Cheshire, and Yorkshire) in damp meadows, dwarf mallow in waste places (notice the parasitic fingers on its leaves), hound's tongue, yellow cow-wheat, butterfly orchis, gout weed, feverfew, hedge bind weed, and a host of others, and perhaps rarer kinds, all are celebrating the "loves of the plants," flowering, and seeding, and dying—one generation succeeding another, but each helping to clothe the earth with its annual wedding garment.

Nursery French.

Many of the mothers of to-day will still remember the sad bewilderment and weariness of their first French lessons, when at the age of nine or ten they were considered old enough to "begin" French, and were suddenly called upon to grapple with the difficulties of reading and writing in a foreign language, whose words, pronunciation, construction, were all alike equally strange and uninteresting to them.

Believing, as we do now, that children should learn a foreign language as they learn their mother tongue—they speak it long before they learn to read and write—we endeavour to give the little ones while still in the nursery a joyous and interesting oral introduction, by means of games, songs, and stories, to the future study of the language as read and written.

Passing over the baby stage of learning, the names of the objects in sight, at table, round the room, out of doors (never omitting the article), and the learning of little sentences by slow and careful repetition, e.g., "J'ai une rose," "le chat dort," "j'aime ma mère," the little one will soon be ready to join in the lively dancing and singing games of his elder brothers and sisters, and will before long be quite as successful in playing "la flûte," "le violon" in "La Mist-en-l'air," or in imitating "le beau monsieur," "la belle dame," "le Capuchin" in "Le Pont d'Avignon," as he is in "washing his face" while dancing round the "Mulberry Bush," or in balancing his fat little person in "Looby Loo." "Savez-vous planter les choux?" is a great favourite; all dance round while asking the question, and then show with appropriate action how they plant with the hand, foot, elbow, the little gardeners going down on their knees with great zest, to plant "avec le nez." There is something peculiarly buoyant and inspiring in the French nursery songs; the rhythm
and easy words catch the children’s fancy, and it is delightful to see the absorption and pleasure of the little dancers as they acquire themselves to their mother’s pride and delight. The lively refrain of “La Bonne Maman” or “Bon voyage, cher Durnollet,” on the stairs, as if in the rhythm of the dance, is heard. There are numberless collections of French nursery songs, but among the best may be mentioned *French Rounds and Nursery Rhymes,* and + ‘Vieilles Chansons et Rondes.’

The illustrations in the latter are very amusing and suggestive, and in the former full directions are given for all the action-songs. The children will, naturally, learn the words slowly and carefully, with their meaning, as well as the actions and music.

Perhaps two of the most simple of the French “talking” games are “J’ai un panier” and “French Loto,” which are quite possible to very small players. In the first, all sit round the table, or the fire, and the mother says to her right-hand little neighbour, “J’ai un panier.” This calls for the interested question, “Que mets-tu dedans?” and its answer by mother, “J’y mets des pois,” “des œufs,” or any other familiar object. The little neighbour first spoken to then tells her right-hand neighbour “J’ai un panier,” and so the announcement, question, and answer pass round the circle. Generally, the children try to think of something amusing to put in their baskets, and the game goes on amid a ripple of merry laughter.

In “French Loto,” each child has a card with about twenty little pictures of familiar objects on it, and a heap of as many counters. The leader of the game reads out from a list she has the name of one of the objects represented on a card, perhaps “la chaise.” The child who has the picture on her card says “J’ai la chaise,” and covers it with a counter; the one who gets all the pictures on the card covered first, wins the game.

Counting games of all sorts offer a wide range for instruction with amusement, beginning with simple counting with objects handed by the children, such as counters, cards, dominoes, and this almost always proves a fascinating employment. Next might follow a little game of question and answer concerning objects held in the hand or pointed at. Thus, No. 1 can ask her neighbour, “Combien de plumes ai-je dans la main?” If the answer be correctly given in full, No. 2 may ask her next neighbour a similar question, and so on round the circle. Children find much amusement in the game of “Buzz,” which can be played in French, thus: It is agreed before the game begins that a certain number, say “sept,” shall not be mentioned, either by itself, or in dix-sept, vingt-sept, &c., and that “Buzz,” shall be said in its stead. The counting goes regularly round and round, each one saying the number which comes next—un, deux, trois, quatre, cinq, six, buzz, huit, neuf, dix, onze, douze, treize, quatorze, quinze, seize, dix-buzz, dix-huit, &c., and the bright eyes look out eagerly for the chance of saying “vingt-buzz,” &c., the forgetful one, who says “trente-sept,” making her mistake amid shouts of merry laughter, as her forfeit is exacted. The games of “Twenty Questions,” “How, When, and Where?” “Circles or Clumps,” “Judge and Jury,” are popular in most nurseries, and, if played in French, help materially to increase the children’s vocabulary and fluency of speech. The French translation of Kate Greenaway’s pretty “Book of Games” gives an endless variety, and will be found very useful.

Besides the words of the songs they sing, children much enjoy learning to recite little fables and stories, and the facility with which they copy both words and expression from their teacher is truly wonderful, and especially forces the question upon us, “How are we to secure a good accent for our children?” A mother may do her painstaking best in her nursery French games and plays, but most likely she will feel, unless she has been educated in France, that there is a too conscious effort about it all, and she will perhaps despondently think of Chaucer’s Prioresse, whose French was

After the schola de Stratford-nte-Roe, For French of Paris was to hire unknown.

Plainly, then, what is needed is to give vivacity and a true ring to our nursery French is the help of a well-educated French lady, a lover of children, able and willing to play and talk brightly with them.

It is not always easy to obtain this help, and so, many who wish their children to speak French are content to engage *... Jeux et Passé-temps.* Kate Greenaway, Hachette. 5s.
a French home, and certainly the little ones learn to speak
French better, and certainly the little ones learn to speak
French more easily; but in many cases the disappointed
mother will find that not only have the little vulgarisms in
expression, intonation, liaison, become firmly fixed, but that
children's accent has suffered by copying the
bonnie's broken pronunciation of that language.

Some may be able to solve the difficulty by employing
a good resident French governess, but usually this is felt to
be an unnecessary expense while the children are still very
young.

A plan that answers very well, and is easily carried out by
most dwellers in towns, is, for two or more families, mustering
perhaps about twelve children, to join together in engaging a
French lady to come for an hour, two or three times a week,
to the most conveniently situated house, for games, songs,
story-telling, and chat. The cost of these lessons, usually 5s. or
6s. per hour, being shared by the number of children, is very
trifling to each mother. In remote country places, more
arrangement and co-operation would be needed to carry out
any such plan. In some neighbourhoods there may be a family
employing a resident French lady, who would be willing to
allow her to hold nursery classes in friends' houses. In other
places, it might be possible for, say, half-a-dozen families to
subscribe £15 to £20 each per annum to induce a French
lady to settle in some central village, making up her income,
perhaps, by private lessons to older pupils.

It may further be suggested that many French ladies, teaching
in England, are glad of holiday engagements, and an over-
worked teacher, from a school perhaps, would find rest and
refreshment in a quiet comfortable English home, with no
heavier duties than to 'play in French' with the willing babies,
who, having no false shame or pride to overcome, make energetic
and funny attempts to understand, answer, and play as required of
them, and are consequently very delightful pupils. The
children will listen enraptured to the little stories of French
children that Mademoiselle will be able to tell them in her
charming vivacious manner; of the clear mites in the "Asile"
learning their droll little complimentary speeches to say on
five-days; of the struggle between Victor and Henri, both aged
about three, to gain the good conduct medal, the blushing pride
of Victor as the medal is pinned to his pretty frock; and then,
leaving the infant school of well-dressed comfortable children,
she will be able to lead her little listeners to the cottage of the
poor widow, whose little ones have their sabots ever so much too
big, so that they shouldn't grow out of them, and must stuff
them with straw to make them at all comfortable; and so on,
with touches of real French life, till the little Britons feel it
is worth while to try to speak the language of such interesting
fellow creatures. We may hope that the foundation of a
hearty living interest in the country so intimately connected
with our own will thus be laid in nursery days.

With what different prospects will children taught in this
manner "begin" to read and write French to those who have
had no joyous and interesting oral introduction, for, with them,
the ladder is well in position, the feet already off the ground
on the first step, and the little climber can see where she is
going.

Frances Epps.