

THE LATIN QUARTIER WAIF WHO HAS TWENTY-FIVE "MOTHERS"

P'tit Gilbert's Soldier Father Was Killed and His Mother Died of Grief—Then Twenty-Five American Girl Artists and Writers Formed a "Godmother Group" to Provide for the Little Fellow's Future—Other Groups Wish for War Babies.

Don't you love stories of Paris art student life and the Latin Quarter? Haven't you always had a secret longing to climb that hill of hopes and dreams, Montmartre? Don't you catch a flash back of memory to Trilby? Then there is the waif in "The Prince of the Sea," adopted by the artist after her mother died. And can't you shut your eyes and see Mimì holding her candle at the top of the dark landing outside Rudolph's door? Or Louise, with her eyes yearning and her head on Julien's shoulder, watching the evening lights begin to shine in Paris far below?

This is a story of real life, in the same setting, but actual and of today.

By IZOLA FORRESTER.

TO the little group of the art colony left on Montmartre, Paris, there came a sudden message that Gilbert Arras, an artist, who had followed the colors into "the lost country," was no more on the roll call of the living. He had not been famous, nor had he even exhibited as yet, but he had lived happily with Jeanne, his young wife, and p'tit Gilbert, the baby boy, in their sunny "sky parlor," and had managed to soil enough to keep the "pot au feu" boiling and the latch-string of the door out, ready for a friend in need.

The day after the news came Jeanne took her boy to the neighboring studio of a friend, an American girl, Katherine

Glover, who did not paint, but wrote stories. Jeanne was tired and was just going for a little walk in the open air, she said. Gilbert would not make any trouble. She had not told him yet of the fate of his soldier father. And after she had gone Gilbert lay sprawled out on the floor playing with paper doll soldiers until he fell asleep.

Late in the evening some one brought whispered word that Jeanne had thrown herself into the Seine.

After that night Gilbert became a sort of joint stock son to the whole Quartier. He was completely satisfied with any arrangement that gave him love and care, and he was only four. Death meant nothing to him but a beautiful voyage up into the blue sky. Just what his future was to be, nobody thought to plan. It was enough that while any one had food Gilbert was love's own guest at table.

Just before Christmas seven of the American girls in the art colony came back to New York. They had always had a Christmas tree together for years, and shortly after their arrival they gathered for tea up at their club and discussed plans for the celebration.

"Girls," said Miss Glover, "it seems awful to think of our own happiness and spending the money just for that. Why, we could adopt Gilbert as our

godchild for fifty dollars, don't you know?"

Then she leaned forward, over the teacups, and explained. They knew of the "godmother" movement in Paris, how women each gave a little, if only fifty cents a week, toward the care of either a war orphan or a wounded soldier, and bound themselves to carry on that care as a sort of official godmothers.

The answer was simple. Fifty dollars were laid down before Miss Glover to give Gilbert twenty-five foster mothers.

If you go along West Ninth Street from Fifth Avenue, New York, turn into a tall, old-fashioned studio building and climb two flights of stairs, you find yourself in the Golden Studio of the Executive Godmother. I should call it that, for the walls are primrose yellow and the sunlight pours in through yellow curtains at the tall French windows. There are golden daffodils just breaking late bloom in a big brown jar on a yellow table, and a yellow kitten with drowsy topaz eyes lies curled up on yellow silk cushions. There really should be a sleek, sloe-eyed Hindoo swathed in the sacred tint to open the door and saisan before you, but there isn't. Just a slim, small person with the widest brown eyes and wavy brown hair. In a painting smock just the tint of a dried oak leaf and a brown skirt to her angles. She is Katherine Glover, Gilbert's first and original godmother back in Paris, the girl who started the group idea here.



Gilbert Arras, four-year-old war orphan of the Paris Latin Quartier, who is officially "godmothered" by a group of American girl students, artists and writers at a cost of \$50 a year. Why, his apple-hidden smile alone is worth that!

Sitting up on the broad yellow couch with the cat on her lap she tells of the many mothered child and of all that lies back of the giving up of that Christmas tree.

"There were just seven of us" girls at first. Alice Boughton, the photographer, some artists, Raphaela Johnson, Frances Delehanty, Claire Avery and Ida Haskell, Tessa Kelso, who writes like myself, and Beatrice Wilcox, librarian. I knew all about the wonderful "godmother" work that was being done by girls and women in France, at the Holophane Ouvrier, No. 156 Boulevard Haussmann, in Paris. There they have organized these composite godmother groups for the relief of wounded soldiers and war orphans. So we wrote to her about our taking Gilbert for our boy and being responsible for his care.

"Meanwhile, news of what we were doing, just us girls down here, spread about, and we began to hear from others who wanted to form groups also and have godchildren of their own. Our own seven original members had grown to 25, girls and women, who

are really accomplishing big things, don't you know. I should think having godmothers like these would really help Gilbert."

Really help him? Was there ever a prince with such a shower of fairy gifts over his future? Just run over the rest of the names of his twenty-five "mothers."

Miss Abastenia St. Leger Eberle, sculptor; Miss Zella de Milbau, etcher and recruiting sergeant in the English Army; Miss Janet Scudder, sculptor; Miss Alice Morgan Wright, sculptor; Miss Katherine Glover, writer; Miss Elizabeth Barry, horticulturist; Miss Ann Phillips, social worker; Miss Elizabeth Phillips, nurse; Miss Carol Fleming, writer; Miss Katherine Burnett of the Red Cross; Miss Alice Simpson, artist; Miss Zulma Steele, artist; Miss Ruby Ross Goodnow, decorator; Mrs. Pearl Franklin Godfrey, playwright; Mrs. de Cordova, artist; Mrs. Edna W. Chase, editor; Mrs. d'Arcas and Mrs. Heloise Haynes, designer.

Think of being able to address any or all of these gifted ladies as "dear godmother!" Of having the concentrated hopes and ambitions of twenty-five such minds centered on your small personality, if you were Gilbert!

"We are going to send our pictures to him," continued the executive godmother from her golden throne beside the yellow kitten, "so he will feel that he knows us all by sight, you know. That gives the personal bond. We can make him feel, as he grows older, that he can rely on love and understanding and help from all of us. And it takes so little, \$2.00 a year apiece, \$50.00 in all."

She leaned her chin on her palm and stroked the yellow kitten gently.

"I believe that thought is contagious, for just as soon as we planned our group and people heard of it they wrote asking how they could get a war baby to care for, too. One woman in Pittsburgh said she didn't ask a pretty child, but some little unwanted one.

"You see, so many want to help and don't know how, and here is something so personal and tangible and appealing, and yet it costs so little that a group can be started anywhere. Some girls in one of the big department stores are forming one. They say they would like the child of some worker in the big Parisian stores. Even little school children want to form, each giving ten cents a month. The beauty of it all to me is that every one can help.

"It isn't for those who are able to volunteer their services in the actual work over there, or those who can sign an ample check. Just a check won't make a godmother. You must give love and sympathy and deep personal interest. The child must feel that—that big strong bond of love. He or she must feel that even while the ocean lies between they are constantly interested in whatever befalls their little charge. Godmother will be so pleased, it must think. "Which godmother?" Miss Glover laughed merrily. "Well, all, of course, the full twenty-five. Think what an incentive it will be to those kiddies when they feel they are the hope of the new France.

"Here the idea is new, but in Paris every woman, almost, considers it her duty to be godmother to either a war orphan or a wounded soldier. We can't very well mother a soldier, but we can take Gilbert."

So the little orphan of the Latin Quartier may spread all those twenty-five photographs in front of him and make up beautiful romances about each pretty girl face. And who may prophesy what other romances may spring out of his?

Just supposing some day, when the war is a memory and Gilbert a stalwart, husky fellow of twenty, he comes seeking his twenty-five mothers? Will he have to ask all their consents when he chooses a bride? And, while we are about it, think of having to please twenty-five mothers-in-law!

The Latin Quarter Waif Who Has Twenty-Five Mothers, Salt Lake Telegram, Salt Lake, Utah, 27 Feb, 1916, Page 41, and other newspapers