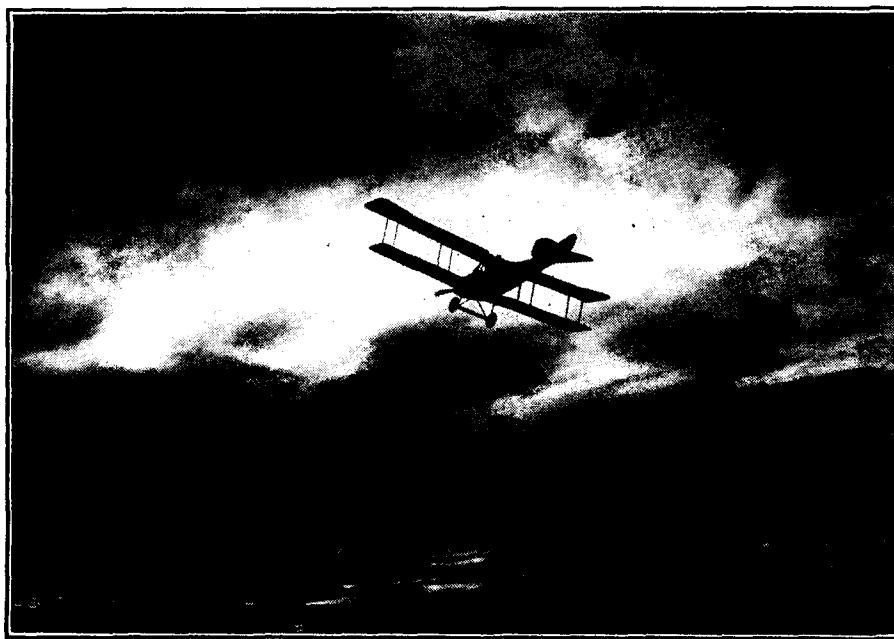


ILLUSTRATION FROM "THE BEAUTY OF FLIGHT" (DAY).

always travelled. Mr. Chase illustrates from our recent war performance: Our soldiers fighting in France had to be fed, clothed. They paid no money for these supplies, but received them in exchange for work they had agreed to do. A whole people fighting on the economic front under a General Staff has essentially the same physical problem. In exchange for useful work the necessities must be provided; in place of weapons the luxuries. And so stated it is not a financial or political, but an engineering problem. It is a technocracy which Mr. Chase envisages—though that is not his expression. His immediate program includes a managed currency, drastic redistribution of national income through income and inheritance taxes, and a huge program of public works.

It is an exciting book, vibrant with fine fervor, yet well equilibrated on a sound base of common sense. Unlike Lawrence Dennis's "Is Capitalism Doomed"—the most dynamic and creative work on the depression—"A New Deal" has not brought to light anything new or profound, but it is an admirable exposition of our dilemma and a synthesis of the most enlightened contemporary thought with Chase's own philosophy. Free from doctrine or dogma, the conclusion, it is interesting to note, coincides with Norman Thomas's as expounded in his "The Way Out; A Program for Democracy."

The weakest point, in Chase's book, deals with the steps for realizing his program—the answer which he offers to the many who are asking: "What can we do individually or collectively to assist such progress?" He offers three courses of action. "Agitate and educate"; join the League for Independent Political Action and try to form a new political party; organize the intelligent in each community as shock troops to solve local problems, and to unite with similar groups to attack larger problems. Alas, the road to the left which we have been invited to follow seems to begin at the other end of a beautiful rainbow!

Law for the Layman

THE ROAD TO THE LAW. By DUDLEY CAMMETT LUNT. New York: McGraw-Hill. 1932.

Reviewed by STODDARD COLBY

THE professional lawyer is seldom articulate about the law. Having rarely speculated about it, he has never quite digested it. For the most part he loves that intimate understanding of it that comes of having to explain any technical subject to the uninitiate. Mr. Lunt is the very rare exception. He translates without unbending; he repeats gracefully and delightfully. His little book is like a revelation and an object lesson to the professional lawyer. Into it he has passed a most unorthodox, illicit wealth of human interest. The facts of his cases and decisions, in flagrant disregard of the customary legal drone, fairly hum with action and drama. For his heresy professional lawyers will never forgive him; he has betrayed them into lucid English—his offense is great.

The seeds of Mr. Lunt's apostasy were first sown on reading Smith's Leading Cases as a young law student. At this impressionable age he conceived the idea that a similar collection of legal precedents, with accompanying commentaries, illustrative of the growth and fundamental principles of law might be compiled and presented to the layman in such a way as to be positively readable—in a word, that the old "carcase juris" might be made to look like a living human being. If he has not quite actually made it live, he has still made it a most fascinating and exciting corpse. Every device to make its pale luminosities seem mellow—from racy, picturesque recitals of the facts of leading cases to actual dialogue between the litigants—has been employed. So much so that the reader almost runs the risk of being more enthralled by Mr. Lunt's appealing characters than by the law. But these are all legitimate lures and accomplish Mr. Lunt's main purpose

of painless education. Mr. Lunt is apparently one of those who, starting from the assumption that most of the age-old lay criticism and ridicule of law is based upon misconception or ignorance of its nature, tends to an assurance that if the layman can only be made to understand what the law is in any given point, he can be made to respect it. Whether this belief is naive; whether familiarity will prove a greater breeder of contempt than ignorance, the lay reader alone is judge. Certainly he cannot fail to understand the law as Mr. Lunt expounds it. His book is a straightforward, unpretentious, common sense exposition of legal principles and their development and growth. It does not pretend to analyze the nature of the judicial process or to account historically for the remote origin of legal ideas—but it presents very clearly to the lay reader certain peculiar twists of the legal mind—in other words the technique of the profession. The layman reading it must, I think, be impressed with the paucity of legal concepts that the English lawyer has to work with—the great, broad, flapping, contentless generalities of its principles such as "public convenience," "certainty," "the standard of prudence of the ordinary prudent man." He may even acquire a sneaking respect for the ingenuity with which the lawyer uses them.

Mr. Lunt presents the legal mind, I am bound to say, in its best light. He assumes that there is a conscious, common sense logical basis for every decision he discusses. Not much place is left for blind growth, psychological or social prejudice of judges, rationalization—in short for the great extra-logical ingredients of legal growth. The illustrations of legal reasoning that he has selected present, for the most part, unimpeachable common sense. While he cannot be accused of soft pedaling law's blind spots, he has refrained from throwing them into any very glaring relief. Though his picture of judicial rationale is both an oversimplification of its tortuous, lumbering process and somewhat of a euphemism, it must be remembered that Mr. Lunt's modest aim is only to acquaint the laymen with a few fundamental legal principles and to exhibit the legal technique of handling them. His book is decidedly refreshing.

The Ocean Overhead

A RABBIT IN THE AIR. By DAVID GARNETT. New York: Brewer, Warren & Putnam. 1932. \$1.50.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

DAVID GARNETT'S novels are inimitable. The book before us is, however, not one of his novels but "Notes from a Diary Kept While Learning to Handle an Aeroplane." The Rabbit mentioned is Mr. Garnett himself, as he appeared to himself during a course of instruction. But he was not really timid, and he qualified. If you have read Mr. Garnett's book just prior to this, which was concerned with a long distance flight from England to China, you will previously have noted his intense interest in aviation.

It is unnecessary to say that Mr. Garnett's style is good. And the naturalness of his diary is a delight. He makes no bones about his many mistakes. His triumph is that he gives one the very feel of the air in flying, smooth or rough, and one's complete identification with the student. Naturally, along with all the practical discussion of the actual flying of the machine—at first a Bluebird, then a Moth—there is particularly vivid description of "sightseeing" also.

This author is able to convey the variety of emotional experiences that come to the beginning flier. He also notes all the physical sensations. He is extremely modest concerning his own ability. He makes the reader partake, however, of all the thrills of the air. The difficulty of landings, the first soloing, his description of the crashing of another machine, which fortunately didn't hurt anyone, are all vividly set before us: On the hundredth page of this little book comes a positive paean in praise of cavorting in the new element.

A Whaling Master

THROUGH THE HAWSE-HOLE. The True Story of a Nantucket Whaling Captain. By FLORENCE BENNETT ANDERSON. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1932. \$3.

Reviewed by AUSTIN STRONG

NANTUCKET ISLAND lies on her side some thirty miles at sea with her knees drawn up to her chin, her broad back to the pounding of the Atlantic Ocean. Within the curve of her shoulder she holds the town protected from the four winds which "bawl and burst their cheeks in vain."

My feet were on the iron rail which encircled the pot-bellied, whitewashed stove. A wooden whale with a red mouth stared down at me with a rogue's eye, as it hung from the ceiling. On the walls were fastened boat steerers lances, ship sextants, parallel rulers, charts with thumb stains of whale grease, mahogany rods for measuring oil in barrels, and pictures of sailing ships, some painted long ago with painful accuracy by Chinese artists in Hong Kong. One grim relic hung on a bracket above the door, a harpoon twisted into a giant corkscrew by the death flurry of some agonized whale off French Rock, New Zealand. A daguerreotype group of Nantucket whaling masters, taken during a visit to New York in the spring of 1860 to inspect the Great Eastern, stared out into the room with stern, unrelenting faces.

We were sitting in the Captain's Room of the Pacific Club looking up the cobbled Square at the foot of Main Street. The elms made a cathedral aisle leading to the steps of the Pacific Bank, an imperfect altar at the upper end. We were watching the "pass."

My companion had more than the touch of the dandy, he had presence. Pick him up and set him down in any company, in any part of the world, and he would hold his own. His hair was well trimmed, both ends of his tie were pulled through a gold ring, his blue trousers had broad black braid down the sides, his trim coat was double-breasted and his hard-boiled shirt spotless. He sat bolt upright in his chair, every inch a Master. He had the ancient dignity and style of the quarterdeck, all shipshape and Bristol fashion.

He suddenly turned and fixed me with an eye dyed blue by long years on deep water.

"Gives me a queer feeling," he said, "to be sitting in this room, the last captain on the Island. From the start I didn't hope—I knew I was going to be a captain. My only idea was to wear a shiny black coat, a tall hat, and carry a whale-bone cane, same as the Captains who used to sit here in these chairs. As a boy I looked in through these windows at them sitting around this stove. Nothing ever touched them in my mind before and after. They were the kings of the world. That was the height of my imagination—going to sea, being master of my own ship, and coming home and having the right to sit in this room among them."

He might have been Tomlinson's captain who raised his voice in "London River":

The sea has gone. When I look down this road and see it so empty . . . I feel I've overstayed my time—allowance. My ships are firewood and wreckage. My owners are only funny portraits in offices that run ten-thousand-ton steamers, and the boys are bones. Poplar? This isn't Poplar. I feel like Robinson Crusoe—only I can't find a footprint in the place.

Nantucket is luckier than poor Poplar. She still has her footprints. So far progress has spared her—so far that robot-eyed monster has not kicked over her monuments, torn up her cobbles, blackened her face with soot, nor stamped out her heart with cinders, noise, and factory whistles. The old Town, smiling and triumphant, is still fresh, distinguished, and beautiful with her gray houses, captains' walks, and church towers "bosomed high in tufted trees."

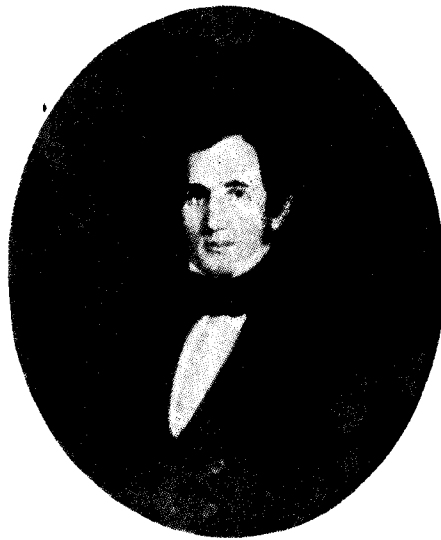
"Through The Hawse-Hole" is a real contribution to the history of our early American culture. One finds on reading the book that the Nantucketer was never a grim Puritan or a dull Quaker. He

seems to have taken his religion as he did his adventurous life with a quiet enthusiasm; the dour New Englander is a false tradition on this merry island.

These men and women were well-bred and bore themselves with grace. They liked silver, fine linen, the best of food, rare wines and good talk. They were exceptionally well-educated, spoke good English, and their minds were never allowed to grow stale for each incoming ship brought extraordinary and exciting news from every corner of the known and unknown world. Mr. William Rotch came home to tell of the first events of the French Revolution, of his meeting Mirabeau, the President of the National Assembly at Versailles; of the cheers of the Deputies when he stood up and pleaded for the tragic conditions of the Nantucket Quakers who had settled at Dunkirk at the invitation of the Government to teach the whaling industry to the French. Then came Sir Isaac Coffin Bart, of his Britannic Majesty's Navy, to build and endow the Coffin School for the Nantucket clan of Coffins. Ship after ship came round Brant Point bringing news as well as oil. Nantucketers knew intimately the early struggles of Peru, the politics of Chile, the pioneers of New Zealand; they heard from first hand witnesses of the opening up of Japan; they were brought word of the Indian Mutiny, of the Crimean War, and the South seas from Galapagos to Apia was an open book to them. Nantucket had the finest news agency that America, or perhaps the world, had ever known, for the news was always first-hand and told by an excited eyewitness. This may explain why today the Nantucketer is not easily impressed.

Florence Bennett Anderson has done her work well in spite of an involved, self-conscious style. I wish she could have told her story with the stark simplicity which the narrative deserves. However, it is a gallant effort and brings to light for the first time an authentic Nantucket whaling master.

Mrs. Anderson tells the tale of her great-grandfather, Captain Seth Pink-

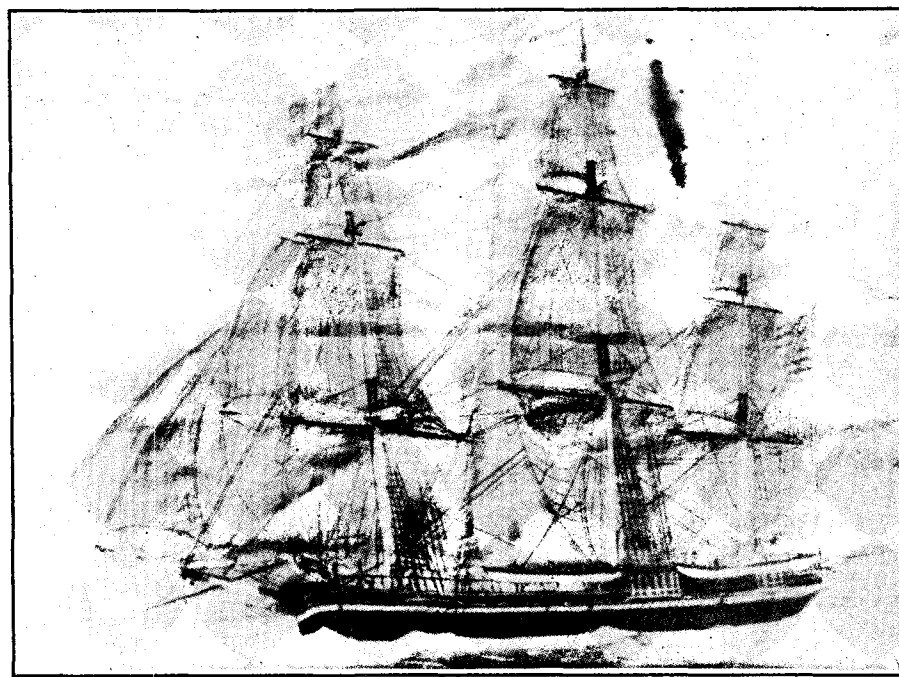


CAPTAIN SETH PINKHAM

ham, who was born in 1786. In her book there is a reproduction of an oil portrait painted in Edgartown in 1840, of this hawk-faced ancestor. Dressed in his shiny broadcloth coat and high black stock, he looks up at you from the page with a bold and penetrating eye. A handsome, sober, successful shipmaster who started earning his living when a boy of ten in a rope-walk and became a prominent merchant, friend of Daniel Webster, and finally representative in the Massachusetts State Legislature.

I have often wondered what has become of all the words the whalemens spoke during those interminable voyages. Science hints that we may soon be able to tap the ether and hear the original Gettysburg speech. I would like to turn the dials back to some star-filled night on a lonely sea in Southern Grounds or up North under the dim, horn-colored Arctic dawn, and listen to the murmur of the crews as they sat huddled together forward, talking and talking of *Fair Street*, *Traders Lane*, *Crown Court*, *Gull Island*, *Egypt*, and *India Row*.

Perhaps these words have come back to hover over the Town. Sometimes one can almost hear them when the tides shift,



ONE OF THE NANTUCKET WHALING FLEET

making the old harbor suddenly restless, excited, and the waters talkative. On still winter nights too, in deserted streets, one is suddenly made aware that the past is by no means dead, but strong as life.

I quote from a letter which to me is the most poignant moment in the book, for it bears witness to the eternal tragedy of early Nantucket, the parting of lovers. How much pain is here in these few stilted words written in a fine copperplate hand. One can see Captain Pinkham gravely sitting with his writing box open on the table in his white, panelled cabin. The telltale compass is swinging in its gimbals over his head as the ship heaves and groans aloud. The noise of wind through the rigging, the screams of wheeling sea-gulls, the banging of blocks, the loud reports of bellying sails are far away from this lover as he carefully writes:

"Ship Galen at Sea on the Coast of Chili Lat. 36° S. in sight of the Land, 29 April 1821.

"My dear and affectionate wife, . . . I cannot send off my Letter to you, without expressing an anxious care about our little girls—they are my dear! tender plants (you know), and they are also the production and offspring of the interchange of our mutual love and affection—bound to us both by the ties of nature and the sanctity of the nuptial vow. I think it unnecessary to enjoin so good a Mother, to have a watchful eye on their ripening years. I can seem to see them stepping about the house, playing with little Malvina F., sometimes asking a simple and childlike question about their Father, and at others perhaps saying something to their Mother about him that would make her eyes swim with tears, all these things you know (in domestic life) come up to view in their turn, in regular succession: and although the hand that guides my pen is thousands of miles distant from you and the innocents, yet the pleasing anticipation of the mental faculties can reach you in the twinkling of an eye.

. . . And, my dear friend, be pleased to accept from your nearest and dearest friend the warmest effusions of his heart. Seth Pinkham."

Prose and Rhythm

(Continued from page 73)

syllabic stress as is brought by the poet to the use of his regular or irregular forms.

It is doubtful how many true stylists we have today. Despite multitudinous creative writers, there are probably but a handful to whom the term stylist would truly apply. For a stylist is one who is read not only for what he says but particularly for the way he says it. Most of our writers, bursting as they are to get something told, hurry on by forced marches. It is the Day of Haste.

Yet one need not be a distinguished stylist to learn prose rhythms, both in what to adopt and what to avoid. As with the form and the content of verse, it is again a matter of matching the flow of the words to the import of a line or a paragraph. Not only the etymological structure, but what might be called the "wave length" of every statement, can be made to reflect the nature of that statement. And, indeed, some of our new

writers are making various experiments in hidden prose rhythms. Only, they conceal them ineffectively. The trouble with most of these experiments is that the machinery immediately creaks, even when it is the case of a good craftsman. In "A Farewell to Arms," Ernest Hemingway was guilty in some few passages of deviating into a kind of adaptation of the method of Gertrude Stein, with lamentable results. It was a self-conscious attempt and alien to his own lucidity. The machinery creaked violently. Other experiments have been made by other writers which produced something perhaps sensational, but certainly neither inevitable nor convincing. Yet one should not cry down the experimenters altogether, unless one feels that all possible effects in the writing of prose have already been attained by one or another of the giants of the past. And we do not believe any such thing. The modern material with which the new writers are dealing should, and will, affect the form, the mould of their writing. To describe contemporary phenomena with the greatest effectiveness new methods will be found, both in verse and prose.

But prose rhythms are a subtle matter. Rhythm is a patent glory of poetry; it must be dexterously masked and directed with discretion in prose. The only rule is that it should not obtrude, but take control of the reader's emotions by stealth. Too crude a technical equipment has been brought to most of the new experiments. Some of them are almost as bad as that "rear of the angry bear" which we have already quoted.

The greatest glory of prose is clarity, sentences so shaped that they tell exactly what the writer wishes to convey in words for which no others will do. And clarity includes concision, the absence of anything extraneous or repetitious. Before undertaking any experiments in prose rhythms we advise the young writer first endlessly to practise concision and clarity. When he can pack into a few words such significance as resides in that simplest of declarative sentences from the Bible, "Jesus wept," he will have achieved distinguished prose.

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