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A WAR IS A WAR IS A WAR

Gertrude Stein Gives A Lecture on Deportment

MOST of our readers know about Gertrude Stein, the self-exiled American writer (now 71 years old) whom all Americans regard as a great writer and scarcely any of them can read. A few weeks ago a Red Cross club asked her to "say a few words" to American soldiers in Paris, and the result was what "Life" called "a rousing lecture on deportment." Here is a correspondent's report of what happened.

THIS Stein is easier to understand when she is talking than when she is writing, but a considerable gap remains between her mind and that of the average GI. Some members of her soldier audience are still trying to figure out the Steinian views on life, humanity and the war which the little old lady expounded with such energy and directness the other

night. Miss Stein's delivery was in fact so forceful, even though she remained seated on the platform through most of her lecture, that those who tried to argue with her were left hanging in the air.

"You're all too serious," was the substance of her complaint. "If we aren't terribly careful the Germans are going to win this war in the sense that all human feeling will be lost between people and nations. Nowadays nobody says anything nice to anybody any more. Every day somebody should say something nice about somebody else. Every nation should say something nice about another nation. Each of you should be like Boy Scouts and smile at least once a day at Frenchmen."

The French, Miss Stein went on to say, are utterly exhausted by the strain of their spiritual campaign against the Germans. "They ignored them," she explained. "They just looked right through them as though they weren't there. But that's an exhausting programme to stick to for four years. Americans don't realise the depth of French fatigue. Their feeling in the occupation was that some time the Americans would come and then everything would be wonderful. Then the Americans came. They were all solemn, serious, hard-working boys, and the French were very disappointed.

"You Must Smile at Somebody"

"It's difficult to explain—you see, the last American army sort of came over on a vacation—by comparison with your experiences it was a sort of vacation. They had their action in concentrated doses and then they came back here and got drunk and were very gay. The French expected you to be like them and you aren't. You're serious; you do your job; you don't always get drunk, at least not all of you—last time everybody was drunk all the time.

"You must smile at somebody—it's shameful—you never smile at anybody, not even at children. Twenty-five years ago you all had broad grins on your faces all day long—now how many of you have smiled to-day at a Frenchman or a French woman or even at a French child? Go on, raise your hands—how many of you?"

One lone hand showed. Then the fireworks started.

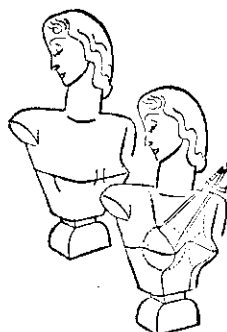
A captain got up. "I rise to the defence of the American soldier," he began. "Now, on this issue of sobriety. . ." That was as far as he got. After five minutes of trying to get a word in edgewise on the issue of sobriety, he sat down, a defeated man.

"Don't Worry So Much"

Another hand waved. "You over there, what do you want?" said Miss Stein. "I rise to the defence of the captain," said a GI. The room exploded in laughter. After a while he got started again; "Miss Stein, I think you misunderstood the captain on the question of being sober. You see, we've got another war to fight when this one. . ." Here Miss Stein delivered a brief ten-minute dissertation concerning the im-

(continued on next page)

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