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I Like American and American

What our most famous literary expatriate really thought of her country

by Gertrude Stein



PHOTOGRAPH BY CARL VAN VECHTEN

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WHAT is the United States of America. It is a country of a great size in the center of which there is a great deal of land. Upon this land live those who can do and do whatever they have to do.

Let me tell about the character of the people of the United States of America and what they say.

Let me tell you one thing, what they say has a great deal to do with what they do, and what they do they do do, as what they were was part of what they did, as by the time, this time, they are what they are.

How do they know what they are. They know it by looking at what they do. This is why the United States of America is important.

★ ★ ★

What is the United States of America.

It is not a country surrounded by a wall or not as well by an océan. In short the United States of America is not surrounded. . . .

By this I mean all this.

Listen quietly.

The United States of America is not where it is as other countries are. It is there as they say and they held it right there. Held or hold it right there. They themselves held it right there. And this is the history of not only but also the people of the United States of America. And what did they do. What did they if they do say this of this.

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Now I will tell you what I like.

I like American and American.

Yes I do.

Now see here and listen to me.

If a country is very big is it generous. I do not have to say so.
If any airplane flies very high does it have to fly higher.

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Listen to this.

I say that America is a large land and it being so they do not have to care because nobody can stare since they are all there so they can be mean. Do you see what I mean. Oh yes you do you do see what I mean.

★ ★ ★

America is always building a nation, even now, when anybody might think a nation had been built.

And if a nation has been built there is only a people.

But when they are always building a nation then there is not only, only a people, there is no waiting.

Nobody can reconcile waiting with a pioneer. And they, they are always here, just dear me, a pioneer.

When they left home, when anybody left home, when they all left home, and in America and at that time, and as now, they all left home, when they left home, they went away from home, from any home, from their home, and they left home, never to see home again.

All is theirs, a whole country is their home, only they left their home. Yes they did, then and now, they left their home then and now. They can stay anywhere.

★ ★ ★

No one, not any one is ever waiting. Not any one who never can or will or does or should or would earn a living.

And now I come to everything I have to say and what I have to say is this.

A real American a true American an American cannot earn a living. If he could earn a living he could be waiting. Waiting is what makes earning a living be a part of existing and succeeding. No American can succeed no American can earn a living. It is only because Americans are part European that they can earn a living because and this I cannot say too often because waiting is part of earning a living and there is no

waiting in an American.

It seems so foolish that it is true that no American can earn a living that no American can succeed. Of course he cannot succeed, if he could succeed he could earn a living, and if he could earn a living he could wait. He cannot wait and therefore he cannot earn a living and therefore he cannot succeed. That is what you can call demonstrated or elucidated.

I like elucidating even better than demonstrating. Of course I do.

★ ★ ★

In America then is was and has been fighting and religion. Remember everything of course it has been that soldiers and religion made them do their fighting being the kind who gave and had orders given or acted without as many Americans do.

They do act without orders they act with orders they like orders, or if not they do as they do. This is what they are.

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There is no sky, no there is no sky. And why. For the very simple reason that there is no sky, not in America not in American religion and why. Why is there no sky.

And so you see why American religion and European religion have nothing in common. Nothing at all.

European religion has a sky. So heaven is there on high.

American religion has no sky and why. Because America has no sky. And why. Because that is why. There is only air and no sky. That is why.

Each one is all.

In American religion there is no one, there is no part of all, there is no sky, and why. Why. Because there is no sky. No one is shy, why, because there there is no sky.

A sky is a thin seen when you look up, when you look up in America you see up. That is all.

★ ★ ★

In an American war, nobody can dream because if you dream you wait just as much as a dream. And so they know how not, not there. But really not, because it could be not a dream. It could not be a dream and so no dream can seem to be a dream, not it. No no no American religion no American war is there.

There is a place, dream is a place and there is no place there there where American war or American religion can be there. Oh.

★ ★ ★

The eighteenth century knew that soldiers were soldiers that is to say they were different from others.

The nineteenth century said soldiers were soldiers but after all soldiers were men.

And we, U. S. we, us, in the nineteenth century discovered the twentieth century because we discovered there were no such thing as soldiers even in a war. Everybody knew it in the beginning of the nineteenth century and then they forgot it and then in the middle of all that forgetting in the middle of the nineteenth century we the U. S. knew it even in a big war.

★ ★ ★

American painters when they paint are not painters. Actors when they act are not actors that is American actors that is they are actors but not European actors they are cinema actors and that is an entirely and very different thing. And I will tell you exactly what I mean.

Now I will tell you exactly what I mean.

There is a very important difference between actors and cinema actors and this is the difference between American and European. Oh yes you will know what I mean.

. . . Now listen carefully while I tell you how American painters paint and as they find they are not like European painters who paint. European painters who paint are extended to the pictures after the pictures have been painted, they are in so much like European actors who see what they say. This is the difference. Now about American painters. Today yesterday or any day. How do they do it.

They do it like this.

When they paint it does not make any difference what gets upon the canvas, they are they and they feel that they are going to be they. Oh yes. They. They are they. That is what they look like and that is what they feel. Anybody who sees them do it knows what they do.

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How can an American marry five women and the last of them be a french woman. The last one was not a french woman but a Swedish woman and she had a great deal of money which she finally lost and married him the American and she thought in marrying him she would begin again having money and they did. He did not have to make money because she soon inherited her own money and then he went away and perhaps he forgot to come back again at any rate she never saw him again.

An American married an indo-chinese woman yes he married her he did not marry a Chinese or Japanese he married an indo-chinese but told no one and no one told him and there are no other indo-chinese women waiting for him.

What do Americans say when they marry. They say I married her. Americans marry a woman. Oh yes they do.

If they do they may care to be better than they were.

If an American marries a foreign woman does he remain faithful to her. Very often he does. If he marries an American woman does he remain faithful to her. He very often does.

It is a part of that interesting thing that American men marry American women and have American children. Just yet.

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An American married an American which was the same as marrying a foreigner and he was very content and had twins.

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Hamilton is nothing, he was just an Englishman. He was an Englishman in America. He thought he was forming the Federal party but he was not, it was the Americans who were the federal party and he was only a boss, nothing but a boss.

Then there is the Democratic party. There was Cleveland and when America was all through with Cleveland they wanted Cleveland again and there was nothing to it. Then there was Wilson's second term, the Democratic party seduces because they only elect a president when they have an exceptional man to elect and a very exceptional man is seductive, no one can help being seduced by an exceptional man.

The Republican party is not seductive because they do not have an exceptional man with which to seduce. **END**