

that you were a little bird, and "thus, thus, thus," you flapped your wings and flew away.

To this day Lina remembers the overwhelming sense of repugnance and degradation that assailed her, when she was led into a circle of smiling companions and told to flap her arms and recite the accompanying "nature-song." "It is silly," she thought, "I am not a little bird."

This is not Lina's biography, and the incident is only introduced, as it indirectly influences Minnie's—for when, at the outbreak of political troubles in Hanover, Lina was returned to her parents with a bound book of Nature-songs for children and an immense and dearly-loved wooden Dutch doll, her views on play were completely transformed and the wild romps of her sister and cousin filled her with as much astonishment as an Early-Victorian curate would have experienced, if called upon to participate in an African waltz.

When "Frederika," the doll, was wrested from her arms for general inspection—and condemned, as "hideous"—Lina found courage to voice the claims of proprietorship taught in the kindergarten.

"She is mine," she exclaimed, and was informed that in play "Frederika" was "ours," that she was the chieftain's daughter, that Minnie was the chieftain, and that Lina, on account of her long golden hair, was the "beautiful lady" of the game.

"Frederika" was then placed into the chieftain's castle—*i.e.*, the play cupboard—and Lina was helped to the bottom of a boat-swing, in the character of the fair lady. The chieftain stood on the back of one seat—a favourite cousin—his trusty foster-brother for the time being on the back of the other—the seats being crammed with as many followers of the "clan of Macgregor," as could be packed in.

It is possible to be quite solidly miserable at six years old, and the "winsome lady," crushed into the bottom of a storm-rocked boat on loch "something or other," shortly after a rough Channel crossing in a paddle-steamer of 1866, hedged in by the clamorous clans of Macgregor, while the chieftain (Minnie), declaimed dramatically as he rocked, in imminent danger of an upset: "A chieftain to the Highland bound," at the top of his voice—had almost reached the limit that separates purgatory from even more desperate regions.

This was reached when there were strawberries and cream for tea—Minnie's favourite delicacy all through life.

On refusing to touch them, the "winsome lady" was severely reprimanded by "Dora," the German nurse, for being affected, and not eating what was set before her,

and Minnie chimed in encouragingly: "Oh, Lina, and they are in your honour, because you have come home again."

To be called affected in the 19th century, was the deadliest insult that could be offered to a sensible child.

Efforts were therefore made to show both common-sense and gratitude, with the result that, throughout a long life, Minnie could always count on double rations of strawberries.

Later on the "fair lady" struck, when the chieftain ordered her to be confined in the strong-hold of the castle (*i.e.*, the toy-cupboard), while the clan of Macgregor fought the clan of MacLean. The battle was suspended by energetic thumps on the gates of the donjon of proud Macgregor, and by screams of rage from the lady, to the effect that she wouldn't, wouldn't, wouldn't be a "winsome lady." "Let me out. Let me out. I won't, I won't, I won't. Never again." So that was the end of that game.

However, better ones followed. Minnie would begin them by saying, "Let's pretend," and then lay before her eager followers a plan from some historical incident, that she had been reading—always

gaining her end and organising the dramatic representation, which quickly took the form of a prolonged game, that went on for days and weeks, to lapse as suddenly and completely as it had arisen from her fancy.

Once we were all young Spartans and were initiated into the mysteries of the temple of Pallas Athena.

Well do I remember a morning when Minnie shook me awake from a pleasant sleep with the solemn words: "Brother, the time of trial has come."

She was generally obeyed. We both arose—two little Spartan boys—dressed as far as our sleeveless petticoats (*i.e.*, our Greek tunics), and were led by each other before the altar of the goddess (*i.e.*, the nursery wash-stand). Here Minnie invoked the immaculate Athena by rites which I have entirely forgotten and then declaimed words to the effect, that in her name and for her honour all pain and suffering were as nought.

She then provided two hair-brushes, one for herself and one for me, representatives of classical scourges.

I was now ordered to beat her bare arms, as hard as I could, while she performed the same kindly office for me, while "unflinching stands the Spartan boy."

I must say his English representatives stood the trial quite creditably, and by the

time "Dora" appeared to bathe and dress them, their little bare arms were punctured by bristle wounds and real blood was visible. I will draw a veil over Dora's remarks; Minnie's were the solemn recommendation to "Keep the mysteries of the Temple."



MINNIE MOLLETT

Aged 9.



MINNIE MOLLETT,

Aged 3, with her sister Lina.

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