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AMERICANS POOREST CONVERSATIONALISTS

Student Group in Survey Gives Opinion; Arabs and Chinese Have Us Beaten

What America needs most is — You probably have your own ideas about the matter, but take it from a group of international students, America's greatest need is bigger and better conversation. That's the idea gleaned from a 90,000-word report compiled as the result of world-wide research in the sociable art of conversation. The report reaches some astonishing conclusions:

Arab First

The Bedouin Arab, for instance, is given first rank as a conversationalist; next come the Chinese; third, the Frenchman; fourth, the American; other nationalities trail on into the dim regions of social silence.

Honors go to the Bedouin Arab because he most nearly meets the conception of the ideal conversationalist, who is described as a person who can alternately listen and talk, whose interests range the entire cultural field, who avoids argument and discursive monologues, who mingles fresh, intelligent humor with a knowledge of the subject on the tongue, and who listens as attentively as he talks enthusiastically.

The environment of the Arab—long evenings in the desert, long hours of sitting in the sun—have forced him

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ESTHER GOULD'S TRAVEL CORNER

"DARK HERITAGE"

By Shirland Quin
 Little Brown

In "Dark Heritage" by Shirland Quin, we have a first novel of interest. It lacks the most characteristic mark of a first novel, perhaps, in that it is completely objective. It has none of that passionate outpouring of all that an impressionable youth has lived or seen or thought about life to date, that clearing of the boards which many young writers find necessary before they can begin to look at life critically and objectively. Of course that may have been done in pages consigned to oblivion and the scrap-basket, or Miss Quin may have gained objectivity through the writing of the three plays which she has already had produced in London.

Mervyn Morgan is a Welsh boy, whose family owns one of the most prosperous farms in the county. They are proud people, loyal and passionate, moody and stubborn. Young Mervyn shares the family pride in and love for the farm, in fact in him, as his grandmother shrewdly perceives, it reaches a climax. All he asks of life is the chance to plow, to till, to sniff the sea breezes as they come in from the stormy Atlantic.

But, alas, Fate has her axe swinging. A natural antagonism exists between Mervyn and his older brother who will some day be head of the farm. A quarrel—one of many but this one more serious—ensues and Mervyn has no choice but to leave the farm, he runs away to America.

This same thing happened in the last generation, in the case of his Uncle David. The same beginning and we can presage the same conclusion. And that is where we would take issue with the author. In a case of history repeating itself so obviously as this we cannot help feeling that the cards are stacked against the character. Now, we will take a character's hand and walk with him willingly through any trials that a capricious Fate may impose, but we re-

fuse to take the author's hand and walk with him while he capriciously imposes them. It is too much like helping boys to stone young birds. At that point we must confess, our interest flagged.

It all happens as it had with the Uncle, years before, Mervyn makes money in America and comes back at last to his native soil, only to find that he doesn't like it any more, his heart has been given to his new home.

The best part of the book is the really delightful and vivid description of Mervyn's early days, his life on the rugged, charming old Welsh farm.

**BOYS WHO ARE BOYS
 "THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO
 ST. LUKE'S"**

By Phillip Stevenson
 Longman's Green

Phillip Stevenson is convinced that a group of boys in a school, which might be any of our eastern boys' preparatory schools, called in the book St. Luke's, are very much like individuals anywhere. There are the bullies, the four flushers, the timid ones, the one born to rule.

In "The Gospel According to St. Luke's" he makes a story out of such a group, which particularly if you are interested in youthful psychology, you will find interesting.

There is Ethelbert, "Ethel" to the boys because of his puny stature and the impediment in his speech, who makes himself by sheer force of will and desire into a hundred percenter, called "Speed," who nearly flunks out of school before the end of his third year, though he had a brain which entitled him to be head of his class. There is Tony who starts out with every bias toward popularity but who becomes opinionated, moody and morose. In other words Mr. Stevenson has been interested in letting these boys work out their destiny under our eyes, a process which makes a good and lively story.

to develop his conversational ability as his most reliable amusement.

Chinese Are Good

The Chinese, because most of their education deals with the teachings of their ancient sages, develop along cultural lines also. The intricacy of their language, its picturesqueness and the musical quality of their voices also make for interesting conversation.

Europe as a whole takes more interest in conversation than do Americans. Their cafes are meeting places where conversation is fostered. Diners and drinkers may pursue their favorite topics into all the labyrinths of language at their leisure. In Berlin, novelties are introduced into the coffee houses to stimulate the patrons—as in one where the waiters are garbed in prison stripes.

"The average American business man, no matter what his success in industry, is a rank failure as a listener or a talker," says the report.

"His conversation is 50 per cent sports and games, 40 per cent automobiles and 9 per cent weather, with 1 per cent meaningless remarks politics. Only one out of 400 devotes one-fourth of one per cent of his conversation to serious cultural subjects.

After a two-year battle to establish a high school in Avon township through special school election, residents of Grays Lake who have been fighting for the school, gave up the battle temporarily when voters outside of Round Lake recently voted 461 to 353 against a high school.

When King Ibn Saud of Arabia makes a journey into the desert he keeps in touch with his two palaces at Mecca and Rivadhfi by radio, which reminds us that our present civilization is extended into Asia. Arabia, by the way, is as large as all of Europe outside of Russia.