

PROF. SIGM. FREUD

20 MARESFIELD GARDENS,
LONDON, N.W.3.

TEL: HAMPSTEAD 2002.

Dear Mr Woolf. Jan 31st 1929
Handicapped in the use of
your language I think
I could not give full ex-
pression to my satisfaction
of having met you and
your lady.
The condemnation delivered

by the Norwegian judge I take
to be a misrepresentation
or a bad joke by a malicious
journalist.

Yours sincerely
Sigm. Freud

To Leonard Woolf

975-10
ms. 100
F-536
22

Received 1897

20 Maresfield Gardens,
London, N.W. 3.

13. 10. 39.

Dear Mr. Woolf,

Thank you very
much for your
letter about my father.
I am so glad that
you and your wife
were here still to
see him and talk
to him. It is very
hard to realise that
all that is ended now.

I should be very glad
to see both of you

again when you are in
London.

Very sincerely yours

Arncliffe.

Freeman's Hindman, Philadelphia, USA, *Books and Manuscripts* auction, 25 June 2024, lot 269

Catalogue description

Freud Writes to Leonard Woolf

Freud, Sigmund *Autograph Letter, signed*

London, January 31, 1939. Single oblong card, 3 1/2 x 5 1/4 in. (89 x 133 mm). Autograph letter in English, signed by Sigmund Freud to Leonard Woolf regarding their recent and only meeting: "Dear Mr. Woolf, Handicapped in the use of your language I think I could not give full expression to my satisfaction of having met you and your lady [Virginia Woolf]. The condemnation delivered by the Norwegian judge I take to be a misrepresentation or a bad joke by a malicious journalist. Yours sincerely Sigm. Freud." On Freud's personal 20 Maresfield Gardens stationery.

In the last year of his life, Sigmund Freud writes to Leonard Woolf, expressing his happiness in finally having met him and his wife, Virginia Woolf. Five days prior, the Woolfs had met Freud for tea at his Maresfield Gardens home in Hampstead, London, where Freud had moved the previous June after fleeing the Nazis. Even though the Woolfs had been Freud's first English publishers since 1924, at their Hogarth Press, this was their first and only meeting with the famed psychoanalyst. Suffering from jaw cancer and not proficient in English, Freud writes here of their meeting, and having been "handicapped in the use of your language" and not being able to "give full expression to my satisfaction of having met you and your lady."

In his autobiography, Leonard later recalled this meeting, writing that, "in the afternoon of Saturday, January 28, 1939, we went and had tea with him. I feel no call to praise the famous men I have known. Nearly all famous men are disappointing or bores, or both. Freud was neither; he had an aura, not of fame, but of greatness. The terrible cancer of the mouth which killed him only eight months later had already attacked him. It was not an easy interview. He was extraordinarily courteous in a formal, old-fashioned way--for instance, almost ceremoniously he presented Virginia with a flower. There was something about him as of a half-extinct volcano, something sombre, suppressed, reserved. He gave me the feeling which only a very few people whom I have met gave me, a feeling of great gentleness, but behind the gentleness, great strength. The room in which he sat seemed very light, shining, clean, with a pleasant, open view through the windows into a garden. His study was almost a museum, for there were all around him a number of Egyptian antiquities which he had collected. He spoke about the Nazis. When Virginia said that we felt some guilt, that perhaps if we had not won the 1914 war there would have been no Nazis and no

Hitler, he said no, that was wrong; Hitler and the Nazis would have come and would have been much worse if Germany had won the war. A few days before we had visited him I had read the report of a case in which a man had been charged with stealing books...among them one of Freud's; the magistrate fined him and said that he wished he could sentence him to read all Freud's work as a punishment. I told Freud about this and he was amused and, in a queer way, also deprecatory about it. His books, he said, had made him infamous, not famous. A formidable man." (*Downhill All the Way: An Autobiography of the Years 1919-1939*, pp. 168-169) Freud, who must have taken the story of the judge seriously, replies here writing that, "The condemnation delivered by the Norwegian judge I take to be a misrepresentation or a bad joke by a malicious judge."

In contrast to Leonard, Virginia wrote in her diary about this meeting, "Dr. Freud gave me a narcissus. Was sitting in a great library with little statues at a large scrupulously tidy shiny table. We like patients on chairs. A screwed up shrunk very old man: with a monkey's light eyes, paralyzed spasmodic movements, inarticulate: but alert...an old fire now flickering." (*The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, Vol 5: 1936-41, p. 202)

The Hogarth Press was the authorized publisher of Freud in England, and the first to make his work and psychoanalytic theory available in English. In 1924, they began to publish the *International Psycho-Analytical Library*, which included works by Freud such as *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, as well as Vols. I and II of Freud's *Collected Papers*. They continued to publish his works throughout the 1920s and 30s, including *Ego and the Id* (1927), *The Future of an Illusion* (1928), and *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930). Following Freud's death in September 1939, the idea was conceived to publish the complete works of Freud, under a new translation and the editorship of James Strachey and in collaboration with Anna Freud, Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson. The 24-volume set appeared between 1953-66.

Lot also includes an autograph letter, signed by Freud's daughter, Anna Freud, to Leonard, dated October 13, 1939: "Dear Mr. Woolf, Thank you very much for your letter about my father. I am so glad that you and your wife were here still I'd see him and talk to him. It is very hard to realise that all that is ended now. I should be very glad to see both of you again when you are in London. Very sincerely yours Anna Freud."