

CONVERSATION LOZENGES

EASY-TO-READ extracts from what some people are writing and thinking about the world over.

Will It Be So Here ?

IN a few light sentences, composed as airily as any of the etchings done by her husband, Elizabeth Robins Pennell has, in the North American Review, limned the difference between the American people of to-day and the American of 33 years ago. Mrs. Pennell finds herself a stranger in her native land. "... the people ... have grown as foreign as the land," she says. "I left them so American that they could assimilate the foreigner who then came to our country to benefit himself and not the capitalist. I find them so foreign that my fear is they will assimilate the American, who, after all, is too fine a type to be sacrificed. To speak of my own immediate experience: In the house where I am staying, I have an Irish chambermaid, a Greek waiter, a Dalmatian handy-man. At the near station my boots are blacked by an Italian, at the near tailor's my gowns are pressed by a Pole. When I go into the shopping streets, every other sign bears a foreign name; when I glance over the list of births and deaths and marriages it seems as if the Boche must be already in possession. Yesterday, music called me to the window and a procession of hundreds passed, each bearing that Russian flag which I, for one, never care to see again—Slavs, I have learned from the morning's paper, making a patriotic demonstration. Why should they make it as Slavs and not as Americans? And it is not Philadelphia alone that has been invaded and conquered. All America during my absence has been turned, not into the melting-pot some call it, but the dumping-ground, the refuse heap of Europe. The longer I am in my native land, the nearer I seem to get to the inevitable day when we real Americans, like the Indians, shall have our reservations and when our successors will come to pay their quarters to stare at us as curiosities."

Why Can Vegetables ?

THERE isn't much vanity about the appearance of a tomato can but, according to David Fairchild in the National Geographic Magazine, for every dollar spent on this staple grocery ninety cents goes to maintain a food fashion and ten cents for the edible portion. Says Mr. Fairchild:

There are 2 pounds 1 ounce of tomatoes in a can, or a trifle over 1.8 cents' worth, and in a case of 24 cans, which sells for \$4, approximately 43 cents' worth of tomatoes as picked in the field.

One ton of good tomatoes, after peeling, trimming, and packing in cans, will weigh approximately 2,300 pounds when crated for shipment, whereas the same quantity, when dried and boxed, is reduced to only 200 pounds, or about one-twelfth as much. In bulk the saving depends upon whether the slices are compressed or not.

Mr. Fairchild quotes similar figures covering peas, potatoes, cabbages, carrots and all other vegetables. Fully, fifty per cent. of the food bill, according to his reasoning—and convincing statistics, is money wasted on so much water. "It would be fortunate," he says, "if the time were soon when the drying of vegetables by means of drying plants of suitable size, with adequate safeguarding appliances, should be a local industry wherever vegetables are grown. The result would be a stabilizing of prices of those perishables which are so often grown at a loss because of over production or a faulty system of distribution."

UMBER no can get—allege light, call you later."

If you call a number in San Francisco, and a soft-voiced answer like that comes drifting over the wire, says a writer in The Railroad Man's Magazine, don't jump at the conclusion that the operator has fallen for your manly tones and is handing you a line of baby-talk.

Not a bit of it! You've just got on the line of the Chinese Exchange of the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company. This Chinese exchange, of course, is for the service of San Francisco's world-famed Chinatown.

A FRENCH family of 1914 reading about the Battle of the Marne. The painter, Ridgway Knight, does not tell us in what village he got the picture for which a bid of \$25,000 was cabled to New York, where it was sold by auction. Perhaps that village is now off the map, and the family homeless. But wherever they are, they are still reading about the Battle of the Marne in 1918.

ROBERT W. CHAMBERS, author of The Restless Sex, interviewed by a writer in The Forum, says:

There really ought not to be any fuss made over a marriage that has come to the end of its spiritual and physical life. It should not be scandalous to ask for the dissolution of the contract. The time will come, he says, when the matrimonial agreement will have its place in the lawyer's cabinet with other contracts made for a partnership. And it will have no greater significance in its legal bond than a partnership contract. It seems to me that it is the highest form of selfishness for a man or woman to compel the conditions of a marriage contract when those conditions no longer exist. I should say that 95 per cent. of the divorces in this country are because the men wish it. Women are obedient creatures of habit, they are not rebellious, and they prefer the good opinion of their friends and neighbors at any cost, so in most cases it is the women who oppose divorce.

How Robert does like to cultivate the good-will of his habitual readers! And what a splendid philosopher he is!

Chambers Should Know

PROPERLY to enjoy life, says a writer in the Engineering News-Record, one should be part bee and part monkey, collectivist and individualist. The bee is a martyr to a Prussian collective system invented by himself. He works for other people. If he took time to think, he'd immediately tend to become individualistic, and the organization would begin to wobble. The man who took this picture of a swarm of bees had no time to think about that, for he soon had a mask of bees on his face. "Don't do a thing, don't make a sound," implored the beekeeper. The camera man wanted to run, to wave his arms, to scream, to fight. He didn't. One bee crawled up his nose. He wanted to sneeze but dare not. He just backed cautiously away.

Film Dramas Wanted

GREAT motion pictures are scarce, says a writer in a St. Louis paper, who avers that there are moral purposes to be served by a great film drama: First, to enhance our interest in life; second, to enhance our power to divine and discriminate as to what happens in our own environment; third, to enhance our grip and appreciation of ideas. Under the first of these headings movie art confessedly does but little. Our interest in life, this critic maintains, is not increased by seeing it with the color washed out. "Compare your open-eyed recognition of beauty as you walk out of an art gallery into the street, with the absence of any such temporary awakening as you walk out of the movie house." As a means of heightening our discrimination, he finds that the screen play does nothing or worse. "If you have been reading a George Eliot novel (another variety of illustration), you will be aware, as you sit at your dinner table, of those common-place nonentities who make up your household, in quite a new way. The novelist has given vision to your eyes. But after a bout in a movie show do you find your family transfigured?" His answer is "no" and he maintains, furthermore, that with one outstanding exception ("The Birth of a Nation") the photodrama has failed notoriously to enhance our grip of ideas. Here is a chance for some Shakespeare of the screen to arise and give the producers what they want. But whoever he is, he will need to get his plots from somewhere else than the purple patches in the yellow newspapers. The film should be a great moral agent.

