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Mann, Klaus

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Sgt. Klaus Mann (32697270),
P.W.B., HQ 5th Army,
APO 464, U.S. Army,

April 4, 1944

My dear André Gide:

I am very happy to have heard from you at last - but very unhappy about certain things you tell me in your letter.

It's too bad - indeed, it is quite depressing to me, that the unfortunate passage about M.A. should be the first - and so far only! - sample you have seen of my book on you. What an unpleasant and wrong impression must you have got from this disconnected, ill-chosen quotation! It may make you dislike the book - even before you have read it... Je suis navré.

I am more than "navré." I am indeed very sad and upset about the whole affair. I hate myself for having written down those rash and inconsiderate sentences. I should have known better and ought to have realized how rampantly rumors flourish, in such a fantastic epoch as ours. Rumor has it, for instance, that my father - very much alive in California - has been assassinated by the Nazis in Switzerland - a story which went through the whole North-African press and was believed by most people. This I thought very foolish. But I was equally naive when I believed the story about M.A.'s "betrayal" and the subsequent rupture of your relations with him.

The first person who told me so was an old acquaintance of mine

- Saul Colin (formerly of Paris; now: 142 East 49th Street, New York City), who is certainly very devoted to both you and M.A. The story was repeated and confirmed by several other people, none of whom had any "ax to grind" against you or M.A. What I heard sounded shocking and saddening, but not in itself altogether impossible. After all, we have had the opportunity to witness a terrible lot of treachery and have seen many an old friendship go to pieces... Taking it for granted that your old friendship with M.A. had come to a bitter end, I thought such a development significant and dramatic enough to be incorporated in your biography. Yet I shouldn't have done it. I should not have accused him, without being more accurately and more reliably informed. Had I only known, at the time, that there was anybody in the United States, able to give me more exact and more trustworthy information! Had I known, for instance, about the relation between M.A. and M. Lucien Vogel! But when I found out this fact - thanks to a letter from M. Vogel - it was too late already.

What can I do? I can apologize. I can omit the objectionable phrase in all the future editions of my book, * (and there seem to be various editions in preparation). I can tell you how profoundly sorry I am, and that it was surely not my intention to be unfair towards M.A., whom I hardly know but have always liked as a person and respected as a friend of yours.

May I hope that you will forgive me for my rash and irresponsible

gesture? And that you will extend my apologies to M.A., if and when you have a chance to write to him? And that he too will forgive me? He knows, and you know, how painfully suspicious and irritable we all have become, in the course of these terrible years...

Please, try NOT to think of this one cursed paragraph, when reading my book at last! It's too bad that my publisher did not succeed, so far, in his attempt to let you have a copy. I have notified him of your present address. (Besides it might be that the editors of "Fontaine" have already received a copy, or will receive one before yours arrives.) (In fact, I would be only too pleased if some fragment from ~~the~~ my book were considered for publication in that remarkable magazine...)

Speaking of books from the U.S. that are "en route" to you: there is another which you should receive before long - a voluminous anthology called "The Heart of Europe," into which I, as one of the two editors, have included a short piece from "Les Nouvelles Nourritures" (in English, to be sure!) This I did - presuming your permission, for which I could not ask you, at the time. The book contains contributions from 120 authors or so - representing all the European countries. (Incidentally, I shall instruct the publisher to send you also your fee - modest as it may be...)

Still speaking of your writings: I would appreciate it enormously if you could let me have any of your recent publications which I am likely not to have seen as yet. I have your conference on

Henri Michaux; also, I glanced, in Tunis, through your Imaginary Interviews (one of which - dealing with American writers - I read in "The New Republic"). The preface to Goethe's plays is an admirable piece of writing; but I was even more deeply touched by a few pages of religious reflections. It seems to me that your voice commands the most moving and persuasive accents when it is invoking the name of Christ...

This is a much too long letter - another reason for apologies. Yet I haven't told you anything about my life and what I am doing here, nor have I asked you all the questions which I would like so much to have answered. But there will be other occasions. Let me hear from you, please!

Faithfully

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