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THE GERTRUDE STEIN COLLECTION

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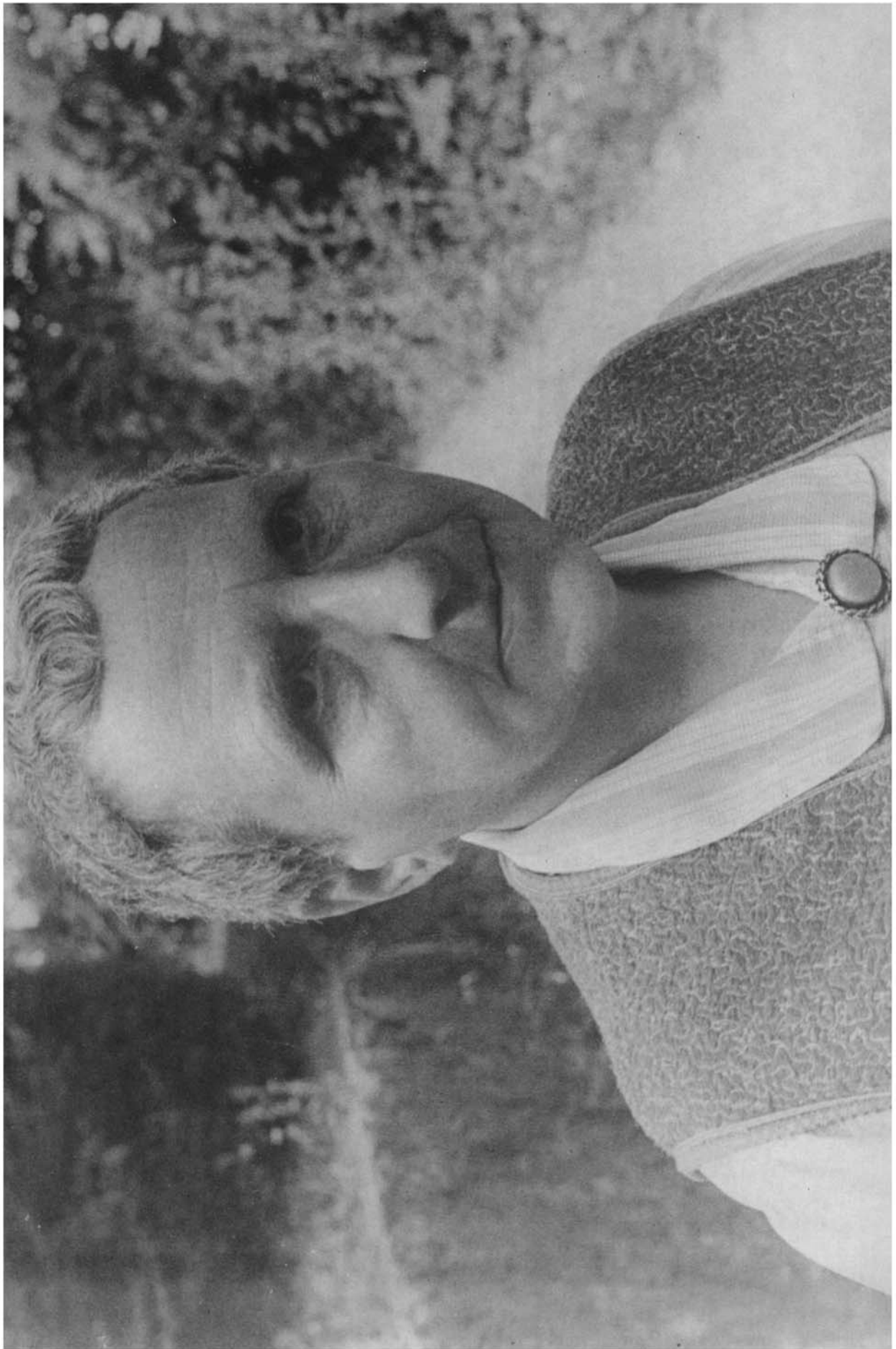
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THE GERTRUDE STEIN COLLECTION

IN Paris, at 27 Rue de Fleurus on 23 November 1937, Gertrude Stein dictated a letter to Thornton Wilder. It was addressed to Mr. Andrew Keogh, Librarian, Yale University, New Haven, Conn., and it began:\*

DEAR MR. KEOGH:

Mr. Wilmarth Sheldon Lewis has sent me a message through Mr. Thornton Wilder that the American Collection of the Yale University Library would be pleased to conserve the manuscripts of my work in its archives. I am happy to avail myself of this kind offer and wish to follow Mr. Wilder's example by making a complete gift of one work and by depositing the rest as a loan for safe-keeping, available to such persons as may wish to study them. The work which I donate outright is "A Long Gay Book." Among the works that are reaching you now, and of which an inventory can be made later, are the manuscripts of "The Making of Americans" and "Geography and Plays." In the near future I hope to send over further manuscripts and the correspondence of Picasso, Matisse, Ernest Hemingway, Juan Gris, William James, Mildred Aldrich and others.

In the event of my demise all this material becomes automatically your property and I would be happy to receive in your reply any suggestion you may have as to how these conditions may be expressed in satisfactorily legal form.

It is a source of pleasure and confidence to me to know that this material is in the collection of American Literature which is being assembled under your direction.

Very sincerely yours,  
GERTRUDE STEIN

Mr. Wilder brought this letter back with him from Europe, and when he mailed it to Mr. Keogh on February 2, 1938, the manu-

\*This and other quotations from Miss Stein's letters are printed with the kind permission of Mr. Carl Van Vechten, her literary executor.

scripts were at his house, although in "a very disheveled state." He put them into order and delivered them to the Library, where their receipt was acknowledged to Miss Stein on March 8, and a welcome was voted them by the Corporation at its meeting on April 9.

These first manuscripts—in number about half the total now owned by the Library—were deposited rather than given outright because Miss Stein wished to be free, if such a step ever became necessary, to sell some of them in order to finance the publication of her unpublished work. They were not historically the first items in Yale's Stein Collection. Not only had almost all the important Stein books been present, either in the Yale Collection of American Literature or on the open shelves, from their respective dates of publication, but Mr. Wilder had himself deposited in the Library in June, 1937, the typescripts, corrected by Miss Stein, of three of her works: *Four in America*, "An American and France," and "What are Masterpieces and Why are There So Few of Them." In order to make the manuscripts available for use by students, Mr. Robert Bartlett Haas, an authority on Miss Stein's work, came from California to prepare a classification of them. He spent several weeks in dating and arranging them, with the aid of her own "Bibliography," in chronological order.

In July, 1939, Miss Stein added to the original deposit the typescripts of *Everybody's Autobiography* (1937) and the unpublished "Stanzas in Meditation," and in April, 1940, part of the corrected galley proof of her first published work, *Three Lives* (1909). In the first of many important benefactions to the Collection, Carl Van Vechten in November, 1940, gave the Library all his Stein typescripts. These were copies of most of the then unpublished material, made originally by Miss Toklas and sent by Miss Stein to Mr. Van Vechten for safekeeping. Of a great number of the works represented, the original manuscripts were already in the Library. Mr. Van Vechten also presented the Library with a complete set of his famous photographs of Miss Stein (one of which is reproduced at the beginning of this account) and deposited under seal all the letters which she had written him up to that time, covering the period from 1913 to 1940, and fully annotated by him.

While the original material was thus increasing, a number of in-

terested friends of Miss Stein and the Library took it upon themselves to make Yale's collection of her books and periodicals with her contributions a not unworthy complement to this unique gathering of manuscripts and photographs. Among these were Mr. Van Vechten, Mr. Wilder, and Mr. Haas, Norman Holmes Pearson, and Cary Ross.

By 1941 the collection had become so noteworthy that it was made the basis of a Stein exhibition in the Library. With a breadth hardly possible for any other contemporary American writer, the history and ramifications of her life and work were displayed. From her college essays at Radcliffe, marked with the penciled marginalia of William Vaughn Moody her instructor, and her medical articles from the days of her study at Johns Hopkins, her development as a writer and a personality was displayed. The show was colorful and exciting, and it was given a particular distinction by Mr. Wilder's opening address. So marked was its success that, at its close, Columbia University asked for and received the privilege of exhibiting at its own library a large selection of the material. New York viewed it with equal enthusiasm. The catalogue of the Yale exhibition, which contained a chronological listing prepared by Mr. Haas of all the known titles of Miss Stein's manuscripts up to that time—some five hundred and fifty of them—helped further to demonstrate the pride and responsibility which Yale felt in its honor of custodianship.

Miss Stein herself was very much interested in the exhibition, and her friends in America kept her informed about it. From her country home in the province of Ain, where she lived throughout the German occupation of France, she wrote to Mr. Knollenberg, then Librarian of the University, on March 24, 1941:

MY DEAR MR. KNOLLENBERG,

It would have been nice to be present, and to hear you all and to see you all and to see it all, but in a kind of way it is just as nice to hear that it is going on over there when I am over here. Some day there will be a lot more for you. I have quite a few ms. here but just at present it seems more reasonable to wait and send them over later, and some day I hope to give you all the letters I have accumulated. I have a habit of keeping all letters and some day when all is quiet, I will send over the lot and then some industrious young man can reduce them to order and then I will try to tell him who is who, and it will be lots of

fun. Thanks and thanks again for all you have done, and I am looking forward to the bibliography.

Always,

GERTRUDE STEIN

The war put an end temporarily to all plans, but the Collection continued to grow. Stein letters were either given or deposited by Mr. and Mrs. Julian Stein, Mr. Wilder, and Mr. Knollenberg, while Miss Doris Ewing gave several which her cousin, Max Ewing, had received from Miss Stein. The Library acquired one of the five copies on vellum of *The Making of Americans* (1926), and the representation of books and periodicals rapidly approached completeness.

From the fall of Paris to its liberation, the manuscripts not already sent to the Library and all the correspondence remained, along with the famous pictures, in Miss Stein's apartment on the Rue Christine. When she returned to Paris at last on December 15, 1944, she found everything of importance intact. The Gestapo had twice invaded the apartment, but on the first occasion had been turned back by the superior strategy of the concierge and the local gendarmerie, and on a later visit had confined themselves to stealing such utilitarian articles as kitchen utensils and household linen. When Picasso came around to marvel at the salvation of his pictures and drawings, he and Miss Stein wept together and Picasso attributed the miracle to the intervention of Miss Stein's great friend Bernard Faÿ, whom the Vichy Government had made Director of the Bibliothèque Nationale. Picasso had informed Faÿ of the visit of the Gestapo, and Faÿ had assured him the next day by letter that everything was arranged and the pictures and manuscripts would not be harmed.

Miss Stein's return to Paris was the signal that many a G.I. had been waiting for, and her Paris apartment became as much a center for the Brewsies and Willies of the United States armed forces as it had been for the Ernests and Bravigs of the "lost generation" in the 'twenties. Among them were friends of Yale and from Yale, and the close relation between her and the Collection was immediately resumed. To one of them, almost her first greeting was with an outstretched hand containing a copy of *Le Bugiste Republicain, journal de la démocratie de l'Ain*, issued in the first days of freedom on the 2d of September, 1944, and carrying a salute to France and America from

her pen. It was for Yale, she said; and at Yale it now is. Only her interest in the Collection could have ensured Yale's possession of so many of this kind of ephemeral publication of which it is extremely unlikely that other copies exist in the United States.

In the early months of 1945, correspondence between New Haven and Paris was often uncertain and always slow, and in order to facilitate the administration of the material already in the Library, Miss Stein formally relinquished title to it on May 11, 1945, and restated her intention of eventually sending the rest of the manuscripts. On July 24, 1945, she reassured Mr. Babb concerning the correspondence as well:

Yes I do intend to give you all my correspondence. It is in a great deal of a mess, and I have the habit of keeping all sorts of letters so it would take a good deal of intelligent sorting. When it is feasible it can be sent to you.

On February 19, 1946, Miss Stein wrote to me from Paris:

. . . will you talk to the Yale Library about arranging to call for the ms. and letters. I'll tell you why, there are a lot of mice here and they do get at papers, we try to scare them with mice powder and even a cat but really it would be better that the Yale library took over as soon as they liked ms. and letters. I suppose they could arrange about that, do talk it over with them . . .

The arrangement first suggested proved unsatisfactory, and Miss Stein wrote again on March 31:

. . . I guess they had better find some competent American who would make out lists and take over the packing, don't you think so, well anyway think it over with them, and let us know . . .

And on May 11:

. . . I would like it to be done as soon as possible because the mice would be active if we go away for the summer, but is it possible that it can be sent . . . let me know what you suggest, I am ready to work with any one who is able to do it.

Arrangements were finally completed, and on July 11, 1946, Miss Stein wrote:

The papers at least a lot of them have gone off, and I hope they get there alright, there has been delay because I have not been quite well, had some intestinal trouble, but now we are going off to the country for a couple of months and hope to get a real rest . . .

They did go to the country, to Bernard Faÿ's place at Luçau, but in five days they were back in Paris. The intestinal trouble proved to be cancer and, after a brief illness at the American Hospital, Miss Stein died on July 27, 1946. The manuscripts and letters now became, in the eyes of the French Government, the effects of an American citizen dying in France, and permission for their export was refused. It was only when the American Embassy intervened in the Library's behalf that the initial shipment of two large boxes plus a third box packed after Miss Stein's death was allowed to leave the country. These arrived on February 5, 1947; two more boxes followed on May 8, and there have been numerous smaller shipments since. Miss Stein had not exaggerated when she described the papers as being "in a good deal of a mess," and a corner of the Yale Collection of American Literature room looked for many days like a wastepaper collection center. Gradually the incredible wealth of the material was revealed.

Here were practically all the important Stein manuscripts not already in the Library, together with typewritten copies of a majority of them. (These were generally carbon copies of the original typescripts sent to Mr. Van Vechten. Of the approximately six hundred titles in Miss Stein's complete bibliography, roughly 90 per cent of the original manuscripts and 80 per cent of the typescripts, many of them corrected by her, are now at Yale.) Included in the bequest were more than a hundred and fifty presentation copies of books, mostly in first editions, by Sherwood Anderson, Louis Bromfield, Jean Cocteau, Bernard Faÿ, Ernest Hemingway, Clare Boothe Luce, the Sitwells, Carl Van Vechten, Thornton Wilder, and other noted writers. Many of these had been presented to both Miss Stein and Miss Toklas, and were their joint gift to the Library. The hundreds of newspaper clippings relating to Miss Stein and her works dated from early to very recent days, and included a collection of contemporary reviews of *Three Lives*. Photographs, large and small, provided a remarkably full and complete record of one of the most colorful careers the world of letters and the arts has ever known.

But the bulk of the material consisted of correspondence from all sorts of people—important and unimportant, well- and ill-wishers, relatives and strangers. Miss Stein had meant it when she said that she

had "a habit of keeping all letters," for it is apparent that almost every communication which she received from the early 1900's until the end of her life is now to be found in the Yale Library. When they were sorting the material preliminary to sending it off, Miss Toklas had objected to including the homely, everyday letters of the concierge and the servants. But Miss Stein was not to be dissuaded. "No," she said, "who knows if in the end they won't be found to be the most interesting?"

Everything is at Yale, even letters directed to other members of the family and to friends. (Many of them are of course addressed either to Miss Toklas as well as Miss Stein, or to Miss Toklas alone, and these are included in the Collection through the generous kindness of Miss Toklas.) Here are the records of Miss Stein's friendships and feuds, the stories of the publication of her books and of the struggle to gain recognition for her work, the testimony of the affection and esteem with which she was regarded by hundreds of individuals in all walks of life. In these letters is reflected a remarkable personality and in them is summed up an entire period in the cultural history of Western Europe and America. Their importance to the student of literature and art will only increase with time.

An excellent example of this historical importance is furnished by one of the letters from Picasso. Written at Paris and addressed actually to Miss Stein's brother, the late Leo Stein, it describes a large canvas upon which the artist was then working. To give the Steins a better idea of the picture, Picasso sketched it on his letter. The sketch (which is reproduced) identifies the picture as the "Composition (Peasants and Oxen)" now in the Barnes Foundation at Merion, Pennsylvania, and generally accepted as one of the most significant of Picasso's early works. Various critics have found in it the beginnings of Cubism and evidence of the influence of El Greco upon Picasso. Since it bears no date, its recognized historical importance has resulted in a controversy as to when it was painted. Zervos ascribes it to 1905, Barr disagrees and suggests autumn 1906, Barnes is uncertain, while Picasso himself says only that it was not done at Gosol where he had spent the summer of 1906. The letter settles the discussion in Mr. Barr's favor, for it is plainly dated in Picasso's firm though imperfect French:



17 Aut 06

It is impossible to give an adequate idea of the scope of the correspondence without a brief tabulation of numbers and names. There are some 63 letters from Sherwood Anderson; 38 letters and cards from Louis Bromfield; 100 from Bennett Cerf, Miss Stein's publisher; 296 from Bernard Faÿ; 47 from Juan Gris; 50 from Marsden Hartley; 33 from Ernest Hemingway; 106 from Mabel Dodge Luhan; 24 from Matisse; 55 from Picabia; 118 from Picasso; 180 from Sir Francis Rose; 39 from Edith Sitwell; 45 from Tchelitchef; 165 from Virgil Thomson; 440 from Carl Van Vechten (many of them containing his photographs); and 110 from Thornton Wilder. Letters from less generally well-known people will doubtless prove to be as important historically. Such are the more than five hundred letters and cards from Miss Stein's great friend Mildred Aldrich, author of *The Hilltop on the Marne*, and the moderately voluminous correspondence of Kate Buss, William Cook, Janet Flanner, Harry Phelan Gibb, Robert Bartlett Haas, Jane Heap, Bravig Imbs, D. H. Kahnweiler, George Platt Lynes, Georges Maratier, W. G. Rogers, Janet Scudder, Mabel Foote Weeks, and Miss Stein's various agents and publishers. There are less extensive sequences of letters from Natalie Barney, Christian Bérard, Eugene Berman, Lord Berners, Georges Braque, Bryher, Robert M. Coates, Jean Cocteau, Katharine Cornell, René Crevel, Jo Davidson, André Derain, T. S. Eliot, Max Ewing, Dudley Fitts, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ford Madox Ford, Roger Fry, Robert Graves, Georges Hugnet, Max Jacob, William James, Eugene Jolas, Élie Lascaux, Robert McAlmon, Henry McBride, Henri Manguin, André Masson, Marianne Moore, Elliot Paul, Man Ray, Laura Riding, William Saroyan, Alfred Stieglitz, H. G. Wells, Edmund Wilson, Alexander Woollcott, and Richard Wright.

Some of the most interesting of all the correspondence has only very recently been received as a gift from Miss Toklas. It includes the letters written to her after Miss Stein's death and becomes a kind of reproduction in miniature of the entire collection.

Through the kindness of Miss Toklas and Mr. Allan Stein, Miss Stein's nephew, the Library has now received most of the books actually on her shelves at the time of her death. These become one of the most interesting parts of the Collection in the light which they shed upon Miss Stein's tastes in literature and her reading habits. Only rarely do the books contain notes; she read when she read and wrote when she wrote and did not believe in mixing the two. A set of Thackeray in twelve volumes, which she owned at the age of seventeen, has her signature and bookplate in each volume and contains, on the front flyleaves of one of the later volumes, the rough draft of a letter written to Bennett Cerf, her publisher, not long before her death. There are comparatively few books in the French language—several volumes of Flaubert, which include her copy of *Trois Contes*, a sixteen-volume set of *Le Livre des Mille Nuits et Une Nuit* (1903-4), and George Sand's *Histoire de Ma Vie* (1856) in ten volumes are exceptions—but there is a great deal of French literature in English translation, Dumas, Balzac, and Jules Verne particularly. Of Russian writers she had Tolstoi and Turgenev. In English literature, Shakespeare and Trollope are well represented chiefly in Tauchnitz editions, and there are sets of the works of such authors as Smollett, Scott, Maria Edgeworth, George Eliot, and George Meredith. Miss Stein's favorite American authors, Irving, Cooper, Mark Twain, William Dean Howells, Frank Stockton, Gene Stratton Porter, are in evidence. There are a number of books by her friends, several historical works, and a few collections, including the nine-volume *Harleian Miscellany* (1808-12). Her library, like herself, was comprehensive and enveloping; it was clearly a library to be read and lent, not of rare editions but of serviceable books printed in good legible type—a friendly collection.

The interest aroused by the arrival at the Library of the first part of the Stein bequest was so great that even before it was completely sorted some of the more important items were placed on exhibition in the four cases in the main corridor. Here they attracted so much attention, particularly from the undergraduates, that the display was gradually increased and eventually filled sixteen cases. It opened on the twenty-second of March, and even after its close on the first of June, visitors continued to arrive at the Library asking to see it.

While shipments have been arriving from Miss Toklas in Paris, additions have also come from this country. Mr. Van Vechten, whom Miss Stein appointed her literary executor, has continued to evidence his great interest in the Collection. He has presented: a large amount of manuscript material and letters relating to his edition of Miss Stein's *Selected Writings* (1946), and to a recent memorial reading of Miss Stein's works held at the Poetry Center in New York; a practically complete set of the photographs which he made of some of the members of the cast of the Columbia production of the Stein-Thomson opera, *The Mother of Us All*; two of the plates which Miss Stein had made for him at the local pottery in Bilignin, one of which employs the famous motto "A rose is a rose is a rose" in its decoration. In August of this year, Mr. Van Vechten finished the annotation of his remaining Stein letters and sent them to the Library along with associated letters from many of his and her friends. In them the final years of Miss Stein's life are carefully documented for the use of future biographers and bibliographers. With the earlier letters which he presented in 1940 (and from which he removed the seals after her death), these form one of the most important, longest, and least interrupted of her correspondences. There are in all some 650 letters, most of them from Miss Stein herself. When one recalls that the Collection also contains Mr. Van Vechten's letters to her, the importance of this particular material can hardly be overemphasized.

Other recent additions to the Collection have been the deposit by Mr. and Mrs. Lamont Johnson of Miss Stein's letters to them and other material, chiefly relating to the performance at the Pasadena Playhouse in California, of her play "Yes is for a Very Young Man." Through the kindness of Mrs. Dorothy Norman, the Library has acquired the photostats of Miss Stein's letters to Alfred Stieglitz, and it is to be hoped that eventually the Collection will contain either the originals or photostats of all Stein letters which are still extant.

Already the Collection is fulfilling its purpose of providing authoritative texts for the publication of Miss Stein's unpublished work. The copy for *Four in America*, which the Yale University Press is scheduled to issue on the 21st of this month, was collated with the original manuscript and the corrected typescript in the Library, and Miss Stein's story "Blood on the Dining-Room Floor" is soon to

be printed from the manuscript and typescript in the Collection. Photographs have been published by *Vogue* and *Life*. Material has already been used for theses at various universities, and other requests for permission to use specific documents have been received.

Hardly before in the history of English and American literature and in the annals of manuscript collecting has an important writer been so completely represented in one Library by manuscript material, and few accumulations of correspondence have covered such a span and been so comprehensive. In consequence, it becomes inconceivable that future historians of the literary and artistic life of our time will write their treatises without some reference to this vast gathering of source material.

Miss Stein's body was interred in the Cemetery of Père la Chaise, overlooking the Paris which she had known so long and loved so well, and her great artist friend Sir Francis Rose is the architect of her tomb. In the Stein Collection at Yale, she has herself designed a monument as lasting as marble, and no inscription is needed to record that here, in these papers, books, and photographs, in the minds of the students who will use them, she has an altogether fitting memorial.

DONALD GALLUP