

AN INTERVIEW

"To have something to say, and to say it—that is the inevitable formula of modern writing." This was said in a tone of finality, and by a man who knew what he was talking about. By miraculous good fortune, I was given the privilege of speaking to one of the most successful newspapermen in New York City. In ten minutes he changed my views of literature, and set up glaring guide posts which pointed the way to the scribbler's goal. His advice may be summarized as follows:

The youth who becomes conscious of literary ability is first an ecstatic being whose soul soars to monstrous combinations of adjectives, and to the lavishness in description which amounts to nothing short of confusion. The literary aspirant sits back, and views his mountain of words, and imagines he has created a firm structure. The man of more mature judgment will see something which may resemble a pile of bricks: there is good material, but it needs training and hard work to build a unified literary accomplishment.

Modern literature needs more action, and less frills. That immediately drops out the writer who has nothing to say. In the old days, a man would write because he could write, and if he wrote well, that was sufficient justification for his labor. But today, apparently, only one who can think precisely and decisively can hope to write successfully.

Ours is an age of accomplishment—an age of vast enterprises, and the mile-a-minute life. The huge machinery which makes up our modern economic system would lead to chaos, if along with the present type of civilization there had not grown the habit of precise thinking. Man has never in the history of the world been so materialistic in his activities; but also he has never been such a colossal mental giant. It is perhaps a matter of adaptation; we have developed a huge machine, and must now mould all our thoughts with preciseness if the machine is to be kept running. Ours is not a dreaming age, but an age of cold, hard facts without any frills or round-about philo-