

The Saturday Review
of Literature

In Savoy

A New Play About France During the Occupation

GERTRUDE STEIN

EDITOR'S NOTE: Gertrude Stein has written a new play, the manuscript of which has just been received by her publishers, Random House. Here, in "preview" form, is the script of the last scene. The play is concerned with two families in a French village in unoccupied France, from the time Pétain started to organize a new army to the day the Americans marched into Paris. Copyright 1945, Random House.

*Living Room of Constance's Home in a French village,
August 23, 1944.*

(Constance looking out of the window calls Henry, Henry comes in.)

CONSTANCE: What has happened, Henry.

HENRY: My father is avenged. My knuckles are broken but my father is avenged.

CONSTANCE: Henry, what happened.

HENRY: We fought, we killed, we made prisoners and I beat the prisoners up, I did not kill them, I beat them up, my knuckles are broken and my father is avenged.

CONSTANCE: Oh Henry, now everything is going so well everything is terrible, Henry, Henry.

HENRY: There you are, Constance, yes, how can you hate, how can you when you have never suffered, that is to say when your country has never suffered. France has suffered, how many times she has suffered, how many times she has been avenged. How often have sons avenged their fathers. I have avenged my father, and pretty soon now we will avenge our country, pretty soon.

CONSTANCE: Will it be very soon, Henry.

HENRY: It will be soon. I have not told you but Ferdinand knew about my father's being killed.

CONSTANCE: Oh Henry, have you seen him.

HENRY: Yes I saw him but he knew about it before I saw him. He hunted me up when he heard and after he too had avenged my father.

CONSTANCE: Did he.

HENRY: Yes Constance, he did, he did avenge my father. It is queer how he heard about it. He had been sent on a mission to find out something that was happening and he had to go into a government office and there he heard two men talking and they told that my father had been killed. Ferdinand was there at the door and he heard them tell that my father had been killed.

CONSTANCE: Poor poor Ferdinand.

HENRY: Dont worry, my father is avenged, dont you worry about that. Ferdinand did it and I did it, they have payed these dirty beasts have payed.

CONSTANCE: It is not true that I do not understand. I do understand but, oh dear.

HENRY: I know it is alright but you see feeling the way you do, well it makes me sick. You dont want the reward of your work, you've worked well but you dont want the reward of your work, the reward of your work is vengeance, and you dont want vengeance and so you dont want the reward of your work. What is the use of working if you do not want the reward of your work, what's the use. Well I do, and I'll have it. I have avenged my father, so has Ferdinand and now I will avenge France and so will Ferdinand, that is the reward for our work, you have worked well, Constance, but you dont want the reward of your work, you wait, not you but perhaps, well no use talking, no use, you're nice, you're courageous but you have no guts, Constance. You dont want the reward of your work.

(And Henry stormed out of the room. Constance begins to play with the radio suddenly the announcer announces, Attention, attention, attention, Paris is free. Attention, attention, attention. Paris is free.)

CONSTANCE: I dont care what Henry says that is the reward of my work.

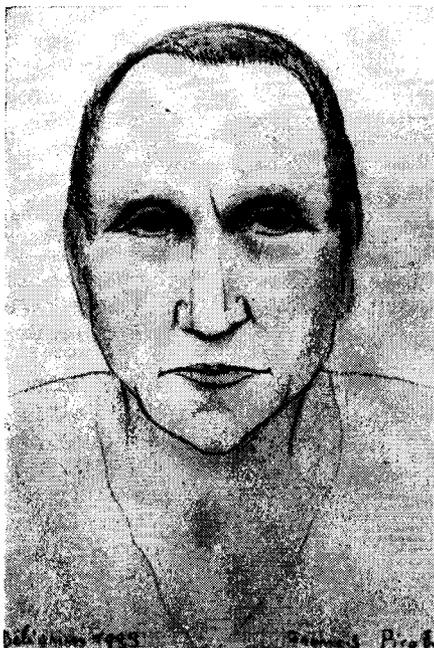
(The two old servants come into the room.)

THE SERVANTS: Oh Mademoiselle, is it true, is it, is it true that Paris is free. Georges Pouper just called out that Paris is free.

CONSTANCE: *(kissing them on both cheeks French fashion)* Yes my dears, it is true, where is Georges, I want to kiss him, Georges.

GEORGES: *(coming in)* Yes Mademoiselle, it is true, Paris is free and we are free, we have just shot the fifty Bosches that were left in the marshes, shot them like rabbits, they are like rabbits, when they do not win they are like rabbits and we shoot them like rabbits, I shot five, shot them dead all five of them.

CLOTHILDE AND OLYMPE: Of course you did, you good brave Georges. We heard you shoot them, when we remember how they occupied this house in forty and how they slept in the house and took sun baths all



—From a drawing by Francis Picabia
Gertrude Stein

naked on the lawn and then the day of the armistice, the beasts, we were just two sad lonely old women and they put their phonograph in front of our kitchen door and it blared out all their horrible German songs, and each one would come into the kitchen and call out, France kaput, and we just wouldnt cry in front of them. No, we just wouldnt, and they broke open our trunks and they stole all our shoes and stockings, all we had, the dirty beasts, Germany caput, Germany caput, oh Georges, oh Mademoiselle, (and they fell aweeping.) Yes now we can cry now they are gone, gone forever. Yes now we can cry, now we can.

CONSTANCE: (patting them both) Now pull yourselves together we have to make flags, French flags and American flags and English flags and Russian flags.

GEORGES: No use in making them, Mademoiselle, you can buy them, and American and French flag ribbon.

CONSTANCE: From whom.

GEORGES: (laughing) From the bazaar, the biggest collaborator in this town, the one who said everybody should send their sons to Germany to help the Germans and he was consistent enough, he sent his, he has his store full of flags, French flags, English flags, American flags and ribbons, no no Russian flags, everybody is in there buying them. He is just coining money.

CONSTANCE: Will I ever understand, but Georges, where did he get them.

GEORGES: Get them, he always had them, he was sure the Germans were going to win but he kept them all, well, he always keeps everything. I suppose some of them were left over from the last war and I know that he is as pleased as anything to have them and to sell them and everybody is as pleased as anything to buy them.

CONSTANCE: But Georges, how is it that the Germans did not find them.

GEORGES: Because he had them put away, hid them if you like but what difference would it make. The Germans, bah, the Germans, they never found anything.

CONSTANCE: Well all of you go to that collaborator and buy a lot of them and we will cover the house with them and lots of ribbon for the children.

(They all go out. Claude comes rushing in.)

CLAUDE: Hullo Constance.

CONSTANCE: Are you pleased, Claude, pleased that Paris is free.

CLAUDE: Of course, of course, well, yes of course, although, well yes of course, do you know Constance, Achille is joining the army, he says that he will help America beat Japan.

CONSTANCE: He does say that, does he, well you can tell him from me, that the Americans dont want him they wont have him, you can tell him that from me.

CLAUDE: What do you mean. Wont have him, they have to have him, the French army wants him, of course they want him, he has written to his old captain to tell him he is ready to join him, my gracious not want an aviator who has brought down five enemy planes. Of course they will want him.

CONSTANCE: (angrily) I tell you they dont want him and they wont have him. The French army can take him if they want him. We dont. Hell, anyway, Claude, what does he want to fight for now. Why dont he stick to his opinions.

CLAUDE: Of course you dont understand, you never understand, as long as the marshal was at the head of the government he obeyed the marshal, any good soldier would, and now that the marshal is not any longer at the head of the government, why naturally Achille obeys the man who is at present at the head of the government and so he joins the army. Anybody ought to be able to understand that.

CONSTANCE: So Achille is just like a dog, when you tell him to come to heel he comes to heel and when you tell him to fight, he fights. What'd the use of being a man if you are going to be like that, what is the use. Well I can tell you the American army does not want anybody like that fighting with them. I dont much think the French army does either.

CLAUDE: You are just jealous, you dont know anybody who has ever brought down five airplanes.

CONSTANCE: And did not wear his decorations because he was so modest, although everybody knew about it.

CLAUDE: You are horrible. I always hated you but when America was not successful I did not care so much but now that America is successful, that she has gotten rid of the dear marshal, that she has opened the door to Bochevism, that she hates the aristocracy, I tell you, Constance, I just hate you, hate you and all Americans, I hate you.

CONSTANCE: And still Achille wants to fight side by side with them.

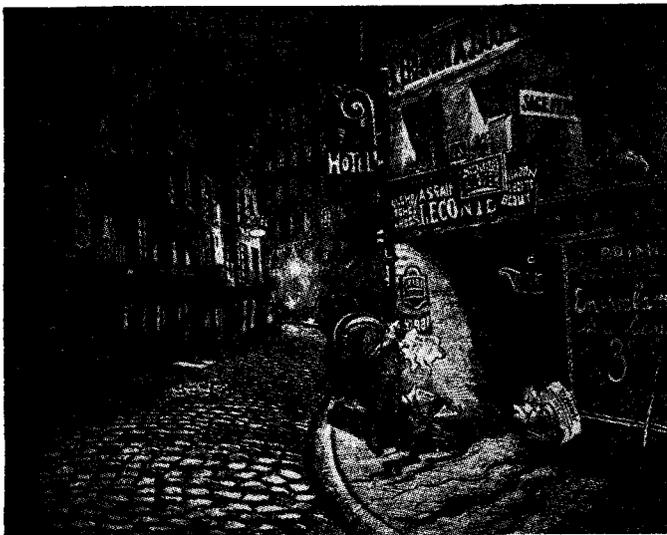
CLAUDE: Well if he does it is because he does, because as a soldier he does.

CONSTANCE: There is no use talking, Claude, they wont have him, nothing could make me believe the French army would have him, No I dont believe they would have him in spite of his five airplanes. No all this time, well we did not say much but now France is free and we tell each other what we really think, no the French army does not want Achille.

CLAUDE: You beast, if they dont take him I know it will be your fault, the fault of those awful Americans, and it will break my mother's heart and it will disappoint Achille, and never never never, no never will I speak to you again, no never.

(And she rushes out. Constance sits down heavily. Oh my gracious, she says. Clothilde and Olympe come in with arms full of flags.)

Oh Mademoiselle, just think, there are lots of little children in this town who have never seen any flag, not any kind of a flag not even a Bosche flag, you know they never carried flags, we dont know why but they never did and little children who are now five and six years old have never seen a flag and certainly never seen a French flag. You should have seen them, they touched the flags so timidly and one little one wanted to know what it was and we knew you would like it and we pinned pieces of American ribbon on each one and then we made them stand up in front of the French flag and say Vive la France, honor to the maquis, and the darlings



—Illustrations by Harold C. Geyer from "All Men Have Loved Thee."

they all said it and we were so happy and they are so happy and it is all so wonderful, we are free and everybody's eyes are all smiling. Oh dear me. (*and beginning to cry they both say laughing*) We can cry now all we want. Yes mademoiselle, we can.

(Henry comes in.)

HENRY: Hullo, you old dears, my gracious, you have gotten flags, has the old collabo any left now that you have bought out the collection, well hang them out, hang them out.

(And he shows the two old women out.)

CONSTANCE: Henry, I have just had a dreadful quarrel with Claude, a really dreadful quarrel.

HENRY: Did you, well one does and one does and one does not but one mostly does. Did you.

CONSTANCE: Yes Henry and this time really this time we probably will never speak to each other again.

HENRY: Well, perhaps not and then perhaps you will. You never can tell.

CONSTANCE: Henry, dont be so unfeeling.

HENRY: Unfeeling and I have just come from a wonderful family scene. Claude was not there, she was busy quarreling with you but all the rest of them were there.

CONSTANCE: And Achille.

HENRY: Achille, my gracious, poor Achille. He is holding his head and surrounded with papers he must sign to get back into the army, but in every one there is the question, what did you do for the resistance. No they dont say, what did you do in the great war daddy, but what did you do for the resistance, and oh my goodness, Achille, what did he.

CONSTANCE: Well, then he wont be taken into the army.

HENRY: Not unless he finds out that he did do something for the resistance, you never can tell, perhaps he will find out that he did something for the resistance, perhaps he will.

CONSTANCE: Oh Henry, it is so awful now we are all so happy and we are all quarreling, oh Henry, it is awful.

HENRY: Why not, if not why not. Oh you ought to see them.

You see now of course there is going to be communism, anyway that is the way they feel about it and they think the old mother thinks of course the old father never thinks anything, the old mother thinks she better divide up the property among the children so the communists wont notice, as they might if it was all together, but she hates to let go, how she hates to let go.

CONSTANCE: And what do you get, Henry.

HENRY: Well, as the most unpopular son-in-law I only get a duck pond with the meadow around it. My, it's funny. Hullo if there isnt Ferdinand. Come in Ferdinand, well well.

CONSTANCE: Ferdinand.

HENRY: Yes there he is.

(Ferdinand comes in.)

FERDINAND: Paris is free.

HENRY: As if we didnt know it. Yes Paris is free. Have you said goodbye up at the house Ferdinand.

FERDINAND: Yes, I have said goodbye.

HENRY: Well, so-long old man.

FERDINAND: So-long.

(Henry goes.)

CONSTANCE: Why are you saying good-bye up at the house.

FERDINAND: Because good-byes have to be said.

CONSTANCE: Ferdinand, you know I have had a dreadful quarrel with Claude and I do not really think that we will ever speak to each other again.

FERDINAND: Does that really matter, Constance.

CONSTANCE: Ferdinand, what do you mean.



FERDINAND: Why should it matter, it's all over. You will never see any of us again. You wont see Henry. Henry loves his wife and adores his little girl and it's all over and that is all that there is when it's all over.

CONSTANCE: Is it really all over.

FERDINAND: Yes really all over. You will go back to the quays of Paris and sooner or later to roasted chickens.

CONSTANCE: And you, Ferdinand.

FERDINAND: Ah, this time I do disappear.

CONSTANCE: Disappear where to.

FERDINAND: Hush, you must not ask, but I'll tell you just the same. To Germany. No, I did not go back there to work, but I am being sent there to organise my fellow countrymen.

CONSTANCE: Ferdinand.

FERDINAND: Yes, Constance, this is our war, you have done your share. Your countrymen will fight some more, but this is our war, our war, and we will fight it and we will win.

CONSTANCE: Yes, I know and so it is all over.

FERDINAND: Yes, look facts in the face, Constance, for you it is all over, for Henry it is all over, but for me it is just beginning.

CONSTANCE: Yes, Ferdinand, yes Ferdinand.

FERDINAND: I wont have time to think so I wont think about you and the quays of Paris and the roast chickens and Henry and Claude and the little girl who looks like me, no I wont have time to think. Good-bye, Constance.

CONSTANCE: Good-bye, Ferdinand.

Curtain

Violin in Virginia

(SULPNECK RIDGE)

By Matthew Biller

WIND-LIPT rune on Shenandoah,
Red fox padding Chimney Run,
Hoick and hound in hoar frost beard,
Winesaps sirupt and seared with sun.

Meadows strange with a homesick whistle,
Cities lost on a pasture train,
Harvest rye and thistle sougning
Soft to the sky and pineleaf rain.

Chestnut rails where blue hawberries
Scatter clouds, forbidden kiss
Taunting merrily . . . nudging . . . knowing
Love is never twice like this.

The heart returns from its hurt and hurry
(Sulpneck sings on the Blue Ridge floor!)
And nimble strings pluck at the latched-up
Portals opened once before.

MAY 5, 1945

7

And Hearts as Well

THEY CHANGE THEIR SKIES. By Letitia Preston Osborne. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co. 1945. 239 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by AMY LOVEMAN

THIS is escape literature in the best sense of the word, not because it evades reality and suffering—it doesn't, one of its exiles finds life too tragic to be able to support it—but because it projects the reader into the midst of a group of people so eminently civilized in their attitudes, so spontaneous in their reactions to life and living that to be with them for the period of the book is to know the pleasure of agreeable hours spent among likable individuals. Miss Osborne's volume is one of those novels that are all too rare, a pleasant, lively love story, with well-realized characters, credible situations, and sprightly dialogue. Though its happenings and personalities are of the moment, it is in an older tradition of American literature, with not a little of the fidelity to detail in portraying the simple incident of daily life, and something of his technique in the assembling of the cast of characters, which constituted the art of William Dean Howells.

The story plays in Honduras where a cosmopolitan group are housed in a hospitable pension run by a wise and gracious old lady. Here Isabel Gresham, a pretty and attractive young American attached to the United States legation, Ralph Hewitt, her countryman and co-worker, an eccentric Englishman, some German Jewish refugees hoping to make their way to the United States, Hondurans, and others meet about the dining table and on the porches. The small events of their daily lives, their discussions, the attempts of the exiles to master the English language, the despair and suicide of one of the refugees, the love story of Isabel and Ralph and its dissipation and resolution into two other love affairs, these are the stuff of the novel.

Miss Osborne has been remarkably successful in conveying the atmosphere of her Honduran scene. The warmth and sunshine and lush, lazy air of the country pervade her book, not as mere setting but an integral part of the story. And her characters, living human beings all, are each sharply differentiated, each presented in the round. Dona Elena, with her exquisite fastidiousness of mind and person, the fragrance of spirit which enveloped her and left her in age with something of the loveliness of youth, and which was like a benediction on the oddly-assorted group who constituted her

boarders; Don Jose, with the patience, serenity, and wisdom of old age and that understanding heart which allowed him to divine, even before they did themselves, the needs and emotions of the young—these two, with a passionate, impetuous Honduran girl who falls desperately in love with the American, Ralph Hewitt, the American-trained and Americanized physician son of Dona Elena, who returns to Honduras to realize that this is his



land and to find there a foreign wife; these are the principal native characters, and they are eminently well portrayed. And Miss Osborne is no less successful with Mr. Pomfret, who under his prickly, brusque English frankness hides genuine kindness, and in her young Americans, with their healthy instincts and normal outlook on life, their preoccupation with each other and eventual breaking away.

In her German exiles she has drawn with no less sure a hand, and has managed admirably to invest the Holtzes,

the warm-hearted German couple who try so humbly to master circumstance, with a genuine and lovable simplicity of soul even while she makes them at once amusing in their efforts to master English and in their occasional bewilderment. But it is with Fritz Abrams that she has touched tragedy and given her book more than mere charm to recommend it. For Fritz is a beautifully conceived and developed character, a person in whom is embodied the tragedy of the German Jew who has seen his people desecrated, his personal life torn and crushed, and who when love, too, fails him, can bear no more. He is the intellectual, the poetic soul, the man of good will in the world of evil, the Jew who bears the cross of his race, and whose grief is not for himself alone but for all who suffer like him. I do not know whether Miss Osborne had Stefan Zweig in mind when she wrote of Fritz Abrams but she might well have done so.

The tale of all these people is quietly and effectively unfolded, with warmth and feeling and sympathy. They and their affairs become of moment to the reader. They are such persons as we all know, with their crotchets and their whims, their affections and doubts and certainties, and they move and act with naturalness and charm. Miss Osborne keeps her tale well in hand, writes with economy and ease, and produces her effects with sureness. "They Change Their Skies" is delightful in the reading and lingers pleasantly in the memory.

Your Literary I. Q.

By Howard Collins

LINES FROM SOME OLD PLAYS

A. C. Palmer, of Pomfret Center, Connecticut, this week offers a quiz on famous lines from old plays. After reading them, can you identify the play and its author? Allowing 5 points for each correct answer, a score of 60 is par, 70 is very good, 80 or better is excellent. Answers are on page 24.

1. MARLOW: A modest woman, dressed out in all her finery, is the most tremendous object of the whole creation.

2. CROFTS: There are no secrets better kept than the secrets that everybody guesses.

3. DELEVIS: You call me a damned Jew. My race was old when you were all savages. I am proud to be a Jew.

4. FAUSTUS: Was this the face that launched a thousand ships, and burnt the topless towers of Ilium?

5. LORD DARLINGTON: What is a cynic? A man who knows the price of everything, and the value of nothing.

6. MRS. MALAPROP: If I reprehend anything in this world, it is the use of my oracular tongue, and a nice derangement of epitaphs.

7. MAURYA: What is the price of a thousand horses against a son where there is one son only?

8. MACHEATH: How happy could I be with either, were t'other dear charmer away!

9. MAGGIE: Every man who is high up loves to think that he has done it all himself; and the wife smiles, and lets it go at that.

10. IAGO: O, beware, my lord, of jealousy; it is the green-eyed monster which doth mock the meat it feeds on.