

Common Sense on Canning

By THE EDITOR

SEVERAL hundred thousand new canning factories have been started in Canada during the past two or three weeks. There never was, so far as we know, such an industrial movement put under way with so little fuss that could be translated into newspaper stories. Women did it. 1917 will go on record as the year of the canning factory outburst in almost everybody's kitchen. And it will need a wise economist to determine how much of the canning business undertaken with what capital father could spare for the purpose, the labour of mother and the girls and the use of the kitchen as premises, will be a real saving in the cost of consumption.

Anybody with the simplest turn for figures can reckon the actual cost of canning such things as beans, corn, beets, tomatoes, peas, etc. All you have to do is to determine:

- (1) Cost of Raw Material.
- (2) Cost of Containers.
- (3) Cost of Fuel.
- (4) Value of Labour.

Take beans, for instance. You buy seven quarts of raw beans for forty cents. By the time you get them into jars they become six quarts. If you raise your own beans the cost is not so obvious. You must reckon on the average retail price of beans.

Each quart sealer costs by the dozen, 6½ cents. Leaving out the cost of fuel, which can only be determined by comparing your gas bills—if you burn gas—with what they were during the same period last year, the only remaining item is labour. Plainly for raw material and containers a quart of beans will cost you about 14 cents. If one can in twelve bursts in the boiler you must increase the cost by that much. If after final sealing-up one can in ten goes bad in the cellar, you must increase it again.

Of course we don't forget that the sealers can be used again next year and, therefore, the cost of these cannot be charged altogether to the year's operations, but rather to capital account. Still we imagine that one of these days there will be a lot of idle and broken sealers in a lot of fruit cellars, ranking as old bottles; and we know that the sealers of 1917 are not so good, even at a higher price, as those of 1915.

Now suppose a woman cans 20 quarts of beans, allowing for as many of beets, half as many of corn, and as many of tomatoes, what will be the total cash saving as compared with the cost of buying these things from the grocer?

That is for each individual to figure out. But from what one can observe of the actual conditions imposed on every household by the canning-vegetables process, it seems like poor economy to set up several hundred thousand small factories, most of them badly equipped for the business. It is well known that the smaller the plant the greater the cost of production. An average kitchen is about the smallest canning factory you can get. Therefore in an average kitchen the cost of canning should be about the highest possible.

If in a high-cost small factory behind the dining room, the actual cost of canning vegetables is, say, forty per cent less than the cost of the same vegetables canned in big factories and sold by the grocer, What must be the actual profits of canning companies?

We do not know. But what we do know is, that the experience of a good many amateur canners in 1917 will make them less keen to can vegetables in 1918—unless the Food Controller's machinery absolutely fails to regulate the price of the factory-made product on a legitimate cost-and-profit basis.

We know that our home-canned vegetables will cost us less than to buy them factory-made. We know that the amount of vegetables actually canned in 1917 will be increased by just so much as is grown in people's gardens. We know that the amount of labour employed in these domestic can-

neries will be a huge addition to the army of professional canners employed in big factories. The increase in the actual amount of vegetables put away, however, will not by any means correspond to the increase in the labour. If all the women who work at kitchen-canning could be paid factory wages for their time and that amount added to the total cost of the home-canned product, would the actual cost to the consumer be much or any less than it would be to buy direct from the grocer? Will the vast amount of home-canned vegetables tend to bring down the price of the factory product? If it was, then the efforts of thousands of women who can can will have been spent for the benefit of thousands more who can't can, because they haven't the money or the time or the equipment to do it. That will be something.

Still it's a safe guess that most of our wives don't can for the benefit of other people.

The big common-sense point we want to get at in this canning problem is, that under proper regulation the big factory is the place where vegetables are canned at the lowest actual cost of production, and therefore of lowest possible cost to the consumer—if the profits of those who can and handle the product are kept down. By the kitchen method we secure a vast amount of labour for canning that might be spent less profitably in some other way, or wasted altogether; much of the labour is uneconomically spent; the household is disrupted by canning-factory conditions; women are tired out doing things which they only half understand, because they are cramming up the directions from government bulletins; and we eliminate the middlemen's profits.

The home-canning craze of 1917 will do a lot of good. But wait till the food-saving era is over. How many of our women will then can their own vegetables? Not many. Most of them may have a vastly better knowledge of what it really costs to can; and this knowledge in thousands of homes may help to club down the canning-colossus' price for the factory-made product. All well and good. But let us not expect miracles from home-canned vegetables or we shall be disappointed.

We advise women to go ahead with the canning programme at full speed. Make 1917 the year of Home-Canning. And by the knowledge gained let us see that in future the canning companies do not rob us.

Vacations and Vexations

By NINA MOORE JAMIESON

NOW that school-days are almost here again, you who live in town can listen to a word or two concerning vacations by one who lives on the farm. And there is a vast difference—not all of it in our favour.

You city people have always the fascinating street. You can turn little Tommy out to play, serenely conscious that the Chinaman's little boy or the Dago's little girl will find something to amuse him. At times an automobile runs him down and nips him in the bud, or he wanders into a far country and fetches up in the Police Station or wherever it is they take lost children. When these things fail you can cheerfully send him out to your cousin's in the country. Yes, to be sure; it is so healthy there and he has such a splendid time you might even go yourself, for a while, and take the baby.

It is pleasant and excitable for Cousin Jane and Cousin John, too. The joy of raising one's own children is insignificant compared with the ecstasies of raising some other person's young hopefuls. . . . They usually open negotiations on these visits by a request for something to eat, then lose no time in sizing up the premises for possible diversions. Sometimes the cat catches it, sometimes the dog; sometimes we rescue an adventurous small boy from the far recesses of the pig pen, or from the clutches of an infuriated gander. After he has juggled the machinery of the binder, scared off the setting hens from their nests, fallen through the trap-door where

the hay goes down into the box stall, and thus scared the mare and foal nearly out of the window, discovered the only sample of poison ivy about the place, tried to milk—and come off a bad second, worked the handle of every machine in reach, then Cousin John announces with an air of finality that he is going to take him home to his mother. But if they can endure the exasperation for a time, the human, lovable boy will appear when the curiosity has somewhat exhausted itself. Curiosity, rather than inertness, a hundred times! The enquiring mind may be a nuisance to those who have to live with it, but it will arrive, sooner or later—there is some satisfaction in that sort of boy!

THE country lad does not bother with these things. They are old to him. He wants to go fishing. But it is a treacherous creek, and he certainly requires a chaperon of some sort when courting the shy trout. Then he wants to visit the neighbour's children, and have them to visit him. But that cannot last for two months! There is plenty of occupation for him, but it must be acknowledged that he does not yearn for the tasks we find him. A limited amount of wood and water carrying, the mustering of the cows, morning and evening; feeding the hens, gathering the eggs—these things are all right; but when you lead him to the potato patch and speak thrillingly of the joy of separating potato bugs from the harmless necessary potato—Oh, then, what a bad toothache Teddy has! How sick he suddenly feels! If he does undertake to play bailiff and evict the unconscionable tenants, he goes about it with a deliberation like unto that of a county councillor who is paid by the day. When he gets half a dozen or so of the crusty little pests in his can, he rattles them about and perhaps spills them upon the ground, or he sits and watches their antics, their fruitless journeyings to and fro in the bottom of the can.

You may say, all youngsters are not like that—and no doubt you are right—you were not like that, eh? But I am speaking of the average young idea between six and ten years old. There are few of them who work "for the joy of the working," unless it happens to be "each in his separate star." Turn the boy loose with a pound of nails, a hammer, and an old lumber pile, and he will erect a chicken house that will at least be as good for chickens as for anything else. But don't ask him to hoe turnips—I wonder why? Perhaps because in the chicken house business he has a vision of the result of his labours—he works toward an ideal. Thinning turnips is simply one hand-blistering, back-aching, detached stroke after another. One is pastime—the other drudgery.

It is a curious thing, and one that has been pondered on through centuries, that a boy delights to do the things that he is neither expected nor desired to do. If you say to him: "Now, I want you to stay in the house to-day, you have a bad cold," he instantly realizes the attractiveness of all outdoors. If, on the other hand, you say to him: "I'm going to paint the kitchen floor, and I want you to stay out," you will find him giving a first-class imitation of sticking closer than a brother. When you say to him: "Now be a good boy," he perceives the repellant smugness of mere vapid goodness. I would resent it myself if somebody earnestly entreated me to behave properly! Anybody would.

This does not mean that you have to sit up o' nights inventing ways to amuse the boy, but it is always well in every walk of life to have a few cards up your sleeve. Don't make a swing for him—let him make one for himself, and a swing-board, too. And give him the freedom of the bread-and-butter combination, for a boy has more accommodation for that sort of thing than you would suppose from his modest dimensions.

What to do with the boy in summer holidays! How many, many mothers yearn for September, longing for the time when the youngsters will have their days occupied again! I would like to remind you, however, that no matter how important knitting, gossiping, housework or anything else may be, there is the most important item of all running around in an old shirt and overalls, perhaps wondering what mothers were made for. A "keep-off-the-grass" sign would symbolize as much sympathy and affection to many a seven-year-old mind. "Now run away, and don't bother me!" and little Jim runs away—and never comes quite as close again.