

(Here are a couple of generalizations about England that would be accepted by almost all observers. One is that the English are not gifted artistically. They are not as musical as the Germans or Italians, painting and sculpture have never flourished in England as they have in France.) (Another is that, as Europeans go, the English are not intellectual. They have a horror of abstract thought, they feel no need for any philosophy or systematic 'world-view'. Nor is this because they are 'practical' as they are so fond of claiming for themselves.) (One has only to look at their methods of town-planning and water-supply, their obstinate clinging to everything that is out of date and a nuisance, a spelling system that defies analysis and a system of weights and measures that is intelligible only to the compilers of arithmetic books, to see how little they care about mere efficiency.) (But they have a certain power of acting without taking thought. Their world-famed hypocrisy__ their double -faced attitude towards the Empire, for instance, is bound up with this. Also in moments of supreme crisis the whole nation can suddenly draw together and act upon a species of instinct, really a code of conduct which is understood by almost everyone, though never formulated)

But here it is worth noticing a minor English trait which is extremely well marked though not often commented on, and that is love of flowers. This is one of the first things that one notices when one reaches England from abroad, especially if one is coming from southern Europe. Does it not contradict the English indifference to the arts? Not really, because it is found in people who have no aesthetic feelings whatever. What it does not link up with, however, is another English characteristic which is so much a part of us that we barely notice it, and that is the addiction to hobbies and spare-time occupations, the private-ness of English life. We are a nation of flower-lovers, but also a nation of stamp-collectors, pigeon-fanciers, amateur carpenters, coupon-snippers, dart-players, crossword-puzzle fans. All the culture that is most truly native centers round things which even when they are communal are not official, the pub, the football match, the back garden, the fireside and the 'nice-cup of tea'. The liberty of the individual is still believed in, almost as in the nineteenth century. But this has nothing to do with economic liberty, the right to exploit others for profit. It is the liberty to have a home of your own, to do what you like in your spare time, to choose your own amusement instead of having them chosen for you from above. The hateful of all names in an English ear is Nosy Parker.

Precis

English are non-artistic, ir-rational. They dislike abstracts. They are efficient in managing towns, weights, water supply. They are deceptive in nature. They are fond of flowers, hobbies and liberty.

(29-words)

Title, - Generalizations about English.