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"No, he was a perfect gentleman. He just ran out of gas and we both had to walk back."

constrict his ankles, with absolute propriety stand on his head.

Collector

NOT only has a collection of nineteenth-century French art belonging to Erich Maria Remarque, the author of "All Quiet on the Western Front," turned up on exhibition at the Knoedler Galleries here in town, but Mr. Remarque himself has turned up at the Ambassador Hotel. He's been living out in Beverly Hills for the past few years but figures on staying in New York now more or less permanently. He has never written for the movies and went out to the Coast in the first place only because he had friends there and had heard that the scenery was like the scenery to be found around his house in Switzerland, on Lake Maggiore. The Hollywood countryside suited him all right, but he says there were too many cameramen hanging around photographing it.

We interviewed Mr. Remarque in his suite at the Ambassador, where we found him relaxed in a sport shirt and a collarless jacket. A number of his own Oriental rugs were scattered on the floor, and there were two paintings, one by Degas and one by Daumier, on the walls. He said that the rest of his collection would still be stored in Los Angeles if Knoedler hadn't offered to have it shipped here in exchange for the loan of it for exhibition. "I was too lazy to do it myself, so I said, 'Go ahead,' " he told us. We soon gathered that this was merely a sample of the agreeable way events work out for Remarque, who is given to letting them take their course. His collection might not even have been in Los Angeles if it hadn't been shipped from Switzerland to London before the war, which it wouldn't have been if Rosa, his maid in Switzerland, hadn't done it on her own responsibility. In 1939, he was packing for a trip to America and Rosa asked if he didn't think she should send some of his things to a safer place in case of war. He believed, because France hadn't prepared, that there wouldn't be a war, but Rosa pointed out that the prophet Nostradamus had predicted one at just about that time. Remarque told her that if it would make her feel better, she could send whatever she liked to a friend of his in London. She sent about everything she could wrap up, while he embarked on what turned out to be the Queen Mary's last prewar voyage.

As for things working out for Mr. Remarque, that's not the half of it, though. He was in Germany in January, 1933, when his agent called him up to remind him that the American magazine *Cosmopolitan* was expecting the manuscript of "Three Comrades," his third novel, in February. He hadn't even started it, so he jumped in his car and drove to Switzerland to concentrate. That was a good thing, because a couple of weeks later, Hitler, who considers "All Quiet on the Western Front" to be on the decadent side, became chancellor. "I escaped the Nazis through a belated sense of duty," he explained. Incidentally, "All Quiet," which was published in 1929, sold 1,200,000 copies in Germany after having been turned down by the first publisher it was offered to. "You know, one of *those* things," Remarque says. He wrote it in five weeks, another one of *those* things. He told us that it was not, as many people think, a diary he had kept during the war; he was able to write it quickly because it had to do with something he and his friends talked about every day.

Remarque was born in Osnabrück, in the north of Germany, in 1898. His father and two sisters may or may not be there still. After the last war, he became a test driver for a tire company and drifted by easy stages to the editorship of a sports magazine called *Sport im Bild*. After this came "that book," as he tends to call it, and then, also in easy stages, his three other novels. Now he's finishing the first draft of a novel about Paris in the two years before this war. At the moment, he's a bachelor, but he's been married twice, to the same woman. He has taken out his first citizenship papers and doesn't plan to go back to Germany, except maybe for a visit. He told us that the old country was a place he had pretty well put be-

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hind him and he had no notion whatever of what things might be like there now. "I don't know whether everybody's a Nazi or three-quarters of them are Nazis or what," he said, "and I doubt if anybody else does." He talks a little like Charles Boyer, only his accent is better.

Mot Juste

A WELL-GROOMED spy we know was sauntering through a corridor in the Pentagon Building recently and caught up with a British officer who was describing to an American the military intricacies of the battle of Salerno, which he had apparently observed. After mentioning the shelling of tanks by ships, the aerial dogfights overhead, and the confusion on the beach, the Britisher summed it all up. "It was realistic," he said. "*Damned* realistic."

Hatwires

WE have gradually become aware of another widespread movement to change a lifelong habit, and upon investigation find that it has nothing to do with war shortages or priorities but is an arbitrary matter of modern design, influenced by practical considerations. It is the disappearance of hatracks from the bottoms of seats in theatres, the passing of which seems to be up to us to record. The American Seating Company, which supplies seats to theatres, legitimate and movie, advises us that a definite trend against hatwires, as they are known in the trade, began four or five years ago. Hatwires have always been a headache to house managers. The modern snap-brim hats have a tendency to slither out of the rack and drop to the floor, where they are trampled to death as the customers wedge themselves in and out. Ladies snag their dresses and stockings on the hatwires and put in claims against the management. Walter Winchell couldn't have known everything about the situation when he accused the New York theatres of being in cahoots with their hatcheck concessionaires. It's not a conspiracy; it's a revolution.

Old-timers remember when the seats in some Broadway theatres had as much equipment as a yacht—hatwires, racks to hold umbrellas and canes, program lights, ashtrays, and slot machines that dispensed candy and opera glasses. Even in those days the hatwire was more or less vestigial, a holdover from the days before the folding seat. In the time of Edwin Booth, seats didn't fold and furthermore hats stayed in the rack because they had stiff brims. Theatre people are among the most conservative in the world, however, and it wasn't until comparatively recently that some daring theatre-chain operator specified no hatwires in a new theatre. The American Seating Company can't recall the revolutionary's name. Since then managers of most of the older houses have followed a laissez-faire policy; if a hatwire is damaged or wrenched off by an irritated patron, chances are that it will not be replaced.

We gather that the newer theatre seats are so streamlined that if they went anywhere they would meet no wind resistance. "Putting a hatwire on that smooth bottom would be like putting galoshes on a faun," an American Seating man remarked to us, taking the simile with no apparent wind resistance. Architects of New York theatres have seldom exceeded the minimum space between seats prescribed by city ordinance, thirty-two inches from seat back to seat back. The Normandie Theatre, on Fifty-third Street, has the greatest leg room the American Seating people know about locally: forty inches, and seat bottoms as smooth as ice.

S O S

YOU'VE probably read about the new radio transmitter now being installed in lifeboats, which enables a person with no knowledge of radio to send an S O S merely by turning a crank. Well, the manufacturer recent-