

第九篇：On Meeting the Celebrated 论见名人

On Meeting the Celebrated

I have always wondered at the passion many people have to meet the celebrated. The prestige you acquire by being able to tell your friends that you know famous men proves only that you are yourself of small account. The celebrated develop a technique to deal with the persons they come across. They show the world a mask, often an impressive one, but take care to conceal their real selves. They play the part that is expected from them, and with practice learn to play it very well, but you are stupid if you think that this public performance of theirs corresponds with the man within.

I have been attached, deeply attached, to a few people; but I have been interested in men in general not for their own sakes, but for the sake of my work. I have not, as Kant enjoined, regarded each man as an end in himself, but as material that might be useful to me as a writer. I have been more concerned with the obscure than with the famous. They are more often themselves. They have had no need to create a figure to protect themselves from the world or to impress it. Their idiosyncrasies have had more chance to develop in the limited circle of their activity, and since they have never been in the public eye it has never occurred to them that they have anything to conceal. They display their oddities because it has never struck them that they are odd. And after all it is with the common run of men that we writers have to deal; kings, dictators, commercial magnates are from our point of view very unsatisfactory. To write about them is a venture that has often tempted writers, but the failure that has attended their efforts shows that such beings are too exceptional to form a proper ground for a work of art. They cannot be made real. The ordinary is the writer's richer field. Its unexpectedness, its singularity, its infinite variety afford unending material. The great man is too often all of a piece; it is the little man that is a bundle of contradictory elements. He is inexhaustible. You never come to the end of the surprises he has in store for you. For my part I would much sooner spend a month on a desert island with a veterinary surgeon than with a prime minister.

译文：

论见名人

许多人热衷于见名人，我始终不得其解。在朋友面前吹嘘自己认识某某名人，同此而来的声望只能证明自己的微不足道。名人个个练就了一套处世高招，无论遇上谁，都能应付自如。他们给世人展现的是一副面具，常常是美好难忘的面具，但他们会小心翼翼地掩盖自己的真相。他们扮演的是大家期待的角色，演得多了，最后都能演得惟妙惟肖。如果你还以为他们在公众面前的表演就是他们的真实自我，那就你傻了。

我自己就喜欢一些人，非常喜欢他们。但我对人感兴趣一般不是因为他们自身的缘故，而是出于我工作要求。正如康德劝告的那样，我从来没有把认识某人作为目的，而是将其当作对一个作家有用的创作素材。比之名流显士，我更加关注无名小卒。他们常常显得较为自然真实，他们无须再创造另一个人物形象，用他来保护自己不受世人干扰，或者用他来感动世人。他们的社交圈子有限，自己的种种癖性也就越有可能得到滋长。因为他们从来没有引起公众的关注，也就从来没有想到过要隐瞒什么。他们会表露他们古怪的一面，因为他们从来就没有觉得有何古怪。总之，作家要写的是普通人。在我们看来，国王，独裁者和商界大亨等都是不符合条件的。去撰写这些人物经常是作家们难以抗拒的冒险之举，可为此付出的努力不免以失败告终，这说明这些人物都过于特殊，无法成为一件艺术作品的创作根基，作家也不可能把他们写得真真切切。老百姓才是作家的创作沃土，他们或变幻无常，或难觅其二，各式人物应有尽有，这些都给作家提供了无限的创作素材。大人物经常是千人一面，小人物身上才有一组组矛盾元素，是取之不尽的创作源泉，让你惊喜不断。就我而言，如果在孤岛上度过一个月，我宁愿和一名兽医相守，也不愿同一位首相做伴。