

The Autobiography of Alice B Toklas, by Gertrude Stein

CHAPTER 2

MY ARRIVAL IN PARIS

This was the year 1907. Gertrude Stein was just seeing through the press Three Lives which she was having privately printed, and she was deep in The Making of Americans, her thousand page book. Picasso had just finished his portrait of her which nobody at that time liked except the painter and the painted and which is now so famous, and he had just begun his strange complicated picture of three women, Matisse had just finished his Bonheur de Vivre, his first big composition which gave him the name of fauve or a zoo. It was the moment Max Jacob has since called the heroic age of cubism. I remember not long ago hearing Picasso and Gertrude Stein talking about various things that had happened at that time, one of them said but all that could not have happened in that one year, oh said the other, my dear you forget we were young then and we did a great deal in a year.

There are a great many things to tell of what was happening then and what had happened before, which led up to then, but now I must describe what I saw when I came.

The home at 27 rue de Fleurus consisted then as it does now of a tiny pavilion of two stories with four small rooms, a kitchen and bath, and a very large atelier adjoining. Now the atelier is attached to the pavilion by a tiny hall passage added in 1914 but at that time the atelier had its own entrance, one rang the bell of the pavilion or knocked at the door of the atelier, and a great many people did both, but more knocked at the atelier. I was privileged to do both. I had been invited to dine on Saturday evening which was the evening when everybody came, and indeed everybody did come. I went to dinner. The dinner was cooked by Hélène. I must tell a little about Hélène.

Hélène had already been two years with Gertrude Stein and her brother. She was one of those admirable bonnes in other words excellent maids of all work, good cooks thoroughly occupied with the welfare of their employers and of themselves, firmly convinced that everything purchasable was far too dear. Oh but it is dear, was her answer to any question. She wasted nothing and carried on the household at the regular rate of eight francs a day. She even wanted to include guests at that price, it was her pride, but of course that was difficult since she for

the honour of her house as well as to satisfy her employers always had to give every one enough to eat. She was a most excellent cook and she made a very good soufflé. In those days most of the guests were living more or less precariously, no one starved, some one always helped but still most of them did not live in abundance. It was Braque who said about four years later when they were all beginning to be known, with a sigh and a smile, how life has changed we all now have cooks who can make a soufflé.

Hélène had her opinions, she did not for instance like Matisse. She said a frenchman should not stay unexpectedly to a meal particularly if he asked the servant beforehand what there was for dinner. She said foreigners had a perfect right to do these things but not a frenchman and Matisse had once done it. So when Miss Stein said to her, Monsieur Matisse is staying for dinner this evening, she would say, in that case I will not make an omelette but fry the eggs. It takes the same number of eggs and the same amount of butter but it shows less respect, and he will understand.

Hélène stayed with the household until the end of 1913. Then her husband, by that time she had married and had a little boy, insisted that she work for others no longer. To her great regret she left and later she always said that life at home was never as amusing as it had been at the rue de Fleurus. Much later, only about three years ago, she came back for a year, she and her husband had fallen on bad times and her boy had died. She was as cheery as ever and enormously interested. She said isn't it extraordinary, all those people whom I knew when they were nobody are now always mentioned in the newspapers, and the other night over the radio they mentioned the name of Monsieur Picasso. Why they even speak in the newspapers of Monsieur Braque, who Used to hold up the big pictures to hang because he was the strongest, while the janitor drove the nails, and they are putting into the Louvre, just imagine it, into the Louvre, a picture by that little poor Monsieur Rousseau, who was so timid he did not even have courage enough to knock at the door. She was terribly interested in seeing Monsieur Picasso and his wife and child and cooked her very best dinner for him, but how he has changed, she said, well, said she, I suppose that is natural but then he has a lovely son. We thought that really Hélienè had come back to give the young generation the once over. She had in a way but she was not interested in them. She said they made no impression on her which made them all very sad because the legend of her was well known to all Paris. After a year things were going better again, her husband was earning more money, and she once more remains at home. But to come back to 1907.

Before I tell about the guests I must tell what I saw. As I said being invited to dinner I rang the bell of the little pavilion and was taken into the tiny hall and then into the small dining room lined with books. On the only free space, the doors,

were tacked up a few drawings by Picasso and Matisse. As the other guests had not yet come Miss Stein took me into the atelier. It often rained in Paris and it was always difficult to go from the little pavilion to the atelier door in the rain in evening clothes, but you were not to mind such things as the hosts and most of the guests did not. We went into the atelier which opened with a yale key the only yale key in the quarter at that time, and this was not so much for safety, because in those days the pictures had no value, but because the key was small and could go into a purse instead of being enormous as french keys were. Against the walls were several pieces of large italian renaissance furniture and in the middle of the room was a big renaissance table, on it a lovely inkstand, and at one end of it note-books neatly arranged, the kind of note-books french children use, with pictures of earthquakes and explorations on the outside of them. And on all the walls right up to the ceiling were pictures. At one end of the room was a big cast iron stove that Hélène came in and filled with a rattle, and in one corner of the room was a large table on which were horseshoe nails and pebbles and little pipe cigarette holders which one looked at curiously but did not touch, but which turned out later to be accumulations from the pockets of Picasso and Gertrude Stein. But to return to the pictures. The pictures were so strange that one quite instinctively looked at anything rather than at them just at first. I have refreshed my memory by looking at some snap shots taken inside the atelier at that time. The chairs in the room were also all italian renaissance, not very comfortable for short-legged people and one got the habit of sitting on one's legs. Miss Stein sat near the stove in a lovely high-backed one and she peacefully let her legs hang, which was a matter of habit, and when any one of the many visitors came to ask her a question she lifted herself up out of this chair and usually replied in french, not just now. This usually referred to something they wished to see, drawings which were put away, some german had once spilled ink on one, or some other not to be fulfilled desire. But to return to the pictures. As I say they completely covered the white-washed walls right up to the top of the very high ceiling. The room was lit at this time by high gas fixtures. This was the second stage. They had just been put in. Before that there had only been lamps, and a stalwart guest held up the lamp while the others looked. But gas had just been put in and an ingenious american painter named Sayen, to divert his mind from the birth of his first child, was arranging some mechanical contrivance that would light the high fixtures by themselves. The old landlady extremely conservative did not allow electricity in her houses and electricity was not put in until 1914, the old landlady by that time too old to know the difference, her house agent gave permission. But this time I am really going to tell about the pictures.

It is very difficult now that everybody is accustomed to everything to give some idea of the kind of uneasiness one felt when one first looked at all these

pictures on these walls. In those days there were pictures of all kinds there, the time had not yet come when there were only Cézannes, Renoirs, Matisses and Picassos, nor as it was even later only Cézannes and Picassos. At that time there was a great deal of Matisse, Picasso, Renoir, Cézanne but there were also a great many other things. There were two Gauguins, there were Manguins, there was a big nude by Vallotton that felt like only it was not like the Odalisque of Manet, there was a Toulouse–Lautrec. Once about this time Picasso looking at this and greatly daring said, but all the same I do paint better than he did. Toulouse–Lautrec had been the most important of his early influences. I later bought a little tiny picture by Picasso of that epoch. There was a portrait of Gertrude Stein by Vallotton that might have been a David but was not, there was a Maurice Denis, a little Daumier, many Cézanne water colours, there was in short everything, there was even a little Delacroix and a moderate sized Greco. There were enormous Picassos of the Harlequin period, there were two rows of Matisses, there was a big portrait of a woman by Cézanne and some little Cézannes, all these pictures had a history and I will soon tell them. Now I was confused and I looked and I looked and I was confused. Gertrude Stein and her brother were so accustomed to this state of mind in a guest that they paid no attention to it. Then there was a sharp tap at the atelier door. Gertrude Stein opened it and a little dark dapper man came in with hair, eyes, face, hands and feet all very much alive. Hullo Alf, she said, this is Miss Toklas. How do you do Miss Toklas, he said very solemnly. This was Alf Maurer an old habitué of the house. He had been there before there were these pictures, when there were only Japanese prints, and he was among those who used to light matches to light up a little piece of the Cézanne portrait. Of course you can tell it is a finished picture, he used to explain to the other American painters who came and looked dubiously, you can tell because it has a frame, now whoever heard of anybody framing a canvas if the picture isn't finished. He had followed, followed, followed always humbly always sincerely, it was he who selected the first lot of pictures for the famous Barnes collection some years later faithfully and enthusiastically. It was he who when later Barnes came to the house and waved his cheque-book said, so help me God, I didn't bring him. Gertrude Stein who has an explosive temper, came in another evening and there were her brother, Alf and a stranger. She did not like the stranger's looks. Who is that, said she to Alf. I didn't bring him, said Alf. He looks like a Jew, said Gertrude Stein, he is worse than that, says Alf. But to return to that first evening. A few minutes after Alf came in there was a violent knock at the door and, dinner is ready, from Hélène. It's funny the Picassos have not come, said they all, however we won't wait at least Hélène won't wait. So we went into the court and into the pavilion, and dining room and began dinner. It's funny, said Miss Stein, Pablo is always promptness itself, he is never early and he is never late, it is his pride that

punctuality is the politeness of kings, he even makes Fernande punctual. Of course he often says yes when he has no intention of doing what he says yes to, he can't say no, no is not in his vocabulary and you have to know whether his yes means yes or means no, but when he says a yes that means yes and he did about tonight he is always punctual. These were the days before automobiles and nobody worried about accidents. We had just finished the first course when there was a quick pattering of footsteps in the court and H el ene opened the door before the bell rang. Pablo and Fernande as everybody called them at that time walked in. He, small, quick moving but not restless, his eyes having a strange faculty of opening wide and drinking in what he wished to see. He had the isolation and movement of the head of a bull-fighter at the head of their procession. Fernande was a tall beautiful woman with a wonderful big hat and a very evidently new dress, they were both very fussed. I am very upset, said Pablo, but you know very well Gertrude I am never late but Fernande had ordered a dress for the vernissage tomorrow and it didn't come. Well here you are anyway, said Miss Stein, since it's you H el ene won't mind. And we all sat down. I was next to Picasso who was silent and then gradually became peaceful. Alfy paid compliments to Fernande and she was soon calm and placid. After a little while I murmured to Picasso that I liked his portrait of Gertrude Stein. Yes, he said, everybody says that she does not look like it but that does not make any difference, she will, he said. The conversation soon became lively it was all about the opening day of the salon ind ependant which was the great event of the year. Everybody was interested in all the scandals that would or would not break out. Picasso never exhibited but as his followers did and there were a great many stories connected with each follower the hopes and fears were vivacious.

While we were having coffee footsteps were heard in the court quite a number of footsteps and Miss Stein rose and said, don't hurry, I have to let them in. And she left.

When we went into the atelier there were already quite a number of people in the room, scattered groups, single and couples all looking and looking. Gertrude Stein sat by the stove talking and listening and getting up to open the door and go up to various people talking and listening. She usually opened the door to the knock and the usual formula was, de la part de qui venez-vous, who is your introducer. The idea was that anybody could come but for form's sake and in Paris you have to have a formula, everybody was supposed to be able to mention the name of somebody who had told them about it. It was a mere form, really everybody could come in and as at that time these pictures had no value and there was no social privilege attached to knowing any one there, only those came who really were interested. So as I say anybody could come in, however, there was the formula. Miss Stein once in opening the door said as she usually did by whose

invitation do you come and we heard an aggrieved voice reply, but by yours, madame. He was a young man Gertrude Stein had met somewhere and with whom she had had a long conversation and to whom she had given a cordial invitation and then had as promptly forgotten.

The room was soon very very full and who were they all. Groups of hungarian painters and writers, it happened that some hungarian had once been brought and the word had spread from him throughout all Hungary, any village where there was a young man who had ambitions heard of 27 rue de Fleurus and then he lived but to get there and a great many did get there. They were always there, all sizes and shapes, all degrees of wealth and poverty, some very charming, some simply rough and every now and then a very beautiful young peasant. Then there were quantities of germans, not too popular because they tended always to want to see anything that was put away and they tended to break things and Gertrude Stein has a weakness for breakable objects, she has a horror of people who collect only the unbreakable. Then there was a fair sprinkling of americans, Mildred Aldrich would bring a group or Sayen, the electrician, or some painter and occasionally an architectural student would accidentally get there and then there were the habitués, among them Miss Mars and Miss Squires whom Gertrude Stein afterwards immortalised in her story of Miss Furr and Miss Skeene. On that first night Miss Mars and I talked of a subject then entirely new, how to make up your face. She was interested in types, she knew that there were femme decorative, femme d'intérieur and femme intrigante; there was no doubt that Fernande Picasso was a femme decorative, but what was Madame Matisse, femme d'intérieur, I said, and she was very pleased. From time to time one heard the high spanish whinnying laugh of Picasso and gay contralto outbreak of Gertrude Stein, people came and went, in and out. Miss Stein told me to sit with Fernande. Fernande was always beautiful but heavy in hand. I sat, it was my first sitting with a wife of a genius.

Before I decided to write this book my twenty-five years with Gertrude Stein, I had often said that I would write, The wives of geniuses I have sat with. I have sat with so many. I have sat with wives who were not wives, of geniuses who were real geniuses. I have sat with real wives of geniuses who were not real geniuses. I have sat with wives of geniuses, of near geniuses, of would be geniuses, in short I have sat very often and very long with many wives and wives of many geniuses.

As I was saying Fernande, who was then living with Picasso and had been with him a long time that is to say they were all twenty-four years old at that time but they had been together a long time, Fernande was the first wife of a genius I sat with and she was not the least amusing. We talked hats. Fernande had two subjects hats and perfumes. This first day we talked hats. She liked hats, she had

the true french feeling about a hat, if a hat did not provoke some witticism from a man on the street the hat was not a success. Later on once in Montmartre she and I were walking together. She had on a large yellow hat and I had on a much smaller blue one. As we were walking along a workman stopped and called out, there go the sun and the moon shining together. Ah, said Fernande to me with a radiant smile, you see our hats are a success.

Miss Stein called me and said she wanted to have me meet Matisse. She was talking to a medium sized man with a reddish beard and glasses. He had a very alert although slightly heavy presence and Miss Stein and he seemed to be full of hidden meanings. As I came up I heard her say, Oh yes but it would be more difficult now. We were talking, she said, of a lunch party we had in here last year. We had just hung all the pictures and we asked all the painters. You know how painters are, I wanted to make them happy so I placed each one opposite his own picture, and they were happy so happy that we had to send out twice for more bread, when you know France you will know that that means that they were happy, because they cannot eat and drink without bread and we had to send out twice for bread so they were happy. Nobody noticed my little arrangement except Matisse and he did not until just as he left, and now he says it is a proof that I am very wicked, Matisse laughed and said, yes I know Mademoiselle Gertrude, the world is a theatre for you, but there are theatres and theatres, and when you listen so carefully to me and so attentively and do not hear a word I say then I do say that you are very wicked. Then they both began talking about the vernissage of the independent as every one else was doing and of course I did not know what it was all about. But gradually I knew and later on I will tell the story of the pictures, their painters and their followers and what this conversation meant.

Later I was near Picasso, he was standing meditatively. Do you think, he said, that I really do look like your president Lincoln. I had thought a good many things that evening but I had not thought that. You see, he went on, Gertrude, (I wish I could convey something of the simple affection and confidence with which he always pronounced her name and with which she always said, Pablo. In all their long friendship with all its sometimes troubled moments and its complications this has never changed.) Gertrude showed me a photograph of him and I have been trying to arrange my hair to look like his, I think my forehead does. I did not know whether he meant it or not but I was sympathetic. I did not realise then how completely and entirely american was Gertrude Stein. Later I often teased her, calling her a general, a civil war general of either or both sides. She had a series of photographs of the civil war, rather wonderful photographs and she and Picasso used to pore over them. Then he would suddenly remember the spanish war and he became very spanish and very bitter and Spain and America in their persons could say very bitter things about each other's country.

But at this my first evening I knew nothing of all this and so I was polite and that was all.

And now the evening was drawing to a close. Everybody was leaving and everybody was still talking about the vernissage of the independent. I too left carrying with me a card of invitation for the vernissage. And so this, one of the most important evenings of my life, came to an end.

I went to the vernissage taking with me a friend, the invitation I had been given admitting two. We went very early. I had been told to go early otherwise we would not be able to see anything, and there would be no place to sit, and my friend liked to sit. We went to the building just put up for this salon. In France they always put things up just for the day or for a few days and then take them down again. Gertrude Stein's elder brother always says that the secret of the chronic employment or lack of unemployment in France is due to the number of men actively engaged in putting up and taking down temporary buildings. Human nature is so permanent in France that they can afford to be as temporary as they like with their buildings. We went to the long low certainly very very long temporary building that was put up every year for the independents. When after the war or just before, I forget, the independent was given permanent quarters in the big exposition building, the Grand Palais, it became much less interesting. After all it is the adventure that counts. The long building was beautifully alight with Paris light.

In earlier, still earlier days, in the days of Seurat, the independent had its exhibition in a building where the rain rained in. Indeed it was because of this, that in hanging pictures in the rain, poor Seurat caught his fatal cold. Now there was no rain coming in, it was a lovely day and we felt very festive. When we got in we were indeed early as nearly as possible the first to be there. We went from one room to another and quite frankly we had no idea which of the pictures the Saturday evening crowd would have thought art and which were just the attempts of what in France are known as the Sunday painters, workmen, hair-dressers and veterinaries and visionaries who only paint once a week when they do not have to work. I say we did not know but yes perhaps we did know. But not about the Rousseau, and there was an enormous Rousseau there which was the scandal of the show, it was a picture of the officials of the republic, Picasso now owns it, no that picture we could not know as going to be one of the great pictures, and that as Hélène was to say, would come to be in the Louvre. There was also there if my memory is correct a strange picture by the same douanier Rousseau, a sort of apotheosis of Guillaume Apollinaire with an aged Marie Laurencin behind him as a muse. That also I would not have recognised as a serious work of art. At that time of course I knew nothing about Marie Laurencin and Guillaume Apollinaire but, there is a lot to tell about them, later. Then we went on and saw a Matisse. Ah

there we, were beginning to feel at home. We knew a Matisse when we saw it, knew at once and enjoyed it and knew that it was great art and beautiful. It was a big figure of a woman lying in among some cactuses. A picture which was after the show to be at the rue de Fleurus. There one day the five year old little boy of the janitor who often used to visit Gertrude Stein who was fond of him, jumped into her arms as she was standing at the open door of the atelier and looking over her shoulder and seeing the picture cried out in rapture, oh la la what a beautiful body of a woman. Miss Stein used always to tell this story when the casual stranger in the aggressive way of the casual stranger said, looking at this picture, and what is that supposed to represent.

In the same room as the Matisse, a little covered by a partition, was a hungarian version of the same picture by one Czobel whom I remembered to have seen at the rue de Fleurus, it was the happy independent way to put a violent follower opposite the violent but not quite as violent master.

We went on and on, there were a great many rooms and a great many pictures in the rooms and finally we came to a middle room and there was a garden bench and as there were people coming in quite a few people we sat down on the bench to rest.

We had been resting and looking at every body and it was indeed the vie de Bohème just as one had seen it in the opera and they were very wonderful to look at. Just then somebody behind us put a hand on our shoulders and burst out laughing. It was Gertrude Stein. You have seated yourselves admirably, she said. But why, we asked. Because right here in front of you is the whole story. We looked but we saw nothing except two big pictures that looked quite alike but not altogether alike. One is a Braque and one is a Derain, explained Gertrude Stein. They were strange pictures of strangely formed rather wooden blocked figures, one if I remember rightly a sort of man and women, the other three women. Well, she said still laughing. We were puzzled, we had seen so much strangeness we did not know why these two were any stranger. She was quickly lost in an excited and voluble crowd. We recognised Pablo Picasso and Fernande, we thought we recognised many more, to be sure everybody seemed to be interested in our corner and we stayed, but we did not know why they were so especially interested. After a considerable interval Gertrude Stein came back again, this time evidently even more excited and amused. She leaned over us and said solemnly, do you want to take french lessons. We hesitated, why yes we could take french lessons. Well Fernande will give you french lessons, go and find her and tell her how absolutely you are pining to take french lessons. But why should she give us french lessons, we asked. Because, well because she and Pablo have decided to separate forever. I suppose it has happened before but not since I have known them. You know Pablo says if you love a woman you give her money. Well now it is when you want to

leave a woman you have to wait until you have enough money to give her. Vollard has just bought out his atelier and so he can afford to separate from her by giving her half. She wants to install herself in a room by herself and give french lessons, so that is how you come in. Well what has that to do with these two pictures, asked my ever curious friend. Nothing, said Gertrude Stein going off with a great shout of laughter. I will tell the whole story as I afterward learnt it but now I must find Fernande and propose to her to take french lessons from her.

I wandered about and looked at the crowd, never had I imagined there could be so many kinds of men making and looking at pictures. In America, even in San Francisco, I had been accustomed to see women at picture shows and some men, but here there were men, men, men, sometimes women with them but more often three or four men with one woman, sometimes five or six men with two women. Later on I became accustomed to this proportion. In one of these groups of five or six men and two women I saw the Picassos, that is I saw Fernande with her characteristic gesture, one ringed forefinger straight in the air. As I afterwards found out she had the Napoleonic forefinger quite as long if not a shade longer than the middle finger, and this, whenever she was animated, which after all was not very often because Fernande was indolent, always went straight up into the air. I waited not wishing to break into this group of which she at one end and Picasso at the other end were the absorbed centres but finally I summoned up courage to go forward and draw her attention and tell her of my desire. Oh yes, she said sweetly, Gertrude has told me of your desire, it would give me great pleasure to give you lessons, you and your friend, I will be the next few days very busy installing myself in my new apartment. Gertrude is coming to see me the end of the week, if you and your friend would accompany her we could then make all arrangements. Fernande spoke a very elegant french, some lapses of course into montmartrois that I found difficult to follow, but she had been educated to be a schoolmistress, her voice was lovely and she was very very beautiful with a marvellous complexion. She was a big woman but not too big because she was indolent and she had the small round arms that give the characteristic beauty to all french women. It was rather a pity that short skirts ever came in because until then one never imagined the sturdy french legs of the average french woman, one thought only of the beauty of the small rounded arms. I agreed to Fernande's proposal and left her.

On my way back to where my friend was sitting I became more accustomed not so much to the pictures as to the people. I began to realise there was a certain uniformity of type. Many years after, that is just a few years ago, when Juan Gris whom we all loved very much died, (he was after Pablo Picasso Gertrude Stein's dearest friend) I heard her say to Braque, she and he were standing together at the funeral, who are all these people, there are so many and they are so familiar and I

do not know who any of them are. Oh, Braque replied, they are all the people you used to see at the vernissage of the independent and the autumn salon and you saw their faces twice a year, year after year, and that is the reason they are all so familiar.

Gertrude Stein and I about ten days later went to Montmartre, I for the first time. I have never ceased to love it. We go there every now and then and I always have the same tender expectant feeling that I had then. It is a place where you were always standing and sometimes waiting, not for anything to happen, but just standing. The inhabitants of Montmartre did not sit much, they mostly stood which was just as well as the chairs, the dining room chairs of France, did not tempt one to sit. So I went to Montmartre and I began my apprenticeship of standing. We first went to see Picasso and I then we went to see Fernande. Picasso now never likes to go to Montmartre, he does not like to think about it much less talk about it. Even to Gertrude Stein he is hesitant about talking of it, there were things that at that time cut deeply into his spanish pride and the end of his Montmartre life was bitterness and disillusion, and there is nothing more bitter than spanish disillusion.

But at this time he was in and of Montmartre and lived in the rue Ravignan.

We went to the Odeon and there got into an omnibus, that is we mounted on top of an omnibus, the nice old horse-pulled omnibuses that went pretty quickly and steadily across Paris and up the hill to the place Blanche. There we got out and climbed a steep street lined with shops with things to eat, the rue Lepic, and then turning we went around a corner and climbed even more steeply in fact almost straight up and came to the rue Ravignan, now place Emile-Goudeau but otherwise unchanged, with its steps leading up to the little flat square with its few but tender little trees, a man carpentering in the corner of it, the last time I was there not very long ago there was still a man carpentering in a corner of it, and a little café just before you went up the steps where they all used to eat, it is still there, and to the left the low wooden building of studios that is still there.

We went up the couple of steps and through the open door passing on our left the studio in which later Juan Gris was to live out his martyrdom but where then lived a certain Vaillant, a nondescript painter who was to lend his studio as a ladies dressing room at the famous banquet for Rousseau, and then we passed a steep flight of steps leading down where Max Jacob had a studio a little later, and we passed another steep little stairway which led to the studio where not long before a young fellow had committed suicide, Picasso painted one of the most wonderful of his early pictures of the friends gathered round the coffin, we passed all this to a larger door where Gertrude Stein knocked and Picasso opened the door and we went in.

He was dressed in what the french call the singe or monkey costume,

overalls made of blue jean or brown, I think his was blue and it is called a singe or monkey because being all of one piece with a belt, if the belt is not fastened, and it very often is not, it hangs down behind and so makes a monkey. His eyes were more wonderful than even I remembered, so full and so brown, and his hands so dark and delicate and alert. We went further in. There was a couch in one corner, a very small stove that did for cooking and heating in the other corner, some chairs, the large broken one Gertrude Stein sat in when she was painted and a general smell of dog and paint and there was a big dog there and Picasso moved her about from one place to another exactly as if the dog had been a large piece of furniture. He asked us to sit down but as all the chairs were full we all stood up and stood until we left. It was my first experience of standing but afterwards I found that they all stood that way for hours. Against the wall was an enormous picture, a strange picture of light and dark colours, that is all I can say, of a group, an enormous group and next to it another in a sort of a red brown, of three women, square and posturing, all of it rather frightening. Picasso and Gertrude Stein stood together talking. I stood back and looked. I cannot say I realised anything but I felt that there was something painful and beautiful there and oppressive but imprisoned. I heard Gertrude Stein say, and mine. Picasso thereupon brought out a smaller picture, a rather unfinished thing that could not finish, very pale almost white, two figures, they were all there but very unfinished and not finishable. Picasso said, but he will never accept it. Yes, I know, answered Gertrude Stein. But just the same it is the only one in which it is all there. Yes, I know, he replied and they fell silent. After that they continued a low toned conversation and then Miss Stein said, well we have to go, we are going to have tea with Fernande. Yes, I know, replied Picasso. How often do you see her, she said, he got very red and looked sheepish. I have never been there, he said resentfully. She chuckled, well anyway we are going there, she said, and Miss Toklas is going to have lessons in french. Ah the Miss Toklas, he said, with small feet like a spanish woman and earrings like a gypsy and a father who is king of Poland like the Poniatskies, of course she will take lessons. We all laughed and went to the door. There stood a very beautiful man, oh Agero, said Picasso, you know the ladies. He looks like a Greco, I said in english. Picasso caught the name, a false Greco, he said. Oh I forgot to give you these, said Gertrude Stein handing Picasso a package of newspapers, they will console you. He opened them up, they were the Sunday supplement of american papers, they were the Katzenjammer kids. Oh oui, Oh oui, he said, his face full of satisfaction, merci thanks Gertrude, and we left.

We left then and continued to climb higher up the hill. What did you think of what you saw, asked Miss Stein. Well I did see something. Sure you did, she said, but did you see what it had to do with those two pictures you sat in front of so long at the vernissage. Only that Picassos were rather awful and the others were

not. Sure, she said, as Pablo once remarked, when you make a thing, it is so complicated making it that it is bound to be ugly, but those that do it after you they don't have to worry about making it and they can make it pretty, and so everybody can like it when the others make it.

We went on and turned down a little street and there was another little house and we asked for Mademoiselle Bellevallee and we were sent into a little corridor and we knocked and went into a moderate sized room in which was a very large bed and a piano and a little tea table and Fernande and two others.

One of them was Alice Princet. She was rather a madonna like creature, with large lovely eyes and charming hair. Fernande afterwards explained that she was the daughter of a workingman and had the brutal thumbs that of course were a characteristic of workingmen. She had been, so Fernande explained, for seven years with Princet who was in the government employ and she had been faithful to him in the fashion of Montmartre, that is to say she had stuck to him through sickness and health but she had amused herself by the way. Now they were to be married. Princet had become the head of his small department in the government service and it would be necessary for him to invite other heads of departments to his house and so of course he must regularise the relation. They were actually married a few months afterward and it was apropos of this marriage that Max Jacob made his famous remark, it is wonderful to long for a woman for seven years and to possess her at last. Picasso made the more practical one, why should they marry simply in order to divorce. This was a prophecy.

No sooner were they married than Alice Princet met Derain and Derain met her. It was what the french call un coup de foudre, or love at first sight. They went quite mad about each other. Princet tried to bear it but they were married now and it was different. Beside he was angry for the first time in his life and in his anger he tore up Alice's first fur coat which she had gotten for the wedding. That settled the matter, and within six months after the marriage Alice left Princet never to return. She and Derain went off together and they have never separated since. I always liked Alice Derain. She had a certain wild quality that perhaps had to do with her brutal thumbs and was curiously in accord with her madonna face.

The other woman was Germaine Pichot, entirely a different type. She was quiet and serious and spanish, she had the square shoulders and the unseeing fixed eyes of a spanish woman. She was very gentle. She was married to a spanish painter Pichot, who was rather a wonderful creature, he was long and thin like one of those primitive Christs in spanish churches and when he did a spanish dance which he did later at the famous banquet to Rousseau, he was awe inspiringly religious.

Germaine, so Fernande said, was the heroine of many a strange story, she had once taken a young man to the hospital, he had been injured in a fracas at a

music hall and all his crowd had deserted him. Germaine quite naturally stood by and saw him through. She had many sisters, she and all of them had been born and bred in Montmartre and they were all of different fathers and married to different nationalities, even to turks and armenians. Germaine, much later was very ill for years and she always had around her a devoted coterie. They used to carry her in her armchair to the nearest cinema and they, and she in the armchair, saw the performance through. They did this regularly once a week. I imagine they are still doing it.

The conversation around the tea table of Fernande was not lively, nobody had anything to say. It was a pleasure to meet, it was even an honour, but that was about all. Fernande complained a little that her charwoman had not adequately dusted and rinsed the tea things, and also that buying a bed and a piano on the instalment plan had elements of unpleasantness. Otherwise we really none of us had much to say.

Finally she and I arranged about the french lessons, I was to pay fifty cents an hour and she was to come to see me two days hence and we were to begin. Just at the end of the visit they were more natural. Fernande asked Miss Stein if she had any of the comic supplements of the american papers left. Gertrude Stein replied that she had just left them with Pablo.

Fernande roused like a lioness defending her cubs. That is a brutality that I will never forgive him, she said. I met him on the street, he had a comic supplement in his hand, I asked him to give it to me to help me to distract myself and he brutally refused. It was a piece of cruelty that I will never forgive. I ask you, Gertrude, to give to me myself the next copies you have of the comic supplement. Gertrude Stein said, why certainly with pleasure.

As we went out she said to me, it is to be hoped that they will be together again before the next comic supplements of the Katzenjammer kids come out because if I do not give them to Pablo he will be all upset and if I do Fernande will make an awful fuss. Well I suppose I will have to lose them or have my brother give them to Pablo by mistake.

Fernande came quite promptly to the appointment and we proceeded to our lesson. Of course to have a lesson in french one has to converse and Fernande had three subjects, hats, we had not much more to say about hats, perfumes, we had something to say about perfumes. Perfumes were Fernande's really great extravagance, she was the scandal of Montmartre because she had once bought a bottle of perfume named Smoke and had paid eighty francs for it at that time sixteen dollars and it had no scent but such wonderful colour, like real bottled liquid smoke. Her third subject was the categories of furs. There were three categories of furs, there were first category, sables, second category ermine and chinchilla, third category martin fox and squirrel. It was the most surprising thing

I had heard in Paris. I was surprised. Chinchilla second, squirrel called fur and no seal skin.

Our only other conversation was the description and names of the dogs that were then fashionable. This was my subject and after I had described she always hesitated, ah yes, she would say illuminated, you wish to describe a little belgian dog whose name is griffon.

There we were, she was very beautiful but it was a little heavy and monotonous, so I suggested we should meet out of doors, at a tea place or take walks in Montmartre. That was better. She began to tell me things. I met Max Jacob. Fernande and he were very funny together. They felt themselves to be a courtly couple of the first empire, he being le vieux marquis kissing her hand and paying compliments and she the Empress Josephine receiving them. It was a caricature but a rather wonderful one. Then she told me about a mysterious horrible woman called Marie Laurencin who made noises like an animal and annoyed Picasso. I thought of her as a horrible old woman and was delighted when I met the young chic Marie who looked like a Clouet. Max Jacob read my horoscope. It was a great honour because he wrote it down. I did not realise it then but I have since and most of all very lately, as all the young gentlemen who nowadays so much admire Max are so astonished and impressed that he wrote mine down as he has always been supposed never to write them but just to say them off hand. Well anyway I have mine and it is written.

Then she also told me a great many stories about Van Dongen and his dutch wife and dutch little girl. Van Dongen broke into notoriety by a portrait he did of Fernande. It was in that way that he created the type of almond eyes that were later so much the vogue. But Fernande's almond eyes were natural, for good or for bad everything was natural in Fernande.

Of course Van Dongen did not admit that this picture was a portrait of Fernande, although she had sat for it and there was in consequence much bitterness. Van Dongen in these days was poor, he had a dutch wife who was a vegetarian and they lived on spinach. Van Dongen frequently escaped from the spinach to a joint in Montmartre where the girls paid for his dinner and his drinks.

The Van Dongen child was only four years old but terrific. Van Dongen used to do acrobatics with her and swing her around his head by a leg. When she hugged Picasso of whom she was very fond she used almost to destroy him, he had a great fear of her.

There were many other tales of Germaine Pichot and the circus where she found her lovers and there were tales of all the past and present life of Montmartre. Fernande herself had one ideal. It was Evelyn Thaw the heroine of the ma ment. And Fernande adored her in the way a later generation adored Mary

Pickford, she was so blonde, so pale, so nothing and Fernande would give a heavy sigh of admiration.

The next time I saw Gertrude Stein she said to me suddenly, is Fernande wearing her earrings. I do not know, I said. Well notice, she said. The next time I saw Gertrude Stein I said, yes Fernande is wearing her earrings. Oh well, she said, there is nothing to be done yet, it's a nuisance because Pablo naturally having nobody in the studio cannot stay at home. In another week I was able to announce that Fernande was not wearing her earrings. Oh well it's alright then she has no more money left and it is all over, said Gertrude Stein. And it was. A week later I was dining with Fernande and Pablo at the rue de Fleurus.

I gave Fernande a chinese gown from San Francisco and Pablo gave me a lovely drawing.

And now I will tell you how two americans happened to be in the heart of an art movement of which the outside world at that time knew nothing.

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Last updated Sunday, March 27, 2016 at 11:59