BETTER AND BRIEFER

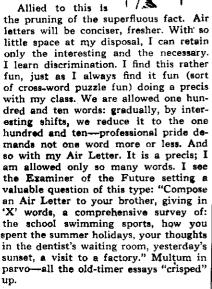
English As It May Be

(Written for "The Listener" by E.D.)

ITH a mind fresh from more compact; altogether more legibleeffect will the cinema and the radio have on the English language?" I because good structure means economy. pause, pen poised in air, as I write an Air Letter Card to my nephew in Ceylon. "What effect—think you—will the Air Letter (Card) have on the English language, especially the epistolary branch?" I feel its influence working on me at this very moment, and I have felt it before.

Foremost and best influence will be the ruthless pruning of the unnecessary word or words. I find myself almost writing: "I have just read your letter through again before answering." If I am to in-

clude in this letter all these important items I've jotted on a slip of paper, I'll have to to cannily on the words. "Through again before answering" therefore delete. eschew the prolix.



Back to Anglo-Saxon

Vocabulary will be simplified. The Anglo-Saxon word will return to its own. I found myself saying a moment ago: "Will that word-function"-fit into the precious remainder of the line? No! Then find a shorter. Done!---'work'."

Inestimable will be the improvement in hand-writing. Even as the sprawled thought must go, go too must the sprawled hand. My writing, that was "worsening" with the years, is now neater,

(continued from previous page) to indulge the ladies so far as to make them acquainted with the arcana of the State as they could not be supposed to be more capable of exeping secrets than men. Upon which they were likewise ordered to leave the House. The Duchess of Devonshire, Lady Norton, and nearly 60 other ladies, were obliged to obey the

the setting of such exami- the constant pause for reflection, the nation papers as: "What all-pervading reflection, prevents the slap-dash.

Sentence structure will be improved

The new compound (proof of the language) will flourish. Instead of telling my nephew about "the zealous neighbour who is determined that I shall share her enthusiasm for gardening," I refer to her as "my gardener-neighbour."

Active for Passive

The cumbrous passive (anathema to "Q") will give place to the active. No longer will the parting employee "be made the recipient of" something. But here (stating the pros. and cons. in the manner of the good examinee) I sniff a danger—the possible spread of "got." And other dangers: the spread of the abbreviation (in this short Air Letter of mine I find "Can't, Exam., aft., geog.") and of the "Uncio" type of word. And to conserve every millimetre one might tend to abolish the paragraph—fosterer of lucidity.

But now let us return in full sail with the pros. The tendency to Victorian underlining will be checked (I use my pen warily on this thin paper). The luxuriance of the feminine exclamation marks (quaint rows of soldiers) will be lopped too.



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