

political life, who often commended him from the platform and in the press.

The senator concedes that there are large domains of legislation and administration from which "it would be better to exclude women as a whole than to admit them as a whole, because the great mass will be so little fitted for them," but affirms that this is true of the great majority of men. This, however, is an argument drawn from a vast evil which should be overcome, not increased by the addition of an immense number of voters whom he grants are destined to remain in the same condition.

To say that the same arguments which the advocates of woman suffrage have to meet have been used against every extension of suffrage merely acts as an opiate to thought, unless it be clearly proved that they do not now apply. Every important change, good or bad, has been opposed. The proposed extension is radically unlike any that has preceded it.

My eminent colleague in this comparison of views asks his opponents to "find four masculine figures whom they will like to select as leaders or companions rather than" those he names. Emerson and Whittier were idealists, neither qualified for leadership in politics or statesmanship, though a multitude rejoiced to come within the influence of their inspiration and elevating impulses. The deliverance of Mr. Lincoln was made at the very outset of his career, and so far as is known, though paying many a beautiful tribute to woman, he never referred to the subject again.¹ His later experience led to a profound conviction that the temperament of women was such as to make it more difficult to compose public feuds among them than

¹ In response to an inquiry, Mr. John G. Nicolay, private secretary, and one of the authorized biographers of Mr. Lincoln, writes: "I know of no allusion or reference by Mr. Lincoln to the question of female suffrage, except that made in the card printed in the Sangamon Journal under date of June 13, 1836 (and

among men. When the possibility of carrying out his conciliatory methods of reconstruction was under consideration, he remarked to the President of the Sanitary Commission that he expected more trouble from the women than from the men, and closed the conversation with these words, "Bellows, you take care of the women, and I will take care of the men."

It is not necessary to journey outside the senator's own paper to find two women worthy to be compared with Mrs. Lucy Stone Blackwell and Mrs. Howe. These are Mrs. John Ware, whom he declares to be "one of the wisest and most accomplished persons in this country of either sex," and Clara Leonard, "another of the women who are the pride and ornament of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts." Both these ladies strongly and conscientiously disapprove of woman suffrage.

To these I add the name of "the most useful and distinguished woman that America has produced," whose influence is felt throughout the world upon every sphere of philanthropy, and is preserved in the laws of every civilized nation, Dorothea L. Dix. She saw the rise of the American woman-suffrage movement, studied it in its advocates, arguments, sentiments, and tendencies, and rejected it. The "divine discontent" which its leaders were and are endeavoring to kindle in the hearts of women she deemed merely one of the ever-changing forms of human unrest. Her biographer states that she believed in "woman's keeping herself apart from anything savoring of ordinary political action. She must be the incarnation of a purely disinterested idea, appealing to universal humanity, irrespective of party or sect."

which is reprinted in Lincoln's Complete Works, Vol. I, p. 7). [This is the passage quoted by Senator Hoar.]

So far as I know, the topic is nowhere else mentioned in his writings, speeches, or letters, nor did I ever hear him refer to it in conversation either directly or indirectly."

J. M. Buckley.

CONVERSATION IN FRANCE.



MUCH has been written, here in THE CENTURY MAGAZINE and elsewhere, about the French salons; but often it seems to be taken for granted that these exist no more. In fact, there are still several of them, which certainly have not all the importance they had before the advent of newspapers and free political discussion, but in which artists and men of letters still love to meet in companionship with intelligent people of the world. Conver-

sation is, and will long continue to be, one of the greatest pleasures of the Gallic race, in which, as every one knows, the social spirit exists from the lowest to the highest rank. Wealth has never been necessary in order to have a salon. Mme. du Deffand lived very simply in the convent of St. Joseph; Mlle. de Lespinasse was so poor that her friends had to support her; and each of these two women had a real court in the 18th century. She who became later almost a queen, Mme. de Maintenon, then Mme. Scarron, gave celebrated dinners; yet it was during one of them that an

anxious servant came to her to whisper, "One more story, Madame, as there is no roast to-day." The old Maréchale de Beauvau, living after the Revolution in a small lodging of the Faubourg St. Honoré, saw quite the same number of interesting people mount her muddy staircase as when she was mistress of a splendid mansion. Good dinners and a grand household have nothing to do with the success of a salon. Yet they are not an obstacle to its success when the best elements exist; one proof of this is the salon of Princess Mathilde, assiduously frequented for so many years by writers and painters. She herself paints, working not in an amateurish and princess-like way, but busy in her studio from morning to dusk. When night comes, her guests are to be found in the two large drawing-rooms of her house in the Rue de Berri, which are filled with old pictures, and precious works of art, and in the greenhouse, which is nothing else than a square yard covered with glass and transformed into a winter-garden. People sit and talk under the tropical foliage of the palm-trees, while the princess, showing still, notwithstanding her years, a classical profile, snowy shoulders, a very graceful movement, and the finest hands in Paris, receives the few survivors of the last empire, with other men of more or less fame who have been faithful to her under all governments. There are some of the younger artists also: Besnard, Doucet, poets like José-Maria de Heredia, novelists like Paul Bourget, critics like Louis Ganderax. Groups of congenial persons settle themselves freely in the corners. The private talk is interrupted now and then by a little music, and tea is served in an informal way by the lady of honor, Baronne de Galbois. The princess has wit, and, moreover, she has eloquence of a fiery, passionate, splendid sort, above all when she is roused to discussion. Her brother, Prince Napoleon, had the same imperial way of speaking. Notwithstanding the atmosphere of liberty and ease which her highness wishes to create, every one has present to his mind the fact that she is a princess, and she herself from time to time shows that she is aware of it. When Taine wrote a hard and severe portrait of her uncle, the great Napoleon, she simply put him out of her house by sending him a formal card, with the letters "P. P. C." Taine mourned the end of their long intimacy.

"But what would you have done in my place?" he inquired sadly of Renan, another friend of the house.

"My dear Taine," answered the author of the "Life of Jesus," "I have, for the sake of what I think truth, quarreled with a much greater lady than all the princesses on earth: I have quarreled with the Church."

We have said that Princess Mathilde is eloquent, and eloquence is supposed to be the enemy of conversation, which never flourished in the days of great oratorical art—during the Revolution, for example. This is probably true in a general way, the chief qualities of conversation being in *apropos* good humor, piquancy, and cheerfulness; but after all, Mme. de Staël was eloquent, and none the less understood conversation. She has written the most delightful things about it—for instance:

The sort of enjoyment that lively conversation makes us feel does not precisely consist in the subject of the conversation; neither are the ideas or the knowledge that may be developed in it the principal interest. It is a certain manner of acting upon each other, the exchange of a quick pleasure, a way of speaking as soon as one thinks, of rushing instantly out of one's self, of winning applause without effort, of manifesting one's wit in all shades, by accent, gesture, look—in short, of producing a sort of electricity which causes sparks to fly, relieves some of the excess of sprightliness which is in them, and awakens others from apathy.

Such is conversation as we see it practised at Paris in the much renowned salon of Mme. Aubernon de Nerville, who is heiress to the best traditions of the eighteenth century. Her day is Saturday—the day of Mlle. de Scudéry in the time of the "Précieuses," which name has been more than once given, very unjustly, to Mme. Aubernon de Nerville and to her mother, who was one of the most accomplished women of Parisian society. "Les précieuses radicales" they were called, both of them being republicans. Every Saturday a dinner is given in the fine house of the Rue d'Astorg, usually a dinner of eight, never more than ten, persons, all of them carefully chosen, with one great talker only. Mme. Aubernon believes that two *premiers rôles* will never do. Either they clash unpleasantly, or, what is more probable, they annihilate the effect of each other. Then, to throw and catch the ball, some academician, chosen from among the more agreeable; a younger poet or novelist; a professor in the Sorbonne; one or two women only, cultivated and open-minded, not too youthful, not too handsome, not too self-conscious, and caring as little as possible to monopolize attention; perhaps as many brilliant men of fashion, capable of listening—of listening even to serious conversation if it happens to be serious, and practising that intelligent silence which is a good "accompaniment to the music of speech." Observe that silence has its value; there may be wit in the manner of responding by a glance, or a smile, to some striking word, and the sympathy thus expressed is the best excitement for a talker. The hostess

excels in this sort of encouragement, having kept the pretty dimpling smile of her youth and the most sparkling black eyes. She has also the knack of making original and unexpected witticisms which turn the current into another channel when she feels that a subject has been dwelt upon long enough, or is becoming dangerous. She never cuts the conversation, a thing which must not be done, she says, even with golden scissors; but she passes rocks and breakers like an experienced seaman, or changes the course when the wind seems to be lacking in the sail. In the choice and treatment of subjects she has plenty of freedom, always kept, of course, within the limits of good breeding; some slanderers accuse her of preparing in her mind the program of each dinner's talk, so that she has the advantage over her guests of being ready, while they are taken unawares, upon such or such a topic. It may be true for the starting, in behalf of what will follow; but very soon she is carried away by her natural and genuine wish to make others shine, and by her perfect unconsciousness.

The prominent star among the more or less brilliant surrounding clusters was very often, while he lived, Ernest Renan. He would speak, with the exquisite grace which pervades all his writings, of the historical and archæological researches which he made in Syria as in the Holy Land. Although by the natural current of his mind he was always brought to religious questions, never did a word of his offend any Christian feeling. The very peculiar combination of belief and unbelief which appears in his books, and makes him, as has been said, a beacon with changing lights (*un phare à feux changeants*), rendered him sympathetic in conversation to every kind of interlocutor. His large tolerance, his broad manner of looking at things on all sides at once, his slightly ironical and perhaps disdainful though courteous acceptance of other people's opinions, made any passing intercourse with him perfectly delightful. When I remember his fine smile and the bright twinkle of his eyes, I cannot help having a grudge against Bonnat's portrait. It is admirable painting, of course, but it does not give an idea of the charm, the very real charm, of a face so heavy in lines, yet so completely refined by the power of expression. M. Renan was at his best at Mme. Aubernon's house; even the most wonderful talkers fall to nothing if they are not given opportunities, and the good nature of that exceedingly amiable man allowed him to yield without protest to any current into which he was pushed. The very first time I saw him—long ago—he was involved in a feminine discussion of shopping and the Bon Marché. Such accidents could never happen at the house of

Mme. Aubernon; she carries the flag of conversation with a firm grasp, and never lets it droop.

Alexandre Dumas has been for many years the idol of this salon. Second only to his father, he certainly deserves to be considered as the greatest spendthrift in conversation, lavishing the gold of genius as if it were brass. This is by no means always the case; on the contrary, some writers are great misers, and keep every valuable thing that comes to their minds for the market—that is to say, for their printed work. Dumas's bon mots are like a continual exhibition of fireworks. Another prodigal of wit is Henri Becque, the writer of some sharp comedies, who has also been one of Mme. Aubernon's favorite guests. Foremost among them all we must still name Jules Simon, Ferdinand Brunetière, and Victor Cherbuliez. Jules Simon's perfect moderation in speech, and his comprehension of social problems, have sometimes allowed the talk to wander toward politics, although this is generally a forbidden subject, the passions which are excited by the public events and discussions of the day being banished from a circle where thought is supposed to soar above all earthly things. Brunetière, the strong and deeply original critic, is also the best lecturer in France. Cherbuliez, who is also known under the name of Valbert, has made his novels the vehicle of much deep thought and information, while he has given to his miscellaneous papers on politics, esthetics, or philosophy, all the charm of romance. His humor, enriched by the intimate knowledge of many foreign countries and languages, has a wonderful cosmopolitan flavor.

It would be a mistake to believe that when Mme. Aubernon invites only one great man at a time, she means to let him take the talk all to himself among admiring listeners. This would never do in France, where long dissertations and anecdotes are quite contrary to the national spirit, which is one of continual take and give, the well-edged weapons clashing together. *Glissez, n'appuyez pas*, is the first rule of conversation. One of the most exquisite talkers of the Aubernon salon, Professor Deschanel, once wrote, "Ten minutes of Parisian conversation are more full of ideas, images, feelings of every sort, than three days of provincial talk." This is true. Provincial talk has always some stiffness and heaviness in it, and it admits of a great many stories good or bad, old or new. The anecdotic manner is, on the contrary, very little used in Paris, where ideas seem far more interesting than people or facts. Some lazy minds think that conversation at Mme. Aubernon's dinners must be work rather than pleasure, and that she behaves among her guests like the leader of a symphony, bringing each

instrument to action or to silence. It is perfectly true that she permits no private chats between neighbors, which would be a trespass against the good traditions of the eighteenth century; she finds it impolite and vulgar, injurious to the general effect, and when by some rare chance it happens, she rings a tiny bell in the most decided way. She was punished once for this tyranny. While some one was speaking,—I think it was Bardoux, the biographer of Chateaubriand's lovely friends, Mme. de Beaumont and Mme. de Custine,—another guest whispered to the lady seated next to him; the tinkling of the bell stopped his untimely words. When M. Bardoux had ended, Mme. Aubernon bade the guilty one speak in his turn.

"What had you to say?" she inquired.

"Oh, little, very little," he answered in a rather distressed way.

"I am sure it was something valuable; we cannot afford to lose it. Pray speak out!"

With hypocritical modesty the other demurred. At last, with eyes lowered upon his plate, he answered, "I was just saying I would willingly have taken a little more salad."

There was a laugh, and some confusion for the autocrat. In truth, Mme. Aubernon deserves to be called by Dr. Holmes—who, if he chose, would have the seat at her right hand,—the autocrat of the dinner-table.

After dinner, as soon as coffee is brought into the drawing-room, the players in her orchestra are released; they may go to smoke a cigar in the *fumoir*, and either vanish afterward in the mysterious way which is called *à l'anglaise* in France, and *à la française* by other nations, or come back to meet the pretty and well-dressed women, and the men of leisure, who call during the evening on their way to a ball or to the last acts of the opera. Stage performances of the rarest quality have been given at Mme. Aubernon's. Chosen fragments of Alexandre Dumas' comedies were played there by artists and amateurs together, the latter—among whom was the mistress of the house—showing sometimes as much talent as the former. Once she was inspired to try the effect of Sardou's "Divorçons," with the last act cut off, and with actors of the Théâtre Français as interpreters. It became thus a delightful comedy instead of a farce. The translation of Ibsen's "A Doll's House" was first given in her salon. But the best representations are always the Saturday dinners, and some of her friends say that she ought to invite people to sit about; she thinks with reason, however, that this attitude of *cure-dents*, so to speak, would only make the listeners feel doubly famished. Nor are the Saturday dinners the only ones she gives; there is a Wednesday dinner for younger and less

well-trained guests—dinners of anarchists, as she calls them, before they get to be tamed and broken to harness.

It has been said that Pailleron thought of this autocratic salon when he wrote "*Le monde où l'on s'ennuie*," and that Mme. Aubernon was portrayed in his comedy. She went to see it, applauded warmly, and told the author, who was among her guests: "People make a mistake; they think you have wished to paint us, while you know as well as I do myself that we are '*le monde où l'on s'amuse*.'"

But the truth is that she cares only for highly intellectual amusements, and that, without being a lion-hunter, she has a great respect for established fame. Many among the Forty Immortals come to her assiduously, and, notwithstanding her democratic feelings, Mme. Aubernon clings to the old institutions, to classical forms. Each election to the Academy is to her a subject of the deepest interest. She is decidedly a conservative in art; the excesses of realism were always hateful to her, and she cannot forgive the so-called *jeunes* their trespasses against the integrity of the French language. The sort of mysticism which has lately become fashionable does not appeal to her, since she has the truly national taste for what is clear, sound, and definite, scorning shadows and mists and metaphysics, and wishing to know where she is going, and to feel the solid ground under her feet. As to her religion, it is sufficiently expressed by the words, "I keep myself equally ready for eternity and for nothingness."

An eternity without lively talk and literary interests would of course seem dreary to this leader of a salon. She could not even understand the witchery of nature, or taste the delightful rest of country life, without some sort of social condiment. When she leaves Paris it is to go a short distance to a place that seems to have been specially made for her, in the neighborhood of those enchanting woods of Marly to which Louis XIV. so often resorted, and of that lovely Louveciennes which his successor cherished. "*Cœur Volant*" is the name of this delightful dwelling-place. The house is built in the unpretending style of the eighteenth century, so favorable to close intimacy. Every piece of furniture belongs to the same time. There, on summer Sundays, the friends who meet on Saturdays through the winter at the Rue d'Astorg come to luncheon or to dinner for an afternoon or evening of conversation; sometimes under the shade of the stately old trees,—suggesting a refined Decameron of modern times,—sometimes, according to the hour and weather, in the drawing-room, the walls of which, if they could speak in their turn, would certainly have much interesting matter to repeat. This also is very helpful; a salon needs

to have been warmed by many conversations, to imprison, as one might say, contagious atoms of thought and wit.

A new, splendid, glaring mansion, without any association with the past, would never answer the purpose. Mme. Récamier knew what she did when she retired behind the walls of L'Abbaye-aux-Bois, where a chosen set came to worship the god whose priestess she chose to be.

This central figure of worship is certainly an excellent means of success, as one may see from the examples of Chateaubriand in Mme. Récamier's salon, and of Alfred de Vigny in that of Mme. Ancelot. Yet the "chosen set" is before anything indispensable. A woman vain enough to suppose that her *habitués* come to her specially for herself will never create anything like a salon. She ought to know that the pleasure of meeting together stands foremost in the mind of each of her guests, and she must leave them to that pleasure with a wholesome fear of breaking the spell. She is not free to open her door to the more pleasant outsiders without making sure that they will not be troublesome to her set; she is not allowed to be hospitable, as she perhaps would like to be; she must stand firm against letters of introduction and suing for invitations: otherwise the salon very promptly becomes an inn, and there is an end of it. Anger, resentment, and jealousy of course follow each of her refusals; she may make many enemies; some bitter attacks may be made in the newspapers: but all this she will have to endure; no difficult work is achieved without a good deal of self-sacrifice and suffering.

The women of the great French salons enjoyed the enjoyment of others without any selfish wish to attract attention, or to shine for their own sakes, even when they did shine. Such is Mme. Aubernon. Her salon, notwithstanding the disappearance by death of some of its most noteworthy people, stands unique in its way. Two others which have very close links with it aspire only to a more subdued and quiet sort of fame, which is not, however, of inferior quality.

Some families seem to be happily gifted. Mme. Aubernon is a near cousin of the two sisters-in-law, Mesdames Baignères, whose Thursdays on the one side, and Sunday afternoons on the other, are frequented by much the same people; but there are more poets than at Mme. Aubernon's, whose preferences are for prose—more painters, more artists of the pen, as well as of the brush. Symbolists like M. de Regnier, impressionists like M. Jacques Blanche, are seen there among the flower of diplomacy and the best of traveling foreigners. In those two very elegant houses a vivid interest is shown in English literature.

A salon which has made me often think what may have been the surroundings of the accomplished and highly cultivated Rahel Levin of Berlin is that of Mme. Arman de Caillairet, a salon where science, philosophy, and literature are blended. There one may meet Anatole France, and G. Laffitte, the present chief of positivism, the heir and representative of the theories of Auguste Comte.

To all these various salons comes a man who, by his intense knowledge of the eighteenth century, seems really indispensable. M. Victor du Bled, the particular friend of all witty French women of all centuries, has tried something new and interesting at the Vicomtesse de Tauzé's Saturday afternoons; he has given short and brilliant private lectures about old French society; one of them, before two princesses of the house of Orleans, on that feminine incarnation of virtue in an unvirtuous time, the Duchesse de Choiseul. This innovation was full of fitness, Mme. de Tauzé, the biographer of Berryer, being a Choiseul herself, and the frame, so to speak, of the picture, a wonderful art-gallery full of carefully selected bric-à-brac, adding to its charm. That more or less fortunate fashion of lectures brought in and through conversation is carried to the highest degree in the palace-like mansion of a worthy English lady much given to what is called spiritualism, the Duchess of Pomar, formerly Lady Caithness.

But we are wandering very far from genuine French conversation. This we should find, and of the best kind, seasoned with tact and taste, within the chosen circle—notabilities of birth, wealth, and talent—which seeks in her modest retreat Mme. Caro, widow of the philosopher. She is herself the author of some very good novels. Her "Péché de Madeleine" was, when it appeared anonymously, a rival to the child in the story of Solomon, having been claimed by two persons, and awarded finally to the true owner, to the great annoyance of the pretender.

An interesting and valuable exchange of ideas is to be found at the fireside of the learned and humorous essayist whom the world at large believes to be a man, under her Russian pseudonym of "Arvède Barine." But her duties as a wife and mother are not neglected for those of a writer. Here we are on Protestant ground, and also at Mme. C. Coignet's, the historian of the French renaissance and reformation, who gathers about her a knot of thinkers belonging to every creed or to no creed at all, provided they be high-minded, and ready for good work; on the ladies' side, the widow of Michelet, the widow of the great liberal preacher, Pressensé, and some other strong-minded, interesting women, who have devoted themselves to pedagogy, or to some philan-

thropic work. Among the men was seen more than once last winter a very remarkable political writer of the "Temps," who is also professor of dogmatics in the Protestant faculty of the Paris University, and has given some admirable lectures in the Sorbonne upon Christian literature. The first one, on "The Intimate Life of Dogmas," was perhaps still more admired by the Catholics than by the Calvinists and Methodists, who found him too liberal, though he is thoroughly Protestant. But like many large-minded men of the period, he seems to wish to throw a bridge from one religion to another, in bringing all Christians to adore in spirit and in truth. His "St. Francis of Assisi" was the event of the season. An irreverent wit said of it, "St. Francis is becoming so fashionable that he will soon be worn upon bonnets."

It would need a separate paper to show at length the powerful sympathy and encouragement which were received in the home of the late Baronne Blaze de Bury by that special group of reformers who represent the neo-Christian movement in France. "Le Devoir Present" and "Jeunesse" have been translated, and many an American has become interested in the ethical league of the "Compagnons de la Vie Nouvelle." Among these one woman only has taken a prominent place—a woman, however, of powerful intellect and inexhaustible enthusiasm, who also is a most clever writer on subjects which would seem to need the masculine mind; but Mme. de Bury had a man's brain. The long illness which has just ended fatally stopped her pen about one year ago. She contributed at least as often to the English reviews or magazines as to those of France. Born in Scotland, she had passed many years in Germany before marrying one of the best Frenchmen of his time, and though she always remained an Englishwoman at heart, she seemed to belong to three countries. Half-foreign salons have more than once succeeded in Paris, as in the case of Mme. Mohl. Mme. de Bury had known well, and admired deeply, Madame Swetchine. Such men as Montalembert, Villemain, and Père Gratry had been the friends of her husband and herself—an association which often made her severe and fastidious in judging the talents of the hour. The afternoon receptions in the old house at the Rue Oudinot, formerly the house of Chateaubriand, were of the most varied sort. One could see at once the Viscount de Vogüé, the late Mr. Lawrence Oliphant, Mr. Hamilton Aidé, people of the Faubourg St. Germain, members of the republican government, representatives of the London "Times," and distinguished Americans who chanced to pass. The hearty welcome of the hostess it is not easy to forget.

We might well give the name of salon—

and even call it a very brilliant one—to the cozy library of Alphonse Daudet, where every Thursday night men like Edmond de Goncourt, Pierre Loti, Paul Hervieu, Raffaelli the painter, and now and then Henry James, come informally to be received by him and his charming wife, who allows his friends the freedom of smoking-jacket and cigar. We could easily add to our list one or two attractive Bohemian resorts; we could describe a certain Monday enjoyed by many a hunter of new forms in prose and verse—Mallarmé and Léon Rosny, for example, with several others, who, however hostile to bourgeois taste, prefer the atmosphere of a friendly home to that of a *brasserie*. But we should be carried too far, since there is almost no house in the world belonging to artistic and literary people where conversation, as an art, does not naturally flourish. For a like reason I have purposely omitted to mention in this sketch of salons, great and small, and their annexes, some of the most conspicuous, which are those that the editor of an important paper or magazine is always able to create with the help of a clever and charming wife. It will be easy to imagine what elements of success a staff like that of the "Revue des Deux Mondes" may bring to conversation at a dinner, or an entertainment of any kind. The salon of Mme. Adam has already been written about more than once. Mme. Eugénie Yung, the widow of the able founder of the "Revue Bleue," has kept near her a group of her husband's collaborators and friends, such as Jules Lemaitre, Challemeil-Lacour, Larroumet, and Édouard Grenier, who speaks as well as he writes about the romantic period whose most glorious representatives have been his friends. As a poet he grew up under the influence of Lamartine, and among the clever and charming women who were his friends were Bettina von Arnim, Daniel Stern (Comtesse d'Agoult), and George Sand.

In the stately building of the Institut, an incomparable court surrounds Mme. Camille Doucet, the wife of the perpetual secretary of the French Academy. The trouble of choosing is spared to her; a more difficult judge than any *mâtresse de maison* can be—the Academy itself—decides. Every Tuesday some of the Forty, who are like a large and very friendly family, come to her, and no reception of a new member takes place without tea following in her hospitable and stately drawing-room, where candidates enter with a low bow, and which is a most pleasant center for the whole illustrious company. Three salons of the Faubourg St. Germain have been closed, one after another, by death: that of the Comtesse d'Haussonville, Mme. de Staël's worthy granddaughter; that of the Comtesse de Chambrun,

and that of the Marquise de Blocqueville. The latter was an invalid during many years, and never went out — which is one of the best ways to succeed, if you wish to have a salon, out-of-door life being incompatible with such an ambition. Salons belong to the time when people stayed much at home, shut their doors to visitors, and wrote dozens of pretty notes every morning, instead of sending telegrams in the modern fashion of Paris, which threatens to be the death of letter-writing, an exquisite sequel to conversation. The same people daily kept those late hours that the "herculean weakness" of an aged Mme. du Deffand could bear, but which would kill any young woman of the present century; they had midnight supper, the meal which has always most suggested wit; they never traveled. By the way, Mme. de Chambrun, who traveled a good deal, managed to have a sort of double salon, one at Nice, the other in her Parisian home, the splendid historical Hotel de Condé. She herself was the author of some poetry. Mme. d'Haussonville wrote two books, one of them relating to the youth of Lord Byron, and the other to Ireland and Robert Emmet. Mme. de Blocqueville has left some refined essays, and a volume of thoughts and maxims. This mode of writing has been familiar to more than one brilliant woman-talker, and many jewels may be found among the "Pensées" of Mme. Barratin, who believes in the power of excellent dinners to stimulate conversation, and is, moreover, able to appreciate the wit of foreign guests, as she knows three or four languages excellently well. The Comtesse de Beausacq (Comtesse Diane) has chosen from among her own sayings the material for a pretty little volume, "Maximes de la Vie," for which the great man of her salon, Sully Prudhomme, has written a preface.

Have I said that it was to be noticed that the women who succeed best in creating a salon are those who have no husbands? The great salons of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were, without exception, presided over by widows or single ladies. When it was otherwise, the husband had to efface himself, as did insignificant M. Geoffrin, whom the philosophers at his wife's table never noticed until some one happened to ask why that silent little gray-haired man, generally sitting at the end of the table, came no more. It was then rumored that it had been M. Geoffrin, and that he was dead.

Fortunately for some women, it is possible to have excellent conversation within reach without resorting to widowhood. Mme. de Girardin, the first wife of the clever newspaper writer and editor, the author herself of the weekly masterpieces called "Lettres du Vi-

comte de Launay," not to speak of her well-known poetry, comedies, and dramas — Mme. de Girardin shone like a star some forty years ago in the neighborhood of her very brilliant husband. She has given in a humorous way very good receipts for conversation: "First of all, the quality of the talkers; secondly, the harmony of their minds; and thirdly, a propitious arrangement of the furniture." "An amusing conversation," she says, "cannot start if the chairs are arranged symmetrically. The disposition of a drawing-room must be like that of an English garden — apparent disorder, which is not the effect of chance, but, on the contrary, of consummate art, the result of fortunate combinations. In a symmetrically furnished drawing-room, it is only at the end of the evening, when the furniture has against its will yielded to the necessities of society, that enjoyment begins. You just begin to amuse yourself when it becomes necessary to take leave.

"And remember," she adds, "that good talkers hate idleness, the most witty men hardly know what to say when they ceremoniously hold their hats in their hands; they must have some valuable thing to finger, and help them keep countenance — dainty scissors or pen-knife, a golden chain, a jeweled smelling-bottle. The more you scatter trifles and baubles in your salon, the less nonsense there will be in conversation. But before anything," she recommends, "let yourself go; do not think of yourself; forget the talent you may have."

And Deschanel, to whom we already have referred, the professor in the Collège du France, the delightful lecturer, adds some more precious and deeper advice: "Banish the words *I* and *me* as much as you can; be courteous in contradiction, ready to understand a joke, although unwilling yourself to use that weapon too frequently; employ no *banalité*, no commonplace; be merry; remember that gaiety is the soul of conversation, that mockery often shows the lack of real wit. Talk can never be good unless men and women are brought together, all of them comfortably seated in a congenial atmosphere. Try to be neither above nor below the persons you talk with, and avoid, like the plague itself, that sort of people who by their very presence, as they enter, take off the wit of others, and spoil the already settled affinities. Let conversation be clear, prompt, and lively, with sound good sense at the bottom."

Perhaps, however, good advice is not quite enough to prepare good talkers. There must be a sort of initiation which no one can get outside that refinement which is the result of elegance and leisure. Less and less, very probably, shall we see anything like the magic of conversation as it existed in some high-born women

of the past, as it exists in the Comtesse de Beaulaincourt, who still lives, and lives most intensely too. She was reared in the midst of it, in the salon of her mother, the Marquise de Castellane, where she knew in her youth Merimée and Alfred de Musset, playing comedies and proverbs with the one, and keeping up a correspondence with the other, of which delightful letters fortunately remain. She remembers to the smallest details the days which one cannot believe her old enough to have seen; but the most distinguished figures of that time passed before her eyes while impressions were quickest and strongest. Her first great dinner, when she was a newly married beauty of seventeen, was given in her honor by Talleyrand, and while she can speak as no one else can of everything relating to the old monarchy, her personal friendship with the Empress Eugénie made her no less familiar with the last court. Imbert de St. Amand, the *évocateur* of interesting women in the last two centuries, often comes to breathe near her the atmosphere of the *ancien régime*; so, also, does Mlle. Herpin, who signs herself "Lucien Perey" in her works of curious research, which are most valuable books. Mme. de Beaulaincourt is keenly interested in history, and she can speak of political subjects, French or foreign, with any statesman. To hear her rouse the eloquence of such a man as Émile Olivier is great good fortune to the listener.

Strange to say, the name of this remarkable woman is not known in America for any social or intellectual reason, but simply as that of a maker of artificial flowers. Among the women's work exhibited last year in Chicago were some of these unique flowers made for the great exposition, which many a visitor made the mistake of thinking natural. While engaged in making these she was busy with an entirely different piece of work—preparing the memoirs of her father, the late Marquis de Castellane, *maréchal de France*.

I remember that when Merimée was passing the winter at Cannes he used to send Mme. Beaulaincourt baskets containing anemones, which she returned to him full of the same flowers so exactly copied that one needed to go very close and to touch them to know them from the models.

Mme. de Beaulaincourt displays her diploma from one of our universal exhibitions in a conspicuous place in her drawing-room, feeling more proud of it than of many greater distinctions. French tradesmen know how well she has deserved it, for she has brought excellent additions to their art through her good taste, her knowledge of botany, and the ingenious researches for which they themselves lacked time and money. More than once she

has taught working-girls, calling them in to help her in some emergency,—such as a sale for the poor,—when they have not only learned the refinement of flower-making, but have discovered that constant, laborious work may be chosen as a pleasure by a great lady who could afford to be idle.

Every day, during part of the afternoon and almost every evening, unless she is taken away by music, Mme. de Beaulaincourt sits at a large plain deal table, which is covered with masses of natural flowers and the materials for their counterfeit presentments, at which she works diligently. She dyes, folds, and curls the small parts of what will presently be a rose, talking meantime to the guests who come and go as no one else will talk when she is gone, because no one else will have, like her, the spirit of the past. Her active fingers have always seemed to help her active brain, for she never talks so well as when most busily at work. She does not strive to imitate the *grandes dames d'autrefois*. She is by nature one of them—the last of them; and it is surprising enough that such vivid interest in the present can exist side by side with such a wealth of ancient traditions.

Democratic life, from its general conditions of haste and effort, is not favorable to conversation. This has often been said and proved; yet we have seen that the great accomplishment still exists in republican France, and, for my part, I have never heard better talk than in republican America. But the American gift for conversation seems, with several glorious exceptions, to be most given to women, which is certainly not the case elsewhere. The reason for this must be in the excitements and engrossments of business, which fill the time of most men, and to some extent in the influence of ladies' clubs. The regular meetings where charitable, literary, or social subjects are discussed seem to be in every respect a very good and wise institution. They develop self-possession, ease, fluency, and clearness of expression. They accustom the speakers to contradict courteously, and to discuss without too much warmth. Even if such a club does not carry its members to the threshold of political life—a life which many of us think undesirable—it will help them a great deal to excel in general conversation, always provided that they do not lose the taste for men's society, keep fast to simplicity, and avoid all over-pretension and pedantic forms of speech. It is very necessary to find the right word, but the technical one is often *de trop*, and an apparent ignorance is very becoming to both sexes, I must say, in purely social intercourse, especially to women. Never will the pedants know how nearly a far-fetched scientific expression produces the effect of the

snakes and toads which fall from the lips of the beautiful princess in the old French fairy-tale.

After all, no one can be taught the art of conversation; it must be a natural gift, or, rather, the individual expression of many gifts, both natural and acquired. "Use what language you will," says Emerson, "you never can say anything but what you are." And to

sum up, I can do nothing better than transcribe that great man's praise of what he considers best in life: "What a train of means to secure a little conversation! This palace of brick and stone, these servants, this kitchen, these stables, horses, and equipage, this bank-stock, and file of mortgages; trade to all the world, country-house and cottage by the water-side, all for a little conversation, high, clear, and spiritual!"

Th. Bentzon.

TOPICS OF THE TIME.

Intelligent Citizenship.

IT is encouraging to note that in various parts of the country, and especially in the large cities, increasing attention is being paid to questions relating to additional safeguards about the ballot-box. Many earnest reformers are beginning to suspect that perhaps we have been somewhat too liberal in extending the suffrage to foreign-born citizens, and also somewhat too eager to make the exercise of the suffrage easy to those least qualified to exercise it intelligently. As a consequence, our naturalization laws are undergoing careful scrutiny, and our ballot laws and election regulations are being examined for the purpose of discovering whether it is desirable to make them more stringent.

These subjects are at present receiving thoughtful consideration in the New York Constitutional Convention, and it is not improbable that the outcome will be amendments making important changes in the fundamental law of the State. Discussion of ballot-reform legislation in this State has turned always upon the meaning of the words in the present Constitution — "all elections by the citizens shall be by ballot, except for such town offices as may by law be directed to be otherwise chosen." The opponents of the most desirable form of the Australian ballot system, as it has been embodied in our American laws, held at one time that the words "by ballot" meant a written or printed ballot, and hence a ballot which a voter may prepare for himself and take with him to the polls. For these reasons they opposed the official ballot as unconstitutional, since its exclusive use prevented the voter from preparing his ballot outside the polling-place. Being driven from this position as untenable, they took up another one, to the effect that any law which did not allow the voter to write or paste upon the ballot the name of any candidate, not printed thereon, for whom he desired to vote, was unconstitutional. Under this contention the "blanket paster" provision was incorporated in the present New York law, and repeated efforts to dislodge it have proved vain.

It is made very plain by the debates and resolutions of the Constitutional Convention of 1776-77, which framed the New York Constitution, that the words, "by ballot" were used to distinguish secret methods of voting, which were just then coming into use, from the open or *viva voce* method, which had previously prevailed. Previous to the Revolutionary War the word "ballot" was used to signify various forms of vo-

ting other than that of holding up the hand, or *viva voce*, but in no case was it used to signify a written or printed vote. Thus, in Pennsylvania, voting with black and white beans was voting by ballot; in New Jersey balls were used under the same name, and in New England Indian corn and beans were so used. Whenever written ballots were used, they were spoken of as "papers," or "votes," and sometimes as "written votes." The framers of the New York Constitution had this custom in mind when they used the words "by ballot," and without reasonable doubt they had no other intention than to designate a form of voting which should be secret as distinguished from open voting.

The contention that not only was a printed or written ballot called for by the words "by ballot," but that the words carried with them also a right for the voter to write or paste upon that ballot any name he chose, and, if necessary, to have help in so doing, is based entirely upon legislation which has been enacted during the last fifty years or more. Because the laws have recognized the right of the voter to write his own ballot entirely, or to write or paste names upon it, the claim has been made that the Constitution gives him this right. As a matter of fact it does nothing of the kind; but years of legislative assumption that it does have given as much force to the contention as if it were based on the Constitution itself.

In fact the ballot laws of nearly all our States recognize the same right when they provide a blank space at the bottom of all groups of candidates' names in which the voter may write any name he chooses. The only reform ballot law that we know of which has not such a provision is that of Colorado, which in its original form had nothing of the kind, though it may have been amended recently.

The question has been raised in more than one State whether or not it is wise to have this provision allowing a voter to write in the name of a candidate which does not appear on the official ballot. If this provision were not incorporated there would be no need of supplying aid to the illiterate voter in all States having laws which arrange the names of candidates in party groups with symbols at the top. It is the necessity of providing aid for illiterates, in order that they may exercise their right of voting for a candidate other than those regularly nominated, which opens the door to all the worst frauds and most pernicious corruption at the polls. If the laws were to say that no one should be permitted to vote for anybody except those whose