

From Irwin Shaw:

Sirs:

Capa is a dangerous influence because he has perfected the trick of making life among the bombed cities and the stinking battlefields of our time seem gay and dashing and glamorous. His is a career of flight; flight from the dreadful evidence of his own cameras. It is a flight which takes him in many directions, but always, inexorably, in the same style. It is an appealing style, old-fashioned and formalized, and its first and only rule is: remain debonair.

How a poverty-stricken young wanderer through the hideous slums of Europe between the wars could have chosen this ludicrously chivalric motto as his guiding principle, probably not even Capa fully understands. And it is a rigorous and demanding creed to live up to. It means that one must never seem weary, one must always be ready to go to the next bar or the next war, no matter how late the hour or unattractive the war. It means that a man must always sit through every poker pot and call every hand; must lose six months salary and buy the next round of drinks, lend thoughtlessly and borrow ceremoniously, consort only with very pretty women, preferably those who are men-

tioned often in the newspapers; it means that one must always know where to buy a bottle, in the driest town, and what restaurants are serving the best dinners, even in times of famine.

Only in the morning, as he staggers out of bed, does Capa show that the tragedy and sorrow through which he has passed have left their marks on him. His face is gray, his eyes are dull and haunted by the dark dreams of the night; here, at last, is the man whose camera has peered at so much death and so much evil, here is a man despairing and in pain, regretful, not stylish, undebonair. Then Capa drinks down a strong, bubbling draught, shakes himself, experimentally tries on his afternoon smile, discovers that it works, knows once more that he has the strength to climb the glittering hill of the day, dresses, and sets out, nonchalant, carefully light-hearted, to the bar of "21", or the Scribe, or the Dorchester, all places where this homeless man can be at home, where he can find his friends and amuse them and where his friends can help him forget the bitter, lonely, friendless hours of the night behind him and the night ahead.