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<Following Roussy de Sales' remarks on Hitler's speeches:>...

Mann, Klaus

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(Following Roussy de Sales' remarks on Hitler's speeches:)

K.M. I must admit that I don't envy you this job, Count Roussy de Sales.

It's a highly important job, to be sure; but I rather sickening one, I should think. Other tyrants and dictators in history may have been as ruthless, as ambitious, as blood-thirsty as Adolf Hitler. But none of them, as far as I can see, ^{far} had this indescribably sickening quality characteristic of the German Führer. He utterly lacks in human dignity. It always makes me impatient when people insist that Hitler, after all, is "a genius." The undeniable fact that he possesses abnormal psychological forces does not yet indicate in itself that he really is what I would call "a genius." Obviously, he is both super-human and sub-human - a piece of rot charged with magnetic powers. A genius can be, of course, a very complex sort of a character - full of enigmas and contradictions. But I wonder if there has ever been a thoroughly evil genius. And that's what Hitler is - thoroughly evil. A very bad man, indeed.

Interviewer: ^{designation} A bad man... : isn't this the ~~name~~ Winston Churchill used in several of his speeches when referring to Hitler?

K.M. Exactly. I cannot help thinking of Winston Churchill's voice when I employ this unsophisticated formula of indictment - that ^{bad} ~~evil~~ man. Churchill has a ~~wonderful~~ very moving way of pronouncing plain and truthful things of this sort. What a wonderful speaker he is! What a trustworthy voice! - neither sweet nor harsh, but firm and sonorous, full of grief, courage and indignation. It sounds, indeed, as a human voice should sound.

^e
Interviewer: Have you read the new collection of Mr. Churchill's speeches, "Blood, Sweat, and Tears"?

11)
K.M. I should say I have! - In fact, I have written an extensive article discussing this remarkable book.

Interviewer: Where is this article to be published?

K.M. It was just published this morning - in a magazine called Decision of which I am the ~~am~~ editor.

Interviewer: Isn't your father also connected with this literary review?

K.M. His connection with Decision may shortly become even more intimate and more conspicuous than it was in the beginning. He has accepted our proposition to act as the Chairman of the Board of Editorial Advisors. Moreover, he has agreed to write for us a monthly column - a sort of Marginal Notes, discussing in an informal manner certain crucial political or cultural issues.

Interviewer, (Something concerning "The Transposed Heads.")

K.M. Isn't it a quite unusual story, indeed? Full of a grim and daring merriment - strangely detached and strangely colourful... I must confess that the man who has written this book, never ceases to surprise and to puzzle me, though I know him for quite a while.

Interviewer: He is settling down in California now, if I am not mistaken?

K.M. Precisely. - In fact, he'll celebrate his sixty-sixth birthday out there tomorrow morning - in a few hours from now.

Interviewer: Tell us a little more about the contributors of your magazine!

K.M. It's a rather colourful crowd. I want the magazine to be as comprehensive as possible - presenting the best of the European minds gathering now in this country, side by side with the intellectual vanguard of America. I am proud to have among my contributors so distinguished Americans as Sherwood Anderson, Stephen Vincent Benét, Upton Sinclair, ^{Max Lerner} Horace Gregory, James T. Farrell; great English writers like Aldous Huxley, Somerset Maugham, W.H. Auden; outstanding Frenchmen like Henry Bernstein, Jules Romains, Robert de Saint-Jean and, - how about you, cher ami? Yes, I mean you, Monsieur Roussy de Sales! Don't look so innocent! I have invited you at least four times to give us a contribution....

Question: Do you want to say something about the political situation, or do you rather prefer to discuss literature?

Answer: "The political situation...": this expression becomes more and more ~~surprising~~ ^{fuzzling} to me... It seems so empty, and at the same time overburdened with fatal meaning. What we usually call "the political situation" is so terribly involved - and yet so very simple. It embraces ~~so~~ many different aspects and problems; we may examine it from ~~so~~ many different angles - social, strategic, moral, philosophic or economic. I daresay, indeed, that the "political situation" is nothing other and nothing less but the spectacular manifestation of a Crisis, which is much deeper and more alarming than a purely political crisis could ever be. For it is the crisis of Civilization itself. Civilization itself is threatened and is at stake. How could we discuss politics, without thinking of Civilization? How could we discuss Civilization, ^{or Literature} without thinking of the present war? ~~The French defeat was a catastrophe, not only for M. Paul Reynaud and the General Gamelin, but also for Voltaire and Zola, Rousseau and Victor Hugo. A British victory - and, in this particular case, a prolonged resistance would actually mean victory - will also be the ultimate triumph of the moral and intellectual traditions, cherished and developed by British poets and philosophers, classic or contemporary. The total victory of Hitler - in which I do NOT believe - would inevitably bring about the total destruction of all higher values, not only in Europe but all over the world.~~ ^{= which means} ~~Question. You think, then, that a total Hitler victory would mean something like a posthumous disaster for Jefferson and Lincoln and Walt Whitman?~~

Answer: Exactly. And, furthermore, it would endanger all efforts and accomplishments of modern American literature, as well.

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Question: What is, in your opinion, the most characteristic feature of modern literature in this country?

Answer: What I chiefly admire in modern American ^{writing} novels, is the direct approach to Life in all its complexity - an approach, that is inspired, not devoid of mystic elements, and yet sober and realistic. I find this inspired realism in the ^{works} writings of Sherwood Andersen and John dos Passos, of Thomas Wolfe, Steinbeck and Faulkner. I think, indeed, the American novel to be the most significant cultural achievement this nation has made in this century - far more essential, in my opinion, than modern American music and painting, and probably more important than the accomplishments of modern European novelists.

Question: Are there any recent books by ~~young~~ American authors by which you were impressed particularly?

Answer: I was profoundly moved by Richard Wright's Native Son - though I would not call it a masterpiece. But it is of a poignant intensity, very human, sometimes frightening, always interesting and exciting. (-) The American mind seems to be gifted with a potential vitality which brings forth, almost year by year, an imposing multitude of original talents. ^(Must to mention one of them, as a shadow) But there are other voices - less striking than that of the Negro novelist: rather tender, intensely lyrical, almost morbid - and yet, in their own way, truly characteristic for certain moods and tendencies of the younger generation in America. Frederic Prokosch, for instance, whose sensual and subtle style was most fascinating in his novel The Asiatics; or Carson McCullers - a young girl from the South, whose first novel - "The Heart is a Lonely Hunter" - is actually much more than merely a great "literary promise." The leading character of the book is a deaf-mute - which already shows you that it hardly is a very gay story... It is full

of that almost enthusiastic sadness which is typical for young poets;
~~always and everywhere~~ ^{And so} it expresses that irrational despair which is
 the problematic homage youthful talent pay to the greatness of life...
 And as we talk on vast, general notions, such as Life, Sadness, Youth,
 I may add as well that, in my opinion, they are more or less, the same,
 everywhere. All major human emotions and problems are international -
 which almost brings us back to the so-called "political situation"...

Q. What are you working on?

A. I just finished a book,
 called Distinguished Visitors,
 a series of portraits dealing
 with various personalities
 who came over from
 Europe - such as the Ex.
 Pres. Chi, the Pres. Compton
 Trub, and the Sen. Gallagher.
 Now I hope the
 book will be ready for
 publication in fall.

Letter from the Editors:

"The dead Season..."

Why should we always yield the floor to our friend, the business manager, when it comes to haranguing our potential readers? Business managers are wise and experienced, but sometimes they are mistaken. ~~All business managers~~ They are haunted by certain fixed ideas, some of which we question very definitely. One of their pet theories is that ~~most Americans refuse to subscribe to a magazine~~ the summer is a completely "dead season" as far as the magazine trade is concerned. ~~For some strange and imperative reason~~ ^{They take it for granted that,} the vast majority of Americans refuse to subscribe to any periodical during the ~~months~~ period from early June up to the middle of September. "I won't spend any money for a mail campaign, at this time of the year," ~~he insisted~~ our friend from the business department insisted, with that stubborn pessimism characteristic of people who have to spend too much with financial calculations, bank accounts, creditors, and other lovely things of this sort.

But writers and editors can be stubborn as well. - "Why shouldn't people read a nice magazine on a nice summer evening, sitting out in the garden or on their balcony? In fact, we think the summer is a much better time for reading than the winter when so much is going on to distract you - concerts, and parties, and new plays, and what not."

- The business manager, however, remained adamant.

- "You may know something about short stories, and poems, and the future of the world," he observed, rather contemptuously. "But in practical matters you are more ignorant than a child." And he concluded, with a terrifying ~~glance~~ look piercing ~~all of~~ us: "There will be no mail campaign for this magazine until the dead season is over."

So ~~the whole matter~~ it is now a matter of honor ^u between the editors and the business department. We have to prove ^u to those arrogant ~~snaps~~ ^{experts,}

Our psychological instinct

We trust that you won't let us down.