GERTRUDE STEIN VIEWS LIFE AND POLITICS

The Cryptic Author, at Home in Paris, Sees No Good In Modern "Chinese Walls" or In Rule by Intellectuals

By LASHING WARREN

A Visit to Miss Gertrude Stein in her studio in the Rue de Fleurus, and in her home, gives an impression of a Greek soul. But, as Miss Stein is a modern artist, her studio, and especially her home, are not Greek. In her home, there is a difference. Many of Miss Stein's statements have an irreproachable terseness, then follow a mistaking ambiguity such as characteristic of the opiates. Here, called from an hour's con-vension with Miss Stein, are come some of the most promising young American women who would descend today into the realms of politics, art, science or literature. "Living in a foreign wall is always bad."

"Would you have received the Nobel Peace Prize?"

"Intellectuals are not suited to directing of government. They are deferred by a mental obliquity."

"Governing is a duty to oneself.

"The best rulers are those who rule by instinct, not by intellect."

"The French are just tired—worn out by this process of making and spending money."

"Don't think you can be smiled at the age of 73."

But, again unlike the shy, Miss Stein is ready to elucidate. "I say these things," she said, "not from any secret knowledge of what is going on. I speak only from my knowledge of people and what I know about my friends and neighbors."

The path to Miss Stein's studio is narrow, the studio is small, and the atmosphere is a shifty's cavern. A host of men and women, among them as now famous, began going to hear what Miss Stein had to say many years before she acquired her present popularity. Miss Stein is not difficult of access, for she receives whoever interests her. The success of her autobiography of Alice B. Toklas and of her opera, "Four Saints," has greatly increased the numbers of her callers. It is possible to know Miss Stein personally, to the extent of the introduction of Miss Toklas, her friend, and to some extent of her fashionable and social acquaintances. She has a very real and efficient personality, delightful and stimulating. It is presented as to her existence when the autobiography appeared.

Miss Stein is a modern artist, however, as is often the habit of the friends of refreshment. She is not talked about. She is always self-effacing, reserved, and conservative. She signs her books herself. This seems strange, but Miss Stein is a heavily yoked, dutiful woman who is obliged to take care of all, arriving in every growing quantity.

One approaches the studio in the Rue de Fleurus through the usual portal of a large, modern Left Bank apartment house. It is directed by the concierge to the interior courtyard. Across that court is a low building, the upper story of which is constructed entirely of glass, suggesting a greenhouse or what it actually is, a workshop for artificial illumination. Miss Stein's door itself is partly of clouds, partly of glass. It is an Oriental servant in a white jacket. The light is on, the door is open, the shop, through which is visible on one side the kitchen, leaving one all the more ready than before to enter the other side to the studio.

It is not an ecclesiastic studio such as one finds in the better art-works. It is a room with a table, a chair, a couch, a window, a skylight, a ceiling. The large table is covered, in typical Parisian bohe-mian life, with overthrown and jumbled disarrangement: a mixture of washed dishes and cast-off clothing. In it are scattered books, in the studio, or about Miss Stein herself, with the evidence of many pages of some of her writings, to suggest that she is not one who does not impress on, the contrary, one of the most alluring, most comfortable armchairs and rows of well-used books are the first things that catch the eye. The next things remarked are the paintings. They cover the whole of the upper part of the high walls of the studio, which rise to the top of the two-story building. These pictures are mainly the work of Miss Stein's cosmopolitan painter friends, noted and un-known, who have been her confidants or her proteges. Again, the impression is not of wild, exaggerated tendencies and aberrations. There are linked paintings that would be called modish, decorative and even unintelligible, but they do not pre-dominate. They are mingled with examples of all schools of art, and the gallery (for it is a veritable art gallery) conveys the effect of a fertile taste. This effect is heightened by their use of colored tints.

Finally the feeling of order and of unity is confirmed by the expression of the character. Her white poodle, Basket, jumps up beside her on the couch and makes a great show of what it is to be rather friendly hospitality. "Basket is a great watch-dog," she observes, with strength to a comb. It was black, but is mingled almost equally throughout with gray, and the re-sult intensifies distinction. It also makes her seem masculine, an impression confirmed by her low-pitched voice, her decided features and her energetic manner. Her eyes are dark and large and there is in them a furtive expression something of the acutest, suggesting years of calculation.

She wears a woolen skirt of medium length, a stiff overcoat of mixed tone and what would be, according to theresden rule, none too long. She talks, as she often does at the mental confusion produced in her auditor by many of her remarks, her face and body become mobile, and there is something impish in her expression. "I say that Hitler ought to have been put in prison."

"The French," she says, "are silly. The American people have not had the war but they have had the mentality of Americanization, or modernization. Some of you are not yet through with doing and have not yet learned not to do. And then we are ready for the fireworks. Intellectuals are not made to enjoy. They don't think ever of pleasant or intellectual life as we are continually doing. The intellectual side does not attract them. That is what they are trying to escape."

Miss Stein as an intellectual, and one of the things that influence France, has undoubtedly构思 nothing of this mental cast which she has in the French. It would seem to explain her experi-ence with the United States, the excep-tionalism from examining them in compartmental structure, from turgid them this way and that and vice versa from the standpoint of their individualities. But one would say today more than the French with their intellectual gymnastics, of putting the play in the name of their own national life, is the French. They would not think of con-sideration with the first person who came along, her concierge, her butcher or the servant who cooks her meals, after the fashion of the Saints in her opera. She might do it once for an experiment, and some day language may become enlarged and take on a new meaning so that her word combinations will become usual. But she wouldn't dream of attempting to make such things general.

Such things are not for practical life. They may get their excitement by speaking a barrel rolls in the stratosphere. Miss Stein as a sister is the art-abstract realm of the writing and intellectual woman."

The separation of the practical from the intellectual sheds considerable light on many of Miss Stein's otherwise cryptic opinions. That is the character of the work of intellectual herself, has a poor opinion of intellectuals who intervene in practical affairs. "I always say that intellectuals are not suited to be first persons of government," said Miss Stein. "They have a mental obliquity. By that I mean that they are diverted by idealism, by their ideals and their theories, from responding to the affairs of the state, and it is necessary to guide practical rule. The best gov-ernors are always the men who re-fuse idealism of any kind."

That is the reason, I suppose, who does not like to see things."

When I say government does not mean a government, but a system of government.

The French and the American atti-tude, she says, "are quite different. The French have, it seems, or have always had, a taste for making and spending money, and I don't like the idea of spending it. That doesn't interest me."

Her speech is steady, natural and marked with a strong feeling for the values and the niceties of words.