

# WOMEN COMPETE IN BELL-RINGING

## English Girls Supersede "Youths" — Lore of Campanology Runs Beyond History— Some of World's Famous Peals

By STEUART M. EMERY.

IN times past the bell-ringer in England was invariably known as a "youth." We find the "Ancient Society of College Youths" was formed in London in 1637 for purposes of bell-ringing, with Oxford, Cambridge and many other localities establishing their own guilds. John Bunyan was once a bell-ringer at Elstow and Lord Mayor Slingsby Bethell of London knew what it was to be a "youth." But lately women have come to the front in England as "youths." Recently it was announced that ten young women of the Ladies' Guild of Change Ringers would ring a peal of 5,148 strikes in the old church of St. Clement Dane's in London, a feat necessitating three hours and a half of continuous work. Hitherto 5,040 changes had stood as the record of English women bell-ringers. Nearly all of them are business girls who have become interested in the lore of campanology, or bell-ringing. Paulinus, the Bishop of Nola, Italy, cast the first church bells, and as Nola was located in Campania, the term campanology was thus derived.

Danger lurks in the swinging of big bells by the inexperienced, as was testified by the funeral wreath which for years hung in the chancel of a Lincolnshire church in memory of a young girl who lost her life in attempting the work of a "youth." The bell lifted her from the floor of the belfry and flung her down again with a force that killed her. A girl of 19, it is reported, will swing alone the tenor call of St. Clement's which weighs a ton and a quarter.

### Moscow Bell the Heaviest.

Beside some of the famous bells of history that one, it must be confessed, seems small indeed. Great Paul, in St. Paul's Cathedral, when swung to its position weighed eighteen tons; Big Ben, in Westminster, thirteen and a half tons; Great Tom of Oxford, seven tons, and York Minster's bell, ten tons.

These bells are outdone by others on the Continent and in the East. The broken Tsar Kolokol of Moscow had the amazing weight of 216 tons, while the Kaiserglocke of Cologne Cathedral swung twenty-five tons of metal. Nor must the great bell of Mingoon, Burma, be overlooked, or the masterpiece of the Temple of Ularo in Kyoto, Japan, twenty-four feet high and sixteen inches thick at its lower rim. Mighty bells, these.

In all recorded history the bell has had eventful tales to tell. It has sounded joyous chimes for great victories and it has tolled dirges for the deaths of great men. The famous Liberty Bell of Philadelphia "proclaimed liberty throughout all the land." America has other famous bells besides. Recently in a number of cities the carillon has been established, sounding its chimes across crowded streets. Once, also, there swung in the old City Hall of New York an alarm bell that weighed ten tons. The day of the bell as an announcer of public tidings has passed, but sentiment is still responsive to its sounds.

There were bells in ancient Egypt, and bells were known also to the ancient Assyrians, Etruscans and Chinese. Centuries before the bell reached Europe, where it was to be brought to its highest development, it was used by the Hindus in their temples to frighten away evil spirits. Bells decorated the chariots of early conquerors as they made their triumphal entries; they tinkled mournfully on the great car that brought the body of Alexander from Babylon to Egypt. Rome in its days of glory made use of "tinnabula" to announce the hour of bathing, and Juvenal writes of bells rung during eclipses.

### Ring the Changes.

Once the music of the bell had reached Europe its vogue spread rapidly. It is a far cry from the smiting of a bell on the outside with a hammer to the complications of change-ringing which resulted from the studies of Fabian Stedman of Cambridge. In 1667 he published his "Tintinologia," the first book on the principles of changes, and his name today is attached to a number of peals. A ring of twelve bells, it is estimated, allows a total of 479,001,600 changes, which at the rate of twenty-four changes a minute would require thirty-eight years to perform.

There was a time when the bell-ringers of England were looked down on as loose-living persons. It is certain that the fraternity had rules of its own, the fine for breaking these being to replenish the "jug" of the guild. The bell—sometimes in a separate bell tower—was not regarded as an integral part of the church, with the result that merry bell-ringers at all hours of the day and night would climb the stairs and produce their own music.

"The people of England are vastly fond of great noises that fill the air, such as firing cannon, beating of drums and the ringing of bells," wrote one traveler about 1550. "It is common for a number of them that have got a glass in their heads to get up into the belfry and ring the bells for hours together for the sake of exercise."

By the next century, however, indiscriminate bell-ringing had come to an end and a real study of the art had commenced. The most celebrated bell-ringer of all was Czar Ivan "the Terrible" of Russia. This monarch was accustomed to mount the tower in his favorite monastery at Moscow and ring for matins between 3 and 4 in the morning. Nell Gwynne of London was another personage who loved the sound of bells. In her will she left money for a "weekly entertainment" for the ringers of the Church of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields.

In the earliest days of bells they

often spread terror by their sound. It is on record that they were the means of saving the City of Sens when King Clothair of France was besieging its walls. The doughty Bishop of Orleans ordered the bells of St. Stephen's to clang their loudest, with the result that King Clothair's troops became so frightened by the din that the siege was raised.

The use of bells by the military goes back to an extremely ancient day. According to Euripides, Greek soldiers were accustomed to fasten tiny bells in the hollows of their shields when they were on a night watch. As the Captain approached, making his rounds, the sentry would shake his shield until the bell tinkled, thus showing that he was awake and on duty.

### Bells Turned to Guns.

Many historic bells have been the victims of war. Their metal has gone into the manufacture of cannon and shot. It was a favorite trick of invaders to remove the bells from the towers of captured towns and promptly melt them down. Roland, the huge alarm bell of the City of Ghent, played an important rôle in all the battle history of Flanders until Charles V captured it and had it destroyed. Again and again its reverberating voice had called upon the burghers to arm for the defense of their town. "I am Roland," ran the inscription carved upon it. "When I toll it is fire; when I thunder it is victory."

Cromwell took the bells of many towns and converted them into artillery. Henry V took a bell from Calais to humble its citizenry, the removal of bells from their towns being regarded as a degradation. When the British were close to Philadelphia after the Battle of Germantown our own Liberty Bell was hastily swung down and carried off by patriots in the dead of night lest it should be captured and melted.

### Destruction Unlucky.

As a tocsin the bell has sounded out more than one echoing signal. The ringing of a bell announced the start of the massacre of St. Bartholomew's Eve in Paris; it also ushered in the French Revolution. The bell's giant voice for centuries has clamored of the joys of victory and tolled the sorrows of defeat. It has summoned to arms and to prayer. In a day when communication was scanty the bell could always be relied upon to spread tidings of any sort.

Traditions have grown up around the music of the bells. Bad luck follows the person who destroys a bell, according to the old legends. Once Henry VIII and Sir Miles Partridge played at dice for the set of bells hanging in the old bell house near St. Paul's Church. Sir Miles had offered to stake the sum of £100 against that particular musical quartet. The luck was with him and he won. At once the bells were melted down and sold, Sir Miles profiting considerably more by the transaction than the amount he had wagered. But the ill fortune of the bell desecrator came upon him—his head fell on the block on Tower Hill.

Ships carrying stolen bells are said to have sunk at sea. All the bells of Rome, it has been related for centuries, ring gently of their own accord whenever a future Pope ap-

proaches the city. And, faintly stealing over the waters on a still day, the Cornish folk say the bells of the lost land of Lyonesse, fathoms deep beneath the sea, can still be heard sounding their chimes. There is even a tale in one Irish village that the local bell would capture thieves and other offenders. One by one the villagers were brought before it when a deprecation had been committed. One by one they laid their hands on the bell and proclaimed their innocence. The instant the real culprit put his hand on the bell it began to murmur.

### Peacans and Alarums.

The bells for churches were invariably blessed and baptized before being swung into place. In an English village a unique ceremony took place many years ago. The bell was filled with beer, which was ladled out to the thirsty workmen and the populace. Inscriptions of a religious, patriotic and often facetious character are to be found on the old bells. There is one in Hants which bears the following typical tribute:

*Dr. Nicholas gave five pound  
To help cast this peal tunable and  
sound.*

Even today bell casting is not a certain art, for the toning of a bell is as delicate as that of a violin. Most of the olden bell founding was done in monasteries. In mediaeval times the guild of bell founders were highly important men, with their own seals and crests. John of Gloster, Sandre of Gloster, Thomas de Lenne and Michael de Wymbis are names familiar to all students of old bells.

The part that bells play in the various phases of life has long been recognized. The wedding bell, the funeral bell, the alarm, the bell of rejoicing, of victory, have all sounded their messages. Poet after poet has seen in the bell a subject for high and grave thought. No one forgets "The Bells" of Poe, Longfellow's "Bells of San Blas," Schiller's "Song of the Bells," Bret Harte's "Angelus," Kipling's "Bell Buoy," or the immortal heroine of Rose Hartwick Thorpe's "Curfew Shall Not Ring Tonight."

The first mention of bells is found in the Old Testament, where small gold bells are spoken of as ornaments on the robes of Aaron. They first rang out the hours of the day in the year 604, at the orders of Pope Sabinian.

### A Notable American Collection.

The oldest dated bell in Europe is at Fontenville, France; it was cast in 1202. This bell sounded for more than six and a half centuries before it fell and suffered a crack that made it voiceless. At Freiburg, in the Black Forest, is a bell dated 1258. Invariably big bells have received names—often expressive of their tone—such as Horrida, the huge alarm of Antwerp, and Jacqueline, the great fifteenth century bell of Paris, whose voice was sweet music. The sixteenth century Amboise, of Rouen, was named after its maker, George d'Amboise, who, the chronicle relates, died of sheer joy upon hearing its first note.

The finest collection of bells in the world is said to be that of Frank A. Miller of Riverside, Cal. In his picturesque and sunny Inn of the Bells are gathered no fewer than 300 splendid specimens from all over the world, swinging from the arches of the courtyard. Bells from Rome, India, China, Japan, Spain, Greece, Germany, Russia and other lands have been assembled in this collection.

The age of bells is passing, now that the whistle and the electric buzzer have come to stay. Not so often is the merry jingle of the sleigh bell heard; the milkman's bell falls silent, the town crier has passed on. The pages of the newspapers give the tidings to one and all, and many a church goes up without a belfry.

## HOLLYWOOD'S OLD TAR POOLS A DEATH TRAP FOR ANIMALS

ABOUT seven miles out of Los Angeles lies the old Rancho La Brea, or "Ranch of Pitch." Surrounding it are the oil fields of the foothills, which are still being worked, though most of the oil has been removed. Several creaky pumps, termed "Old Faithfuls," operate day and night. Wilshire Boulevard, the "Fifth Avenue of the West," cuts a broad dividing line to the south, and fifty paces to the north of this extremely modern thoroughfare lies the famous Death Trap.

This natural trap, thousands of years old, is as effective today as it ever was. That it was effective in olden times many fossil skeletons in the Los Angeles Museum of Science and History attest. Where the present-day automobile hums and occasionally backfires, in the far-off past the mastodon and the cave lion trailed and captured their prey.

The only monument that has withstood the changes of time is the line of the Hollywood foothills, offering a glimpse of snow-capped Old Baldy in the far background of the Northeast. The prehistoric wild life roamed a wide, flat plain overgrown with lush vegetation. It was such vegetation that aided in disguising the death trap of the tar pools, so that an unbroken record of the earth's Pleistocene inhabitants has been preserved to modern generations.

### Catching Modern Wild Life.

The great natural trap will provide data for scientists until the pools are finally drained. Nor has the potency of the tar as a preservative throughout the ages diminished in any way.

Where the American camel and the giant-tailed bear were caught in the pitchy mass and their bones preserved intact, the redwinged blackbird, the gopher and the jack-rabbit are now trapped and preserved.

Migrating birds have been found stuck in the tar. It may be that they were killed in midair and fell into the pools, or it may be that they ventured too low in search of food and were caught unawares, not knowing the oily fluid would grip them.

Because of this remarkable trap, the Los Angeles Museum presents what is called the finest collection of Pleistocene mammal fossils extant. That the trap took a plentiful toll is evidenced by the fact that the museum's

collection consists of the skeletal remains of more than 150 species of birds and mammals, from the ancient forerunner of the modern horse to the giant three-toed sloth.

Thousands of such great quadrupeds as the imperial mastodon, the bison, the American horse and the long-tailed bear were mired in the deadly oil, where they sank, leaving no trace to warn others of the fate that had claimed them.

From this one death trap, which consists of several tar pools, all within a radius of fifty yards, about 3,000 more or less perfect skulls of the saber-tooth tiger were taken. One glass case in the museum contains hundreds of the sabers, stained a deep brown from the pitch. Another case contains several massive skulls displaying the growth of the tusk from the earliest "milk-tooth" to the sharp saber itself, often as long as seven or eight inches.

### PARIS "SALONS OF THE OPEN AIR" MAY BE TAXED

A MEMBER of the Paris Council, which, like the national Government, is pressed for funds and searching new sources of revenue, recently proposed that the city place a tax upon art exhibitions in the streets. He indiscreetly referred to them as "markets of paintings" and argued that they should be taxed like other businesses.

Of course there was prompt and emphatic objection. For the so-called "foires aux croutes," or "salons in the open air," are scarcely able to contribute appreciably to the support of the city. Many of the artists who exhibit on the curbs of the Boulevard St. Michel, the Boulevard Raspail and in Montmartre have to resort to occupations other than painting to pay their way. A levy by the municipality would add to the already heavy burden they bear.

With their pictures hung upon light canvas and wooden easels the painters stand on the street all day long and late into the night on exhibition days waiting for purchasers. Their prices are low and in many cases their work is excellent, yet sales are not numerous. The crowds that pass by the rows of paintings and sculpture—which often extend for half a mile—come to see rather than to buy. And the displays are always worth seeing.