

*Zodiac Books*

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Three Letters on the English

ANDRÉ MAUROIS

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*Chatto and Windus*

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ON THE ENGLISH

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LETTERS  
ON THE ENGLISH

*By*  
André Maurois



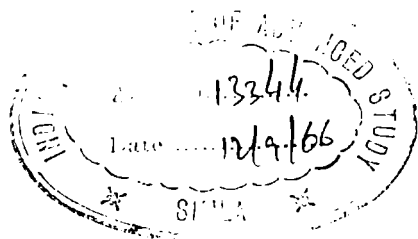
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CONTENTS

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Advice to a Young Man

Advice to a Young Lady of Quality

Notes for a French Statesman

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*ADVICE TO A YOUNG MAN  
GOING TO ENGLAND*

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## *Advice to a Young Man going to England*

**Y**OU are going to live in a far country, far not in distance, but in customs and ideas. You are going to live in a difficult, a mysterious country. For the first few days you will think: "This venture is hopeless; I shall never get to know them; the gulf is too wide." Be reassured. The gulf can be crossed. Tell yourself that when the English have adopted you they will be your most faithful friends. Read Lawrence's book, *Revolt in the Desert*; you will see how this Englishman went back, alone, into a perilous desert to look for an obscure Arab, left behind by the caravan. Such is the friendship of the best of them. I put it to the proof during the War. It is worth making an effort to win it.

### *Conversation*

Do not talk much until you have found your depth. In France it is rude to let a conversation drop; in England it is rash to keep it up. No one there will blame you for silence. When you have not opened your mouth for three years, they will



## ANDRÉ MAUROIS

think: "This Frenchman is a nice quiet fellow." Be modest. An Englishman will say "I have a little house in the country"; when he invites you to stay with him you will discover that the little house is a place with three hundred bedrooms. If you are a world tennis-champion, say "Yes, I don't play too badly." If you have crossed the Atlantic alone in a small boat, say "I do a little sailing." If you have written books, say nothing at all. They will find out for themselves, in time, this regrettable but inoffensive weakness; they will laugh and say: "Now I know all about you," and they will be pleased with you. If you are unjustly treated (that will happen; they are sometimes unjust) go straight to them and explain why you think they have been wrong. There is a good chance that they will admit it. They attach importance to playing the game.

*Golden rule:* Never ask questions. For six months during the War I lived in the same tent and shared a bath-tub with an Englishman: he never asked me if I was married, what I did in peacetime, or what were the books I was reading under his nose. If you insist on making confidences, they will be listened to with polite indifference. Avoid making confidences about other people. Gossips exist here as elsewhere, but they are at the same time less common and more serious.

## TO A YOUNG MAN

There is no middle course between silence and scandal. Choose silence.

### *Discretion*

I will give you an example of their discretion. A young Englishman, having been invited to a fancy-dress ball by some neighbours in the country, decided to dress up as a court jester. He ordered a red and green satin costume, with short breeches, one red and one green stocking, and a pointed parti-coloured cap. On the evening of the ball he drove to his friends' house. When he arrived at their door he sent away the chauffeur; then, a little surprised at not finding the door open and the house lit up, he rang the bell.

The butler opened the door, looked at the guest (whom he knew well), and without saying a word, showed him into the library where the family, dressed in the usual everyday clothes, were reading, playing chess, in fact spending a quiet evening without any visible sign of a party. When the young man came in, they got up to welcome him. No one seemed to notice his odd get-up, and the ensuing conversation was so natural and agreeable that the newcomer

## ANDRÉ MAUROIS

himself soon forgot that he wore a green and red doublet.

Towards midnight the lady of the house said to him, "I know you have sent away your motor; perhaps you would like us to give you a bed for the night? . . . my son is about your size and will lend you pyjamas."

This was done. The next morning, when the guest, still dressed in red satin, took his leave, his host went with him to the car. Then he leant over and said in a low voice, "Goodbye . . . We are very glad to have seen you, but don't forget to come back in a week; next Monday we are giving our fancy-dress ball."

Perhaps you will consider that it would have been simpler to speak out, to explain the mistake, and make a joke of it. I think myself that it is rather fine that a group of human beings should have been able to keep countenance in such surprising circumstances and to converse for two hours with a jester without making him feel a fool.

### *Clothes*

Two principles, no more. Dress like them; dress simply. Like them, because they are conventional. If you play golf in riding-breeches, if

## TO A YOUNG MAN

you dine at a regimental mess in shorts, you will shock and distress them. But you will shock them even more if you have the bad taste to be overdressed. In England, clothes should not be too careful, nor shoes too new. Miss Jane Harrison in her *Reminiscences of a Student's Life* describes the pleasure she felt when she saw a Duke of Devonshire receiving his doctorate *Honoris causa* at Cambridge, "with a longish hole in his right boot from which emerged a grey woollen toe." "That," she felt, "was really ducal." Don't think that you should dress in London like an Englishman travelling abroad. In London an Englishman is no longer travelling; imitate him; dress as you would in Paris.

### *Food*

Before you leave, you will be told that you will get bad food in England. If you know how to make a wise use of your hunger, you will be able to eat perfectly well. In England there are two excellent meals: breakfast and tea. Keep your appetite for them. Introduce yourself to new pleasures: porridge, haddock, marmalade. At lunch, eat the great joint of underdone beef, or the admirable pink ham. Wave away the dessert with a manly air. Say firmly, "I

## ANDRÉ MAUROIS

don't like sweets." In England every second shop is a sweet-shop, and yet Englishmen despise sweets. Leave them to children and women.

Adopt the drinks of the country. Of whisky they will say, "It is a clean drink." That is quite true; it will leave you with a clear mind, a clean tongue, and a glowing body. Their beers are good, but be careful not to drink them as you would drink our *bière du Nord*. During the War the Tommies used to say, sadly, "You can't get drunk on French beer!" Never forget that a Frenchman can too easily get drunk on English beer. Train yourself to drink a glass of sherry before dinner, a glass of port after dinner, whisky at 11 o'clock. You won't go far in their good opinion if you drink water. Disraeli in his discussions with Bismarck forced himself to smoke, although smoking made him ill. "In such a case," he said, "the man who doesn't smoke looks as if he were spying on the other." By the way, their port, which is very dry, is better than ours.

### *Justice*

Do not commit murder in England. You would be hanged. Before a French jury, if you have a certain imagination, a romantic face and

## TO A YOUNG MAN

a good lawyer, you can, if you are put to it, save your neck. But twelve English good men and true will listen with disgust to your talk of sentimental suffering and will have you hanged by the neck until you are dead. Be wise, avoid their law-courts. The cross-examinations of their counsel are so diabolically clever that you would willingly confess to having stolen the Nelson column in order to escape their hail of questions. Remember that respect for the law is greater here than elsewhere. In English "Keep off the Grass" does not mean "Walk on this lawn."

### *Prudery*

Victorian prudery is dying out. Freud and his disciples have at last allowed Anglo-Saxons to express their passions behind a scientific mask. In London theatres you will see plays far riskier than you would have dared to put on the boards in Paris. You will read English and American novels which will seem to you incredibly cynical. All the same, take care. Even in the very violence of this cynicism there is still quite a large element of Puritanism. That makes for an inimitable explosive mixture, which a foreigner should treat with caution. Besides, the great

## ANDRÉ MAUROIS

mass of the British people have not been touched by the "new morals." Julian Huxley tells a typical story. At the London Zoo a lady went up to the Keeper of the hippopotami. "Tell me," she said, "is that hippopotamus a male or a female?" The Keeper looked at her in a shocked manner: "That, ma'am," he replied, "is a question which should only interest another hippopotamus." The Keeper of the hippopotami was also the Keeper of Victorian prudery.

### *Activity*

In England do not work too hard. Above all, do not be what they call "fussy." Wait for someone to ask you to do things. Look how they walk, rather slowly, with over-long strides. That is how they proceed in life. They do not like jostling fate. In the Army they used to say to me, "Never refuse a job; never volunteer for one." They have ambition like everyone else, but they are pretty good at hiding it.

### *Sentimentality*

You will find them more sentimental and more capricious than the French. The films and plays

## TO A YOUNG MAN

which the great English public love are full of sentiment. Doubtless the time is past when Dickens at the end of his novels had to assure the happiness of all his characters in order to satisfy his public. But many Englishmen still find it necessary to believe that England is an earthly paradise. They know the weaknesses of human nature; they would be unhappy if they had to confess to them in public. Hence, on the one side, sentimentality, on the other, the need for a moral mask. The Englishman sincerely wants to believe that the behaviour of nations, and especially of his own, is determined by moral scruples. In order to make an Englishman act, it is best to propose a way of action which, while it is in conformity with his country's interests, can also, with more or less subtlety, be described as a moral action. Even in animals, or at least in the animals which they like, Englishmen wish to find sporting reactions. A good dog is for them a gentleman; the trout is a lady. I have cut out for you this letter from a clergyman in *The Times*. "I think," he wrote, "that the following little incident which I witnessed will be of interest to your readers. In my garden two magpies and a squirrel got up a race this morning from the root of a tree to the top. The squirrel climbed all the way up the trunk, the magpies jumped from



## ANDRÉ MAUROIS

branch to branch, and I am happy to say that neither of the birds took any unfair advantage of its capacity for flying. Both showed themselves real sportsmen." It was charming because this good man, who attached the greatest importance to respect for conventions and rules, showed himself naïvely convinced that these qualities are no less respected in the feathered world.

### *Subtleties*

Since the War there has been at the École de Saint-Cyr an English instructor who not only teaches his language but also prepares our young Frenchmen for visits to England by explaining to them certain infinitely small details of custom which it is useful to know about, in order not to wound our friends: I shall quote you a part of his instruction: "Do not forget that it is a delicate compliment to your English host not to smoke while you are drinking his port; this shows that you consider the port a wine of rare quality which should not be clouded by smoke. . . . It will also be polite to prepare yourself with a cigarette to smoke his cigar. . . . An English soldier will be given you as an orderly. Do not let him see too clearly that his English is difficult to under-

## TO A YOUNG MAN

stand. . . . Doubtless he will be a miner or a metal-worker. You will give him pleasure if you talk to him about his occupation, about the town where he was born. . . . As to hotel porters, if you are in uniform, tip them a shilling; if you are in mufti, sixpence. . . . If you go into a public-house never offer the barmaid a tip, for she is a lady. . . . If you find that your bedroom in a country house is haunted, wait for the owner of the house to mention it himself; it is not good form to talk to a man about his own ghosts. . . .” You can profit by this advice; it is all sound.

### *Envoi*

Above all enjoy the scene before you. You will like the countryside, which looks as if it had been painted by Constable or Gainsborough. You will like the little hills, the valleys and the downs. You will like the rather wild gardens, the rolled and clipped lawns. You will like London, which in its blue and gold mist with the red splashes of omnibuses and the black blobs of policemen looks like an enormous Turner. You will like the theatres with their comfortable seats, their short intervals, and their unmercenary attendants. You will like the bookshops with

ANDRÉ MAUROIS

their appetising variety of colour, like exotic fruit shops. And you will like above all the human beings . . . but do not say so: it would scare them stiff.

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*ADVICE TO A YOUNG LADY GOING  
TO LONDON FOR THE SEASON*

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*Advice to a Young Lady  
going to London for  
the Season*

**Y**OU will arrive in London for the season. Prepare yourself by a severe course of training. This will be the greatest physical effort of your life. I have known men who had explored Central Asia, made war, fought elections; they succumbed to a single London season. For two months you will not have a meal alone; you will talk from morning to night; you will write thirty letters a day; you will telephone, dance, talk philosophy; all that in a strange and capricious climate, with gusts of east wind which will distress your Continental liver, and whole days of warm mist and storms floating over London, black clouds pierced by a cold sun. That is the price you will pay for playing your part in one of the most brilliant scenes in the world.

Will you play that part well? Yes, if you play it conscientiously. In England they will expect of you not brilliance but precision. With the English, punctuality is more than a habit; it is a vice. If you are invited to dine at eight-thirty, that means in London eight-thirty and not eight-

## ANDRÉ MAUROIS

twenty-nine nor eight-thirty-one, still less (as in Paris) nine-fifteen. Within the space of a few seconds you will see motor after motor rolling up and the drawing-rooms will fill, just like those plays of Labiche or Angier where the text gives "Enter the guests." Even in the country, in spite of long distances, everybody is on time. I have seen a Frenchman arriving at a distant country house, after driving all the morning, at twenty-eight minutes to two, when he had been asked for half-past one. His hostess greeted him kindly but severely with: "We were beginning to be worried."

How do the English do it? How do they calculate the traffic blocks, inevitable in the middle of London? I believe they allow themselves a margin of error, and wait if they are before their time. They tell the chauffeur to drive round the block until the exact moment. If they are on foot, they measure the length of the pavement. The servants themselves are chronometers. The guest who rings at eight-twenty-seven has to wait for a minute, gets a severe look from the butler, and puts out his hostess, who is finishing dressing. At eight-twenty-eight in every house in Belgravia footmen unroll carpets on the steps and take up their positions behind half-open doors.

## TO A YOUNG LADY OF QUALITY

The corollary is that late-comers are not waited for. After five minutes it is assumed that they have made a mistake, or that they have died. Otherwise they would be on time. I once forgot a luncheon and went next day in confusion to apologise to my hostess: "I hope at least," I said, "that you did not wait for me." "Wait for you!" she cried in surprise, "I never wait for anybody." Another time when I was lunching with a London hostess one of the guests kept us waiting five minutes. "Let us begin," said the lady of the house, "I suppose Patricia must have broken her leg." A little later the telephone rang and the butler came with the message: "Lady Patricia says that she is very sorry, but she has broken her leg."

Next to punctuality the most dangerous vice of the English, one which will encroach most upon your indolence, is the morbid abuse of letter-writing. I am not speaking of letters to friends, still less of love-letters—both of these repay the pains they exact with lively pleasure—but of the social correspondence which will overwhelm a woman like you. In England all human communications are effected by letters written by hand. You will be invited to dinner with a letter and you will reply with a letter. If you have been unable to go to a tea-party, even one for

## ANDRÉ MAUROIS

three hundred people, you will have to write a letter. If you have given a luncheon yourself, you will receive next day letters telling you how nice it was, and if you are perfectly polite you will reply in your turn that if it was nice it was only because your correspondent was there. There is no end to it.

You will come, like many English women, to spend the whole day writing. When I was staying in the country I remember seeing one woman, normally a gay and charming creature, sitting on the lawn in the centre of a large group of people, writing hundreds of letters on her knee. The people around her talked amusingly, played games, ate and drank. Imperturbable, absent, rapt by the magic of convention into an unreal world of Politeness, she finished her correspondence. In the evening I asked her, "And now, for how long are you free?" "Until tomorrow morning," she replied. One of London's most amiable hostesses has acquired, for these superhuman claims upon her time, a rapid handwriting entirely composed of curves, which looks at the same time like a Persian manuscript and the plan of a scenic railway. It is charming, but illegible; you have to ask for a translation on the telephone. But the law has been respected, the letter written. Another woman trained a secre-



## TO A YOUNG LADY OF QUALITY

tary to imitate her hand; a culpable evasion, not without attendant risks.

Conversation has rigid rules. At a dinner-party general conversation is very rare. This phenomenon has been explained to me by the naturally low tone of English voices, which do not carry far. I should be more inclined to attribute it to a horror of all affectation. It is indecent to draw upon oneself the attention of the company. A hundred years ago Lady Holland, hearing Lord Macaulay talking admirably but at too great length, called her butler: "Go round the table and tell Lord Macaulay from me that that will do." The rule is that you must talk almost equally with your two neighbours. Two or three times in the course of dinner you will see a mechanical turning of heads which will tear away the man who was talking to you, sometimes in the middle of a phrase. Give in; a new partner is already waiting for you on the other side.

What should you talk about? About anything, so long as you do not ask personal questions, nor show too lively a taste for literature or the arts; so long as you avoid pedantry, conceal beneath a mask of humour any ability you may have, and above all say nothing to drag your neighbour out of his depth. If he loses his footing, it is ill-breeding on your part. If he is as good a

## ANDRÉ MAUROIS

swimmer as you, see that you discover this miracle gently, prudently, leaving him every minute an opportunity to swim, if he so desires, towards the safe and tepid shallows of the shore. Above all, do not talk to writers about their books, nor to ministers about their politics. Not that Englishmen do not like flattery as much as the rest of mankind, but it is necessary that the flattery should be more adroit and more secret.

What I have told you would not be true in the intellectual and rather arrogant little clique which it is convenient to designate by the word Bloomsbury, but which in fact meets as well in Chelsea and Mayfair houses. In this group conversation is a series of epigrams, and reveals with each phrase an incredible, a universal erudition. For all that, even there the intellectual modesty of the English betrays itself in the extreme speed of delivery, and in the mystery of their allusions. You might say that they are trying to excuse the brilliance of their wit by the obscurity of their speech.

After dinner you will suddenly see your hostess get up. It is the moment when the ladies withdraw. In England the men stay by themselves, for long enough to smoke a cigar. Do you want to know what they do then? There is no mystery. They pass round a decanter of port

## TO A YOUNG LADY OF QUALITY

and a bottle of brandy which they scarcely touch. The host comes and sits down between his two most important guests and tells stories. I am sorry to cause you disappointment, but that is the moment when the men in this country are really interesting. That is the moment also when important business is done, in a few brief asides. The politics of England, and Europe's politics too, have more than once been transformed by the murmured phrases of two men who had turned their chairs towards one another at one end of the table.

It is in the country and during week-ends that you will grasp the essence of English life. Those fine houses, insulated from the outer world by parks the size of a province, are beginning to disappear. But it was in those houses that England was made. You will arrive at tea-time on Saturday. Do not come too early. The week-end would be too exhausting if one did not arrange for certain periods of rest. Establish firmly and immediately that you do not come down to breakfast. Seek refuge for part of the day in the library. They will leave you perfectly free. The charm of these visits lies in the naturalness of their intimacy.

It also lies in the perfection of the servants. Shaw and Barrie have amused themselves by

## ANDRÉ MAUROIS

showing the high place which the English butler occupies in the scale of beings. They did not exaggerate. The best butlers are geniuses and enchanters. They know everything, arrange everything, control everything. They do all that in half-tones, without a gesture, sometimes with the shadow of a smile. Servants in this country enjoy their profession, and believe in the hierarchy which they watch over. Victoria Sackville-West has depicted in *The Edwardians* the order of precedence below stairs. It is much stricter than it is in the drawing-room.

Do not think that your face is terrifying if you see a bevy of distracted housemaids flying from your bedroom like a flight of doves at your approach. It is the strange rule in English houses that those efficient and silent maidens must never be encountered. There is a whole strategy of corridors and screens which allows them, in a country where guests live very little in their bedrooms, to do their work and still remain, like Wells's "Invisible Man," transparent insubstantial forms. I have been told about an old peer who used to be in a bad temper all day if he caught even a distant glimpse of a housemaid's skirt.

Will you be made love to? I am sure you will, but not as you would be in France. Among the

## TO A YOUNG LADY OF QUALITY

younger generation it is fashionable to consider love as an agreeable sport, and to eschew all sentimental conversation. "I am not the conventional lover," the heroines seem to say in English plays. They mean that their convention is different. Passion is suspect; "If you are taking this seriously, let's stop seeing each other." This cynicism is a fashion which will not last. Elderly couples, in England, seem very happy, and in London you will also find liaisons of long standing, cemented by habit and silently respected.

For duration is in England the most important element in success. There is no public which tires more quickly of a new star than the New York public, no public more loyal than the London public. Sarah Bernhardt was adored by England right up to her death. A woman, talking to me in the highest terms of praise about an old French diplomat, added, "We are very fond of him; his English is so bad that for forty years no one has ever understood a single thing he said, but he has become one of us." Become one of them. This is your first London season; in thirty years you will begin to understand this simple, mysterious and noble country.

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*NOTES FOR A FRENCH STATESMAN  
CROSSING THE CHANNEL FOR  
THE FIRST TIME*

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*Notes for a French Statesman  
Crossing the Channel for  
the first time*

**M**ONSIEUR LE MINISTRE, you are going to negotiate with the English. In them you will find men full of good faith and of reserve. All of them, even the most generous and the most loyal friends of France, will look at you with an imperceptible mistrust because you are that monster: a foreigner. Co-operation between our two peoples will for a long time still be made a little difficult by differences of culture and of temperament, by distant memories, not yet completely effaced, of the First and Second Empires, by the reawakening, in new and varied forms, of Puritan prejudice. But the possible is only one step from the essential, and co-operation between us is so essential that it is gaining strength every day.

*British Eloquence*

We know you are a brilliant speaker. In England avoid eloquence. Remember that you have come to a country where there is no rostrum

## ANDRÉ MAUROIS

in Parliament, where everybody speaks in a low voice from his seat and it is good form not to have too perfect a diction or too easy a delivery. Do you know the story of Joseph Chamberlain's début as an orator? When he had finished his first speech in the House of Commons—it had been a remarkable speech—an old member of Parliament went up to him and said, "Very fine, Mr. Chamberlain, very fine indeed, but the House would be thankful if you could hesitate . . . sometimes."

The graver the question with which an English speaker has to deal, and the more chance it has of arousing violent passions, the more he will constrain himself, if he is in the great national tradition, to deal with it calmly, quietly, without dramatic effect. I was in the House of Commons when Lord Baldwin, then Mr. Baldwin, uttered the famous words, "The frontier of England is no longer the cliffs of Dover; it is on the Rhine." It was for a Frenchman an interesting and astonishing sight. One of our orators, venturing on such words on the rostrum in the Chamber, would have charged them with the most powerful and sonorous accents; they leant themselves to such treatment; but Mr. Baldwin uttered the words in a blank voice. "The frontier of England," he said, "is no longer the cliffs of Dover.



## TO A FRENCH STATESMAN

It is . . ." he stopped. In front of him on that large table which separates ministers from the Opposition lay some files of papers. He stooped and began to run through them. One got the impression that he had lost the frontier of England, that it was hidden there, somewhere in the papers, and that he was carefully searching for it. At last he turned over the last page, straightened himself with a look of satisfaction and announced in quite a low, rapid murmur: "It is on the Rhine." It was a great lesson in British eloquence.

### *Indolence and Strength*

If you are engaged with them on some enterprise, you will find yourself thinking them indolent; faced with events which you consider serious, you will be astonished by their patience. Observe them more carefully. You will see that their anger is slow to rise, but when it does burst out, it is tenacious and strong. Their voices remain low and regular, their eyes are quiet and direct; never a sign, nothing to show, when Englishmen are getting ready to hit back. When finally they decide to "dig their toes in," as they say, and take a stand, it will not be for any precise reason, or for any reason which you would

## ANDRÉ MAUROIS

consider irresistible, but because a secret instinct has warned them suddenly that the Gods of the Empire demand it. They like fighting with their backs to the wall, tactics possessing the advantage, and the drawback, of making retreat impossible. Until this moment comes, do not try to wake them up or to terrify them by sinister forebodings. That would distress them but it would not convince them. In particular, allow them to enjoy in peace the pleasures of Christmas; between the 15th of December and the 15th of January they consider all bad news a crime. To escape your gloomy prophecies they will take refuge in the most improbable, the most consoling fictions. Do as they do, and wait. Everything will come in its own time.

Do not demand too much precision in their plans. Not that they carry their horror of preparation quite to the verge of mania, but because they have never thought it possible for men to organise the future, nor to foresee the caprices of fate. They like leaving a certain freedom of judgment to the man on the spot, in time as well as in space. If your mission necessitates obtaining a contract from them, be content in case of need with a "gentlemen's agreement" and tell yourself that when they are face to face

## TO A FRENCH STATESMAN

with an actual situation, they will make a point of going a little beyond their bond.

Above all, do not try to make them work except in their own way. It has happened that British negotiators, in order to satisfy some importunate foreigner, have consented to put off for a few hours their departure for the week-end. Those were always hours of bad work. Motors full of angry wives and sandwiches were waiting in Downing Street. Faces wore a frown and concessions were made without joy. After some days all that was to be left of these agreements made in haste was a lasting rancour. In such a case you should prefer to accept the invitation which you will get to go from Saturday till Monday to a country house. You will talk about your business there in the course of a walk in the park and in three minutes on a green lawn you will obtain concessions which on a green carpet would have been refused you in three days.

### *Permanent Characteristics*

Remember always while you are negotiating the permanent characteristics of England. She was and still is an aristocratic country which prefers the amateur to the professional. She likes

## ANDRÉ MAUROIS

being governed by simple, modest men who are wary of grand designs. She had a long affection for that Lord Hartington who is described by Strachey in a portrait worthy of Proust or La Bruyère. She admired that Lord Salisbury who used to escape on Sundays with a book to the roof of Hatfield, and who appeared, when he was making a speech, entirely to ignore his audience.

Never forget that England is a religious country. Disraeli used to say that it is impossible to govern England against the non-Conformist conscience, and some of the least religious Englishmen of our time are still Protestants at heart and in mind. These dissenters, like their predecessors, are recalcitrant to all collective thought; they claim for the individual conscience the right to form its own opinions on metaphysics, economics and politics; they take a bitter pleasure in finding themselves in disagreement with the majority of their fellow-countrymen. They are hard men, disagreeable men, but they have a greatness of their own, and you as a negotiator must consider them, understand them, and win them over, for if they dislike you, you will never succeed in this country.

Remember that the English are without malice. Hatred and violence, with a nation as with an individual, are nearly always the visible signs of

## TO A FRENCH STATESMAN

some secret grudge. It is inferiority-complexes that make men and peoples cruel. England has no inferiority-complexes. She has enjoyed a long prosperity at home and abroad. Thanks to God and the Navy she has never been invaded. The only feeling inspired in her by foreign nations is one of immense indifference.

### *Compromise*

Among all the possible solutions of a dispute you perhaps prefer the clearest ; you will observe that your English colleagues will nearly always favour the most confused. "Shall I be brief and precise?" Gladstone asked Peel—"No, be long-winded and diffuse." They have a taste for compromise. Is it right or wrong to send diplomatic agents to certain governments not yet recognised? The French will hesitate between a positive and a negative solution. The English will adopt at the same time both the positive and the negative solutions: they will send agents, but will not call them diplomatic.

### *The Bulwark of Freedom*

If you find yourself surprised or shocked by what they say or think, do not hesitate to tell them

## ANDRÉ MAUROIS

so frankly. There is no nation which stands criticism, even severe criticism, so well as the English. They are too proud to be touchy. It may even occur often enough that Englishmen will tell you that they have a horror of any kind of praise. Do not believe this. They are human. But when you find yourself in disagreement with them, do not forget that the Englishman's soul is like the English skies: the weather is nearly always bad, but the climate is good. Besides you can be certain that a well-bred Englishman will try in nearly all circumstances to conform to a rather noble code of honour and behaviour. One of your predecessors, Guizot, wrote long ago that England is the bulwark of freedom and of human dignity. That is still true.

Amkhan.

14.12.38

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