

Stein Book Sold to Cultist at Profit

Though Gertrude Stein—"A rose is a rose is a rose is a rose"—probably confused a higher percentage of her readers than any other author, there is no question that she had a tremendous effect on writing and thinking in the first half of the 20th century. How good the effect may have been is quite another matter. The subject is an easy one on which to get an argument. Nonetheless, there can be no dispute that the extent of the effect is considerable, and one evidence of it is the premium that first editions of her works command.

I was reminded of this recently when I had the good luck to find a copy of her "Three Lives" at only a dollar. Because it was a first edition, published at New York, 1909, I bought it without hesitancy and took it home with much the same frame of mind in which one takes home a victim.

VICTIM OF INFLATION—AMERICAN HALF PENNY

The California gold rush of 1849 brought a major upset in the world economy, and one of the minor evidences of it is that within eight years it caused the government to suspend one of its most popular coins—the half-cent piece.

Why it did so is that the gold rush had the paradoxical effect of being highly inflationary. It sent prices up with the result that there was no longer any need for the half-cent piece, and so, by 1857, the government ceased minting them.

However, some of these half-cent pieces are among the more worthwhile collector's items. One in particular that I saw recently is a piece that anyone would be happy to find.

It was one of those issued in 1796, the kind showing a pole supporting a Liberty cap. It is not so rare as those that do not show the pole reaching into the cap, but it is rare enough.

The design on the face of the coin is simplicity itself. It

LACK OF MARKS ON PISTOLS RECALLS ERA

Why would a pistol that was obviously made by a superior gunsmith have no marks on it to identify the maker? And, more particularly, why would that be true of a flintlock?

Some pistols made by American arms plants during the Revolution and again during World War II, have no marks to indicate their origin. In the first case it was to protect the workers against reprisals from the British in case the later won. In the second, the purpose was to provide no clue to the Axis Powers as to the origin of the arms which were supplied to resistance fighters.

But a flintlock pistol, such as one I saw recently, was such a beautifully finished piece that the odds were heavily against its having been produced in a plant geared for war production. It had two .56 calibre, smoothbore, nine-inch barrels of browned, twisted steel. They were side by side and fired by separate gooseneck hammers and double hair triggers.

The stock was of ebony, and the grip was of the checked, saw-handle type with a small ivory crest inlaid on either side. The engraving on

It was disappointing in that respect. The book, her first, is a collection of short stories, and so, as one critic long since put it, "it is evidence that she was capable of an intelligible style."

When I told a Stein-enthusiast acquaintance about the book, not forgetting to mention the criticism and how precise it was both in accuracy and understanding, his reaction was typical.

Gertrude Stein could be appreciated, he said, only by the real intelligentsia and literati, not by the pseudo variety. They didn't deserve to have her books, and under the circumstances he would be happy to buy my copy at what the prevailing price would be, as determined by the better book stores and auction records.

I was glad to be insulted in that way. Three telephone calls later I was exactly \$14 richer.

The design, by the way, was discontinued the following year for the reason that it was felt to be too subversive. It had its origin in the French Revolution, and because by then the French Revolutionary government was doing its utmost to upset all other governments and remodel society in general, the pole and cap symbol engendered almost as much opposition as we would have today if one of the political parties urged the hammer and sickle symbol for our coin.

Value of the 1796 half-cent piece with the pole showing behind the shoulder, is up to \$359, depending on condition. The one in which the pole does not show as it enters the cap is around \$50 more.

the steel was restrained, but it was on each part, even the hammer tips and trigger guard.

Though there was no mark of any kind to indicate its origin, a comparison of the piece with pictures of late 18th and early 19th century dueling pistols quickly showed its probable maker. It was so similar to handguns produced by either of the Mantons of London, or the famous D. Egg, that it was almost certainly made by one of them or by one of their ablest workers.

As to the absence of identifying marks, the most likely explanation is that it was made during one of the periods when duelling was banned under pain of death. That happened periodically, the ban sometimes being so intense that smart arms makers avoided trouble by keeping their names off pistols that were bought in cases pairs—for duelling.

The double barrel pistol by itself was worth from \$200 to \$300. The original pair in its case would have been worth from \$800 to \$1,000.

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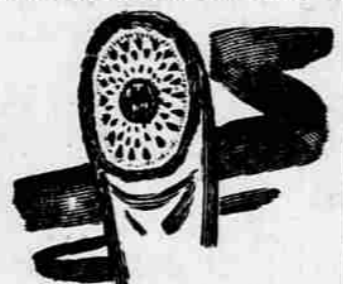
WINNING BY 20-14 VOTE, Senator Everett M. Dirksen (Ill.), is congratulated by Senator John Cooper (Ky.), his opponent in race for Republican floor leader.

Is That So?

By OLGA BURNS

King Henry I of England died from a surfeit of lampreys, and the trout with other valuable fish of the Great Lakes are dying from a surfeit of lampreys, too.

But while the lampreys the king ate gave him acute indigestion, the trout the Great Lakes lampreys eat merely make them hungrier still. In



fact, since the early 1930's, these sea eels have pretty well killed off all the lake trout, except in Lake Superior, and have made such inroads on the rainbows as to result in shortened fishing seasons in the Great Lakes tributaries.

But since the trout is a wily fish and a fast and powerful swimmer, how is that the lamprey, said to be the most primitive of back-boned creatures, can catch him? Apparently it is more by speed than by guile.

The lamprey is able to dart forward with such power that he can make his way up rapids and over dams by throwing himself forward bit by bit to a new point where he can cling to the rock by his powerful sucker mouth. In open water he has been clocked at speeds up to 15 miles per hour, and he has been found clinging to the sides of ships, whales and other animals.

How he kills fish is by fastening himself to his prey, preferably near the gills. His round mouth with its rasplike tongue and over 100 sharp teeth, quickly scrapes away the skin, and it is then a simple task for him to suck out the blood and bits of flesh. The strength of the lamprey is such—some of them reach a length of three feet—that it seems it would be impossible for a fish to rid himself of one, and yet they occasionally do. Both steelhead and shad in the rivers of northern California have been captured with scars on them that unmistakably showed they had won out.

Like various other fish, the

sea lampreys enter fresh water to spawn. Most species die after laying their eggs. Along California streams their bodies have been found by the hundreds in May and June. The eggs, as many as 200,000 are laid in scooped-out shallow nests, and when they hatch, the larvae—known as ammocetes—burrow into the mud or sand where they stay for three or more years until the summer or fall in which they undergo a swift change in the adult form. Once the transformation is complete, they go down to the sea or lake.

(Released by McClure Newspaper Syndicate)

Sorry, I simply cannot answer your many friendly letters individually, but I will be glad to answer letters of general interest through the column. Please address your letters to: Is That So? c/o Mail Tribune, box 1069, San Francisco, Calif.

Children Release Car's Hand Brake

Ashland—Three small children escaped serious injury Thursday when they released a station wagon's hand brake and the vehicle rolled across one street, travelled 100 feet and struck two parked cars, according to Ashland police.

The vehicle, operated by Mrs. Edna Mary Toney, 223 Fifth st., Ashland, had been parked on Second st. across from the post office.

Parked cars struck were registered to Fred E. Jones, 607 Fairview st., and Roland L. Parks, Bandon. Both vehicles were damaged slightly, police said, and Mrs. Toney's vehicle received considerable damage to the front end. Mrs. Toney was cited for failure to park securely.

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