



*The Hon. Lady Fortescue.*

JUNE is a radiant month of roses and opening buds—a fitting month for *debutantes* to blossom forth into a world which seems ever more eager to wear them proudly in its buttonhole.

What a splendid time the children of to-day have ! From the moment of birth they, are people of importance ; the " gamp " has given place to a skilled trained nurse, ready to cope with every childish ailment that may attack her precious charge ; in the nursery and schoolroom fascinating methods of tuition have been devised to lure the child into the paths of learning. She is encouraged to splash paint about to express her feelings, her sense of rhythm is developed by musical exercises, even the dull subjects are rendered attractive. And when she is older she is taken to interesting lectures ; when she reads Shakespeare's plays she is taken to see them acted by the leading players of the day ; she is taught history in the rooms of the British and South Kensington Museum ; botany and bird-lore in country fields and woods ; the knowledge and love of pictures is instilled into her by study of wonderful reproductions or by visits to the great galleries of Europe.

No longer are children asked to " mug " up subjects from dull books—how well I remember an irreverent brother of mine writing upon the fly-leaf of Ransome's History of England, " We have a Ransome for our sins "—everything is illustrated for them and the dry bones made to live.

And since the French franc fell so low, most parents can afford to send their girls to Paris for a year to be French polished. The pensions are full of English families who have come over for this purpose, Parents find it cheaper to let their homes in England and accompany their girls. Living in Paris is cheap, and there are endless small hotels and pensions where " summer prices " are given all the year round to visitors who book their rooms for a period of weeks or months ; and life in Paris is far fuller, more varied and amusing than life in London, for parents who are " putting in time " while their children are being educated. And it is far better for the girls themselves to go to a school or convent by day and return to the wholesome influence of an English home at night.

The French idea of finishing a girl's education is far more comprehensive and practical than ours. Girls are taught cookery in all its branches from competent *chefs*. I know of one delightful little English girl of seventeen who, after six weeks of cooking lessons in Paris, undertook the cookery for her family during the whole of last summer. They hired a *chalet* in the Pyrenees, and little Anne astonished them daily with her delicious French dishes, contrived, it appeared, out of nothing at all.

Dressmaking, and fine embroidery of every kind are also taught, and, which is most valuable, taught in so fascinating a way that pupils become really enthusiastic over

their work. I have yet to meet the girl, schooled in Paris, who does not wear the daintiest *lingerie* made entirely by herself.

The art of wearing clothes correctly becomes instilled into them—they learn the exact length a skirt should be, and that the coat worn over it must on no account be shorter; the perfect line of a hat, and the tilt to a fraction of an inch over the eyes.

Pride of appearance—a sleek shingle, well-shod feet and carefully manicured hands—become second nature. Girls learn that the perfection of dressing is always to wear the right frock at the right moment ; never to be over-dressed or under-dressed ; that a smart *tailleur*, perfectly cut, can look right for almost every occasion.

Both in the art of cookery and the art of clothes the Frenchwoman understands better than any other woman in the world—except, perhaps, the canny, thrifty Scot—how to lay out her money to best advantage and to make the most of her purchases when bought. From the peelings of fruit and vegetables, too often thrown away by scornful English cooks, the French chef makes excellent soups and sauces ; from what is cut to waste from a piece of material the French dressmaker contrives, with odd scraps of lace and ribbon, to create gossamer under-garments, a dainty handkerchief to tuck into the vest pocket of a *tailleur*; a cluster of flowers to decorate a hat or frock. Nothing is useless, nothing is ever thrown away. French ingenuity can make use of the so-called rubbish of the world.

And the French ideas and skill graft excellently upon young English trees which afterwards bear even better fruit than the French ones. We English are a peculiarly plodding and endeavouring race. We don't like to be beaten, and most of us know how to drudge our way to success. Thus it is that when English girls are educated in France they gradually go one better than the French. The *Parisienne* gets a brilliant idea for a frock and blows her material together with wonderful artistry—but no *finish*. The *Anglaise* copies the idea, but *her* frock is beautifully finished to the last detail of stitchery. The inside seams will bear examination ! An Englishman—once an actor—who designs the loveliest artificial flowers made from the feathers of the humble goose, told me that although all the great French dressmakers buy his flowers for their model gowns, he had tried unsuccessfully to run a workroom in Paris. The French girls were incapable of the careful work and finish required ; they had neither the patience nor the perseverance to make these dainty blossoms successfully. All his workers are British. He has trained them from school age, and most of them can now be trusted not only to make up the fragile petals into flowers, but to dye, tint and curl them into the exact tints and forms of nature.

There is hope for us yet !