

BRIEF THOUGHTS ON EXACTNESS

Fish

move exactly there and exactly then,

Just as

birds have their inbuilt exact measure of time and place

But mankind,

deprived of instinct, is aided
by scientific research, the essence of which
this story shows.

A certain soldier

had to fire a gun every evening exactly at six.
He did it like a soldier. When his exactness
was checked, he stated:

I follow

an absolutely precise chronometer in the show window
of the clockmaker downtown. Every day at seventeen
forty-five I set my watch by it and
proceed up the hill where the gun stands ready.
At seventeen fifty-nine exactly I reach the gun
and at exactly at eighteen hours I fire.

It was found

that this method of firing was absolutely exact.
There was only the chronometer to be checked.
The clockmaker downtown was asked about its exactness.

Oh, said the clockmaker

this instrument is one of the most exact. Imagine,
for years a gun has been fired here at six exactly.
And every day I look at the chronometer
and it always shows exactly six.

So much for exactness.

And the fish move in the waters and the heavens are filled
with the murmur of wings, while

The chronometers tick and the guns thunder.