



THE POSTER OF "LA FRONDE."

## "La Fronde."

THE FIRST DAILY PAPER PRODUCED FOR WOMEN BY WOMEN.

BY FREDERICK DOLMAN.



WOMEN'S "daily" has for a long time been the dream of some "advanced women" in England and America. By some strange irony of circumstances the practical realization of this dream has been left to the gay and frivolous Parisienne—as she is pictured, that is, by her Anglo-Saxon sisters.

In the autumn of 1897 the following advertisement attracted some amount of attention throughout France:—

Women form the majority of the population in France. Thousands of women, spinners or widows, are living in independence of men. Women pay taxes, though they cannot vote, contribute by their manual or intellectual labour to the wealth of the nation, and claim the right to be heard on all questions pertaining to the society of which they are members equally with men.

*La Fronde*, a women's

journal for women, will be the faithful echo of their feelings, wants, and claims.

On the boulevards this announcement was received with no small amount of ridicule and derision, and when it was learned that the new paper was to be entirely produced by the work of women, it was freely prophesied that the "fad" would not last a month. But when the first number of *La Fronde* appeared on December 9th, 1897, the tone completely changed. The Press generally gave the fair new-comer something better than a chivalrous welcome, and 200,000 copies were sold. In a short time the sound editorship, accurate information, and philosophic style of *La Fronde* caused it to be dubbed "the *Times* in petticoats"—a sobriquet which its conductors smilingly accepted as a high compliment.



MADAME MARGUERITE DURAND, PROPRIETOR AND EDITOR OF "LA FRONDE."

From a Photograph.



From a]

THE EDITORIAL STAFF AND CONTRIBUTORS.

[Photograph.

It has celebrated its second birthday, and looking at a copy of *La Fronde* in comparison with its Paris contemporaries, I should unhesitatingly conclude that the first daily journal "*féminin* and *féministe*" had come to stay.

"But *La Fronde*?" I can hear the puzzled reader exclaim. Many visitors to Paris, glancing at the papers on the kiosks, must have passed this, the title conveying no meaning to them. They may or may not remember that this was the name given to a certain civil war which afflicted France in 1648-53. The historical recollection does not give much help. The civil war was nicknamed "*La Fronde*," or "*The War of the Sling*," from the mimic conflict of boys with this weapon in the ditches of Paris. The leaders of the people against the Parliament spoke of it as a "*war of the public weal*"; but Michelet, the historian, characterizes the campaign as "*a burlesque war*," "*a war of children with a child's nickname*." This little excursion into history, therefore, leaves us no wiser as to the fitness of this title for women's pioneer in daily journalism. When Madame Emmy Fournier, the *rédactrice-en-chef*—or acting editor, as we should say—was questioned on

the point she could only shrug her shoulders. So we must conclude that this choice of a title is the one piece of caprice in this noteworthy enterprise with which Madame Marguerite Durand, the founder and editor of *La Fronde*, has justified her sex.

Paris has not its Fleet Street, the newspaper offices being scattered about the west central district. The *La Fronde* building is in the Rue St. Georges, a quiet street off the Rue de la Fayette. It is a typical Parisian *hôtel* of five storeys, with white stonework and latticed windows, converted for the nonce to the purposes of newspaper production—such a building as contrasts most agreeably with the dingy, smoke-begrimed bricks and mortar of our own Fleet Street. An electric arc lamp illumines the title, *La Fronde*, and reveals in the lower windows large copies of



From a]

MADAME FOURNIER, THE ACTING EDITOR.

[Photograph.



Mlle. Dufau's symbolical picture of the women of the country, whether in the costume of the peasant or in that of the nun, joining hands together and acclaiming the newspaper as the herald of the enfranchisement of their sex.

An inquiry of a matronly janitor in her little office at the foot of the staircase brings down a girlish messenger in neat black dress, who conducts me to the room of Madame Fournier, *rédactrice-en-chef*. Madame Fournier is busy with MSS. and proofs, but rises from her chair, and with all the charm of one of the most charming Parisiennes it has been my good fortune to meet, at once places herself at my disposal for this article in THE STRAND MAGAZINE.

*La Fronde*, she tells me, was founded entirely by the efforts of Madame Marguerite Durand. As the wife of a well-known Deputy, Madame



THE BUSINESS MANAGER.  
From a Photograph.

Durand had become intimately acquainted with politics and politicians, and for some time before undertaking the present enterprise she had contributed to the *Figaro*. About a dozen ladies were employed as members of the indoor staff, as writers, sub-editors, and reporters, all of whom came practically fresh to the routine work of a newspaper office. Besides these, there were twenty or thirty regular contributors to the columns of *La Fronde*, most of whom had had previous journalistic experience in writing occasionally for other papers. Of this number the most distinguished was the lady with whose work, under the *nom-de-plume* of "Séverine," Paris had long been familiar. Séverine contributes nearly every day a short political and social *causerie*, under the title of "Notes d'une Frondeuse."

I made the acquaintance of some members



From a

THE STAFF DINNER.

[Photograph.]



From a]

THE EDITOR'S SANCTUM.

[Photograph.

of the staff when Madame Fournier took me over the building. With the financial editor, for instance, a young lady who with tape and telephone by her side was absorbed in Bourse quotations and reports; perhaps it was by way of relief from such prosaic things that she had decorated the walls of her room with the playbills of Paris theatres, unless, indeed, this was the work of her *confrère*, the dramatic critic, who at other hours may pen her "notices" at this same desk. I met this lady on the staircase, about to make her way to a *première* at one of the theatres, and was there introduced to an editorial writer who had just arrived for her evening's work. The reporters' room was empty, and I was disappointed in not seeing the two fair correspondents who won renown at Rennes by their pen-pictures of the trial of Dreyfus, whose cause, by the way, has been championed by *La Fronde* from its first number.

Judging by those whom I saw and by their portraits, as published in these pages, *les Frondeuses* may be described as a body of intellectual women, full of energy and vivacity, many still having the bloom of youth, and most that piquant charm which is so seldom found outside Paris. In her manner and costume

nothing could be more unlike the "blue stockings" of a caricature which is scarcely yet discredited. Even the empty rooms through which I pass bespeak the femininity of their usual occupants—in the scent of flowers, the air of delicacy given by a dozen little knick-knacks, and in other less definable ways. There is but one exception to the womanliness of *La Fronde*, in the

person of one of the political writers who chooses to don masculine attire, after the example of the great artist, Rosa Bonheur.

Madame Durand's editorial sanctum looked almost as pretty as a pretty boudoir under the soft glow of electric light, irradiating the light tints of its decoration and furnishing. The dainty writing-table and luxuriously easy chairs suggested a delightful union between the graces of life, with its weightier cares and responsibilities, as exemplified in the directress of a daily newspaper. Among other photographs in the room were many portraits of members of Madame Durand's staff, *à propos* of which I learned of the warm spirit



THE REPORTERS' ROOM—ONE OF THE POLITICAL WRITERS IN MASCULINE DRESS.

From a Photograph from



of comradeship animating all *les Frondeuses*. They dine together on the day of St. Margaret—Madame Durand's patron saint — and on page 213 appears a picture of last year's festival at a well-known garden restaurant in the Bois de Boulogne. Adjoining Madame Durand's room is the *La Fronde* library. In this apartment, which is no less tastefully furnished, are being collected all the books published by Frenchwomen. Practically all that have been given to the world since the establishment of *La Fronde* are to be found, and nearly every day presentation copies of new works arrive from their authors.

The composing-room is at the top of the building. About twenty women are employed, gathered together from various printing establishments in Paris. There is a neatness, a cleanliness, I cannot help noticing about these *ouvrières* and their work such as is not usually associated with a type-setting establishment. The young woman to whom the task of proof-reading is intrusted sits in an adjoining corridor, a picture of pleasant serenity such as her occupation does not always engender. But, then, there is no grinding machinery to rack her nerves. The actual printing of *La Fronde*, as is not unusual with Paris newspapers, I believe, is put out to contract and is done in other premises. On the other hand, the business connected with advertisements and the sale of the paper is carried on here by a staff of lady clerks, who are prettily uniformed



THE SPORTING EDITOR.  
From a Photograph.

in green cloth and white facings.

Descending to the ground floor again, I finish my tour of inspection with the *salon* — an important feature in the establishments of leading French newspapers. In this commodious yet cosy hall, resembling a large drawing-room, ladies come and take afternoon tea or a glass of wine, read the paper, or chat with their friends for half an hour or so. Now and again, it is the scene of evening parties at which Madame Durand acts as hostess. On such occasions you would meet there not merely the leaders of the "woman's movement" in France, but also a company of the most distinguished men and women of Paris in politics, art, literature, and journalism. Splendid toilettes dazzle the eyes, musical "stars"

enchant the ears. The most recent of these brilliant functions took place last December in celebration of the second anniversary of the newspaper, when Madame Durand received a testimonial from its friends and admirers in the shape of a bronze *bas-relief* by the sculptress, Madame Syamour, representing "the woman of the past" raising her veil of ignorance and



From a

THE COMPOSING-ROOM.

[Photograph.



From a]

THE SALON.

[Photograph.

discerning the coming of a new day for her sex.

This *salon* is also the meeting-place of several societies in which *La Fronde*, as a newspaper, takes a sympathetic interest. The "Ligue du Droit des Femmes," for instance, meets here once a month. By its persistent advocacy as well as practical aid it is said that *La Fronde* has already proved itself an important factor in bringing about reforms that Frenchwomen have long desired—such as the right to the disposal of their own earnings or properties, their representation on tribunals of commerce, and their admission as *avocats*.

It must not be supposed, however, that *La Fronde* concerns itself only with feminine affairs. Published at a *sou*, it contains four fairly large pages—being about the same size as most of the Paris "dailies"—and probably about half this space is occupied by matter which would interest men as well as women, such as home and foreign politics, literature and the drama, finance and sport—although

sport is treated mainly from a woman's standpoint. On the other hand, the heading "Le Home" is so unfamiliar in a French newspaper as to give it a very distinctive meaning. *La Fronde* shows a strong interest in the welfare of working women—among whom it circulates largely—and has organized a special department for the benefit of the female "unemployed." In politics generally it is Radical and Republican, and—true to the best instincts of women—is all for peace and amity in international relations.

Very vigorous

were its protests, by the way, against the insults to Queen Victoria which were recently rampant in a disreputable section of the French Press.



From a]

THE EDITORIAL PET.

[Photograph.