

FRENCH GIRLS IN LONDON.

By ANNE BEALE.



THAT deservedly popular suburb of London, St. John's Wood, stands a very hospitable mansion called Grove House. Although it is opposite St. John's Wood Chapel and St. John's Wood Metropolitan

Railway-station, and is placed just where four crossed roads have omnibus-waits at every corner, it still retains its prestige of a country-house. Once inside its iron gates and all the noise of the outer world seems suddenly to cease, and a sort of Elysian quietude prevails. Lawns and gardens, winding paths and shady avenues rejoice the sight; and the cool waters of the Regent's Canal take their slow and silent course beneath the large trees, refreshing the weary mind.

The owners of Grove House do not keep this, their pleasure, to themselves. As the summer comes round they take delight in opening it and its grounds to "all sorts and conditions of men." To-day, June 20th, 1893, its gates stand open to admit the members of the French Mission, under the superintendence of the Rev. Du Pontet de la Harpe. It is strange to be transported in the twinkling of an eye from England to France, the only channel to be crossed being the gates aforesaid. But no sooner are you through them than the French language greets you everywhere. The large assembly of guests, young and old, women and children, are all speaking French. It is, indeed, a foreign country into which we have so quickly entered.

Although all ages are represented, young women preponderate, and are resolved to enjoy this, the "thirty-first anniversary of the Mission to the French in London and Great Britain, in connection with the Reformed Evangelical Church in Bayswater." This they do, first of all, by thronging a tent erected on the lawn, whence issue fumes of their beloved coffee. We also throng the tent, and do not leave it until we have consumed as much of that favourite beverage, and as many slices of cake as may be convenient. Within the crowded tent are French women presiding at the tea and coffee urns—French girls cutting up the cake—French children waiting on the guests. A few English ladies intermingle, and they are airing their French to the best of their ability. Their conversation is not fluent, neither is that of the French women who respond in English. It is curious to find so many with so slight a knowledge of the language of the country in which, for a time at least, their lot is cast. One tells us that, although she has been twenty years in England, she cannot speak English. But these years have been spent entirely among her own compatriots, in connection with this Mission to the French. She has had no chance of learning the language of the country of her adoption. There are fifty or sixty thousand French in London alone, and we are thankful for the various "Missions" instituted both by English and French inhabitants of the Metropolis for their benefit; but we are not surprised at their ignorance of our language. There are districts of this huge city—parts of Soho, for instance—which are wholly French.

And this Mission of M. Du Pontet de la Harpe is, of necessity, French. It provides a Home for Foreign Governesses, a Registry

Office for Befriending Foreign Servants, schools and a church for French Protestants, a Medical Mission and other necessary adjuncts. The friends who surround us in this *fête champêtre* are all, more or less, connected with the Mission. M. Du Pontet himself and some of his friends wander about amongst his flock, and we are set a-wondering as to their native places and present abodes—so far asunder and so different! The cloudless sky of this our remarkable summer, the trees, flowers, and greensward must remind many of *la belle France*; and, as they roam about at will, play their old games, set the children to dance and variously disport themselves, they must almost imagine themselves at home again. At home! *Chez moi* is what all doubtless long to be!

And they have a home at 3, Colville House, Talbot Road, North Kensington. Its name is *Bienvenue*, Welcome. Here over three hundred governesses have found rest, and many of them situations during the past year, and nearly five thousand have tenanted it since its institution some ten years ago. Our English girls go to Paris in the hope of obtaining a livelihood, foreign girls come to England. It is a sort of give and take. We bid them welcome, and are thankful that English hospitality is still national. Mr. and Mrs. Greer are good examples of this, and their French guests are not slow in responding to their *Bienvenues*.

Suddenly, outside the tent, on the smooth lawn, the young girls start a round dance. Really a round dance, similar to our "Kiss in the ring," or "I carry water in my glove." In French it is called a "Ronde," and the dancers sing as they foot it. They move swiftly as they circle the girl in the middle, who finds it difficult to break the ring and to get into the place of her whom she ejects. The usual scramble for a kiss accompanies the exploit, and the game goes merrily on.

The French have a variety of these round games, and also many songs to be sung with them. Here is one.

LE PRINTEMPS.

Beau printemps reviens nous rendre
La parure des vallons;
Les ombrages, l'herbe tendre,
Les oiseaux et leurs chansons.

Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la.
Tra-la-la-la-la-a-la.
Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la.
Tra-la-la-a-la.

Que ton souffle nous ramène
Hirondelles, passereaux,
Qu'on entende dans la plaine
Les clochettes des troupeaux.

Tra-la-la, etc.

Rends la vie à nos campagnes,
Et ranime leurs couleurs;
Sur les cimes des montagnes
Fais renaître d'autres fleurs.

Tra-la-la, etc.

Another round dance seems similar to the last, with the exception that the girl in the middle is replaced by the one she kisses as rapidly as possible. The accompanying song is called—

LA PERCHE.

C'était une grande perche
Pour abattre les noix;
C'était bien malhonnête
De la faire connaître—

Adieu (*bis*) embrasse (*ter*)
Adieu, adieu, embrasse qui tu veux.

How bright and cheerful it all is! We forget that the young people who dance so merrily, chase one another so quickly, and kiss the chosen friend so heartily, are strangers and foreigners in our land. We forget, as we hope they do, the anxieties of daily life, and the difficulties experienced in procuring its daily bread. The songs of the "Rondes" carry us all away from the prosaic present to "Les Alpes," "Les Chamois," and "Le beau Château." They embrace also "Le Cavalier Russe," "Grand Guillaume," and a "Chant guerrier," all of which are inspiring, though they are not all danced and sung this afternoon. If it be possible to procure the music, the French girls will submit it to their English sisters, and as many of them are readers of THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER, the pleasure will be mutual.

While the girls dance and the children play, and while guests, native and foreign, still throng the coffee tent, we will just take a glance at the work accomplished by the Mission.

The Société de l'Espérance, "The Society of Hope," seems a good starting-point in view of the present gathering. Its motto is "Love and serve," and it numbers one hundred and fifty members. These are French servant-girls, who are "on the Lord's side," and who meet for Bible classes and other religious services. Indeed, the Sunday afternoon Bible classes are generally well attended, and out of the five hundred and fifty girls who applied for situations last year, many have been brought into Christ's fold. But perhaps the most remarkable outcome of this evangelical work is the Medical Mission, at 4, Oxford Mansions, Oxford Circus. And this is in danger of being closed, because one of M. Du Pontet's stringent rules is not to be in debt, and the Mission is in debt, though not very deeply. A few hundred pounds would clear it; but until these flow into the exchequer, some branch of the parent tree must be lopped, and the Medical Mission is to be the unfortunate branch. We trust the pruning knife may be stayed, and the foreign sick in our midst continue to have medicine both for body and soul dispensed to them. During the last fourteen years some twenty-seven thousand have been physically and spiritually treated, for medical missions "minister to the mind diseased" while doctoring the body. The patient, biding his time in the waiting-room, hears the Word of Life, and gratefully receives a gospel or Bible, as may be, from the friend who speaks to him. Although this Mission is essentially French, it has embraced nearly a score of nationalities, and foreigners visit it of "many unknown tongues." May it please the All Wise to send the means to continue so blessed a work. Three or four hundred pounds in donations and subscriptions would suffice, albeit that would not quite enable M. Du Pontet to exclaim, "Out of debt, out of danger." He dislikes begging as much as we do, but he finds it difficult to get on without it. "Ask and ye shall receive," is an apt text, for without "asking" the poor mendicant rarely gets his copper. Still, many kind friends send voluntary and sometimes anonymous aid, which arrives like "flowers in May" to the anxious founder and maintainer of this Mission, at his residence, 16, Kildare Gardens, Bayswater.

The cheerful gathering at Grove House might lead one to suppose that the female sex was alone benefited by the said Mission. But on glancing through the Report, while the young girls still dance their "Rondes," we

see the "Cercle de la Jeune France" mentioned, another kind of "Ronde," to which young men of sixteen and upward are welcomed. This is held not far from where the Medical Mission has its quarters, at 9, Oxford Mansions, Oxford Street, and, like it, is open to youths of every nationality irrespective of creed.

Here, also, is a Salon de Lecture and inquiry office, open for men every day except Sunday from eleven to six, and on Sunday at three. Evening classes, refreshments, and recreations are provided at a moderate charge; and who shall appraise the benefits that must accrue to the foreigner from such a place of

refuge? The schools in Bedford Passage, Fitzroy Square, are likewise for boys and girls, so the male sex cannot complain that they are left out in the cold, albeit not invited to the reunion at Grove House on this bright June afternoon. That is to say, the guests are mainly of the gentler sex; but at five o'clock M. Du Pontet is joined by many male friends who assemble to speak kindly Christian words to the young people who have been disporting themselves in this English Elysée. Another large circle is formed on the lawn, and the company are soon quietly seated. In their midst are their pasteur and his male friends

prepared to speak good words to them in their own tongue. Again we are transported to France, and wonder if they have open-air religious meetings there. Each speaker delivers a kindly and encouraging address, and shows how that true Christianity is of no particular creed nor clime. The young folk who danced their Rondes so merrily now drink in the words of affectionate counsel with equal zeal, and we are convinced that the spiritual side of the *fête champêtre* will be long treasured in the hearts of the listeners. So will be the kindly welcome accorded to them by the generous master and mistress of Grove House.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

EDUCATIONAL.

CONSTANT READER.—We should recommend you to make enquiries at the Educational Enquiry Office and Registration for Teachers at 74, Gower Street, W.C.; Secretary, Miss A. G. Cooper.

H. G.—The head office of the Froebel Society is 12, Buckingham Street, Strand, W.C. There are eight kindergarten training colleges in London and five in the provinces. One of the former is at 13, York Place, Baker Street, W., Secretary, Miss Franks; and one of the latter at Sheffield, Superintendent, Mrs. Woodhouse, High School. At these candidates are prepared for the National Froebel Union Exams. Write to the secretaries for all further information.

LILY WILSON.—The College of Proceptors in Bloomsbury Square, W.C., holds half-yearly exams. for pupils, the certificates of which are recognised as guarantees of a good general education. The fee amounts to 10s. Write to the secretary for the answer to your query. We could not tell you whether they would arrange for carrying on your studies in the South of France, and granting a certificate without your personal attendance at the exams.

LOMCOX.—If you consult our many answers on the subject you will see that governesses find no opening for their work in the Colonies excepting as an adjunct to the work of a lady's-help, prepared to assist the housewife in every description of work in which she herself is engaged.

ANXIOUS M. is beginning early to prepare herself for the situation of nursery governess, and wants a book that would be useful for that purpose. We do not know of any one book that would comprise all she has to learn. She wants one on geography. We think she needs a spelling-book too. She should get a good atlas, and Milner's *Universal Geography*, revised by Keith Johnston.

JUDITH.—To obtain an appointment as lecturer write for all information to Miss Lankester, Secretary of National Health Society, 53, Berners Street, Oxford Street, W. All candidates must be upwards of twenty-five years of age and generally well educated. They must have attended the ambulance classes (inaugurated by the Order of St. John of Jerusalem), and gone through a course of three months' training in an infirmary or hospital.

MUSIC.

E. HARTLAND, Hon. Secretary of a practising society (Newent, Gloucester). We are glad to hear that our notice of your society has resulted so wonderfully well in obtaining new members.

STUDENT OF TRIN. COLL.—Guido Aretino, or Guido d'Arezzo, was a Benedictine monk, stated to have been the inventor of the musical gamut. He was the author of the *Artes Musicae* and the *Micrologus de Disciplina* about the year 1030. He was born about A.D. 990, and died about the year 1050.

CURIOSITY.—You do not say to which school of music you wish to attach yourself. For the Associated Board of the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music apply for information to the Secretary, George Watson, Esq., 52, New Bond Street, W.; for the Guildhall College of Music, write to the Secretary, Mr. W. P. Smith, Victoria Embankment; for the Society of Arts, to the Secretary, John Street, Adelphi, W.C.

A WORKING GIRL.—You would require a master to train your voice or you would fall into bad habits and tricks. To procure an instruction book, with scales to practise, would be a little expensive, but quite insufficient. Such books are to be procured at a music publishers'.

PETERINA.—There are several colleges of music where you could pass exams. For the Royal Academy and Royal College of Music write for information to George Watson, Esq., 52, New Bond Street, W.; for the Guildhall College of Music, Victoria Embankment, write to the Secretary; and for the Society of Arts, John Street, Adelphi, W.C., likewise.

MISCELLANEOUS.

ANXIOUS ONE.—The blinking of the eyes is a nervous affection. To relieve the local trouble you should be treated with reference to your nervous system.

A SCHOOLGIRL.—I. It was Suraja Dowlah, the Nabob of Bengal, who put one hundred and forty-six British prisoners into the dark cell at Calcutta, called "the Black Hole" (A.D. 1756). The fort we held was taken by an army of seventy thousand horse and foot and four hundred elephants. The dungeon was about eighteen feet square; and only twenty-three persons came out of it alive the next morning! Mr. John Zephaniah Holwell was the gallant defender of Calcutta, and was incarcerated in the dungeon with his countrymen. Dowlah was slain the next year by one of his own officers when Lord Clive and Admiral Watson regained the city. Of those who perished in the Black Hole, Macaulay says "not one of them could have been recognised by their own mothers!"—2. There were two Allan Ramsays—father and son, the former a poet, the latter a painter. The father was a wig-maker, then a bookseller, and afterwards a writer (1685-1758). The son was a portrait-painter, whose works were regarded by Walpole as equal to those of Sir Joshua Reynolds. He was a favourite with George III., and likewise of Dr. Johnson, who thought much of his literary works and conversational powers, and equally so of his good dinners!

ANXIOUS ONE, No. 2.—A bad digestion is probably the cause of your trouble. Food decomposes which ought to be digested. Attend to your liver and diet.

DOLLIE AND NETTIE (Australia) enquire whether it be "the correct thing for a gentleman to embrace a lady when he is first introduced to her?" Certainly not. Possibly, after a fifty years' acquaintance, and on some special occasion, such as a Christmas festival or wedding, the rule might be relaxed.—2. We think the phrase you quote may be Persian. The first part of the Mahomedan confession of faith is, in that language, *La-Mah-e-il-Allah!* i.e. "There is no god but God." It is a form of exclamation ever on the lips of Mahomedans, and employed irrespective of any devout sense of the meaning of the words.

A READER.—I. The term "palimpsest" signifies "twice rubbed" with reference to a manuscript (from a Greek word). The parchment was twice prepared for receiving an inscription, effected by rubbing with pumice-stone, first, in the course of manufacture, the skin having been dried or "cured," and a second time, after the original writing had been washed out or erased. "Twice prepared for writing" is the precise meaning of the word.—2. The phrase *Ullima Thule* is Latin, taken from Virgil. Thule was the most remote island in the northern latitudes known to the Romans; and thus the phrase denotes the most distant extremity of the world.

J. W.—I. A "Sabbath day's journey" was $7\frac{1}{2}$ furlongs, or some 16,050 yards, according to Dr. Adam Clarke. The Mount of Olives, according to Josephus, was 5 stadia, or 625 paces from Jerusalem, which would make the distance prescribed for the Sabbath-day walk out there about 1050 yards.—2. There are six or more benevolent societies for aiding female prisoners when discharged. If you desire information about the work, write to the secretary of the Royal Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society, 32, Charing Cross, S.W., which assists convicts from all prisons, and short-term female prisoners discharged from Wormwood Scrubs. We are sure that articles of clothing would be most acceptable.

WANDERER.—You might obtain a good suggestion in our series entitled "Some New Occupations for Women and Girls."

LARD.—We have ceased to repeat our answers to questions on the complexion and skin diseases. There are hospitals for the treatment of the latter, where you can obtain advice gratis if our answers and articles be insufficient.

QUEENIE.—We regret that we cannot offer you work on our paper. We have to employ experienced writers, and cannot give our readers "trial" stories.

TASMANIAN.—1. There is no such verse in the Holy Scriptures as the somewhat irreverent phrase you name. We have much to expect at the hands of our Heavenly Father and benefactor through the merits of His divine Son; and those persons who may be hereafter "disappointed" have only themselves to blame.—2. The less whalebone you put into your stays the better.—3. Alkali in soap should be avoided as injurious to the skin.

LILY.—There is no reason, on the ground of near relationship, to preclude marriage with a cousin. The union would not be within the prohibited degrees set forth as by law prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer. The only objection that could be raised against it is that of expediency in the case of any hereditary complaint in the family. Were there consumption, gout, insanity, or epileptic fits, cancer and glandular swellings, of course the evils would be intensified in the children of such a marriage.

ANNOYED.—Probably your questions had been too often answered in reply to other correspondents to permit of still further repetition. There is no stated time when letters should arrive at our office. Your writing is good, but the tone of your letter is objectionable. Reflect a little before writing.

FRANKIE'S DARLING wishes to know "why a young woman of fifteen years and six months may not be engaged to a man," and quotes the case of some other girl who was silly enough to marry at that age. You are not nearly grown up. You are a child, who ought to be in the schoolroom, or, if obliged to go out to work, should be learning under an upper servant the duties of domestic service. A man of twenty-six ought to know better than to speak of marriage to a little, inexperienced girl who cannot express herself correctly, and can scarcely write, for her handwriting is a mere scribble. No wonder "everybody" should be "so against" such an inexpedient engagement. Your mother should dismiss the man at once, for you are not old enough to know your own mind, and you have not done growing.

NORTH WALES.—1. There is much acidity in your system, and you should have your diet regulated under medical advice, and forthwith be treated with the proper medicines, or you may let the disease go too far to be arrested in its course.—2. There is a Village Home for Lady Guests at from 12s. 6d. to 25s. weekly, at Broadway, Worcestershire—address, Miss Emily C. Weston, Pethuel Lodge. Also, there is the Farm House, Little Addyns, Horsted Keynes, Sussex. Apply to Miss Mason. Terms for board and lodging, 12s. 6d. per week. The Seaside Home for Ladies, 2 and 3 Denmark Terrace, Bognor, Sussex, might suit you. The terms from 15s. to 21s. per week. Address the Lady Superintendent, Miss E. A. Harrison. We have not the addresses of any such homes in North Wales, though we have those of many in other places.

WILD ROSEBUD.—Perhaps a stocking-knitting machine would enable you to earn a little by getting trade orders, and some amongst your acquaintances. The fact of your being an invalid, confined to a couch, would add to your chances of success.

A. S. A. G.—We are greatly touched by your grateful acknowledgment of help rendered by us. It is most encouraging, and we hope your work in the parish will be greatly blessed.

ADA.—The "Rosetta stone" was discovered near Rosetta, hence its name. It was the key by means of which the Egyptian hieroglyphics were read, discovered by a French officer of marines at Fort St. Julian, on a branch of the Nile, during the French occupation of Egypt in 1799. There is an inscription on it in Greek and Latin, as well as in hieroglyphic. It was set up B.C. 105. It is of black basalt, and is preserved in the British Museum, having been delivered to us on the capitulation of Alexandria.