

Distinguished Women and their Dolls.

BY FRANCES H. LOW.



THE handsome volume that, under the title of "Queen Victoria's Dolls," makes its appearance this month, with the gracious approval of Her Majesty, will call to the mind of many mature doll-lovers a host of happy childish recollections, in which a beloved wooden puppet was the central figure of the nursery drama. And, notwithstanding a recently-expressed masculine opinion, that little girls ought to be discouraged from placing their affections on inanimate wooden and wax objects, it is safe to predict that this fondness will continue to remain as deep and perennial an instinct as that of maternal love itself, of which, indeed, it is a touching premonition.

Those who are disposed to regard the pleasures, and passions, and play of a child as unimportant and unprofitable will have neither concern nor interest in this article.

But there are others, youthful by right of freshness of spirit, who will read about the early tastes, affections, and playthings of distinguished women with an eagerness that is as wholesome as it is innocent.

The Empress Frederick, like Her Majesty, was exceedingly fond of dolls. Count Seckendorff says she was very fond of working their clothes. Here is his letter:—

"When a child, the Empress Frederick was exceedingly fond of dolls and of working their clothes—especially for small ones—and of arranging a doll's house and of putting them in. As a tiny child the Empress Frederick was devoted to dolls, and fonder of playing with them than many a little girl. Of the Empress's daughters, some were also very fond of dolls."

The Empress, as is well known, is a devoted mother; and one can well picture that her little doll-household was a very orderly one, carefully and systematically looked after. Early habits exercise an enormous influence over our lives; and who can doubt that the little girl who keeps her dolls clean, learns how to wash, and tend, and dress them with taste, is learning lessons which will stand her in good stead when she reaches motherhood?



THE EMPRESS FREDERICK.
From a Photo. by Gunn & Stuart, Richmond.

The doll owned as a child by Mrs. Keeley, the veteran actress, was a massive wooden creature, which did not even possess the conventional number of limbs; but that it held a place in her affection and memory is clear from her delightful letter, which is printed below:—

"To quote Ashby Sterry:—

I thought I'd done with dolls some years ago; I've put away the dolls of childhood's age, I've bid good-bye to puppets of the stage.

And yet you ask me in my eighty-seventh year to remember the dolls of my childhood. Well, I'll try, but fear the description will be very uninteresting. I never had but *one* doll, a great, heavy, *wooden* doll: no stuffing, no nice, soft leather arms and legs. No! its limbs were strongly wedged, and *pegged* into its body—it was so big and heavy, I could scarcely drag it about (I was four years old only); its name was 'Lummox.' It was a nuisance to everybody in the house, and one unlucky day I let it fall upon my mother's foot, and in her pain and anger she put it on

1. You ask me in my 87th year to remember the dolls of my childhood

FACSIMILE OF WRITING FROM MRS. KEELEY'S LETTER.

the kitchen fire, and there was an end of 'Lummox.' As near as I can remember, the inclosed is a faithful portrait.—
MARY ANNE KEELEY."



From a Photo. by Elliott & Fry.

Mary Anne Keeley

No contribution will be read with more interest than that which has been sent by Lady Martin, whose sweet and noble personations of many of the greatest women in Shakespeare's gallery remain still in the memory of older playgoers, and are little likely to be effaced by any modern actress:—

"You touch me upon a tender point when you ask about the dolls of my childhood.

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FACSIMILE OF WRITING FROM LADY MARTIN'S LETTER.

They engrossed a large share of my thoughts and my affection. The throb of joy with which a new doll was received into my arms, or the pitying interest with which a very old one was regarded, I can never forget. The earliest act of pure self-denial I can remember was when I surrendered my sweetest, newest doll, one possessed of excellent qualities—for dolls varied in these—to a poor young cousin who had lately lost her mother. I fear I inwardly bewailed this act of self-sacrifice when I found afterwards my favourite was thrown aside—neglected! Some girls have no liking, no feeling, for dolls. They like their pretty faces at first, but can see nothing in them, and thus soon grow tired of them. I had a proof of this in my godchild, Hester Helena Makepeace Thackeray Ritchie (I had to think well over this string of names before repeating them over the baby at the font).

She is now advancing towards the sweet young lady period, but some four or five years ago I said to her, rather regretfully, 'Hester, I have never given you a doll.' 'I am very glad,' she responded; and, with a naïve air of weariness, added, 'I have a whole shelf full of them upstairs.' I had one young playfellow who shared my passion for dolls. We used to make stories about them. Some had good dispositions, some bad, and with the latter we had much trouble. Then the adventures they passed through! At times they were stolen by gipsies, then by robbers; were the 'babes in the wood'—every tale we read they had to realize. We had a boy doll who was the very counterpart of Aladdin, and, oh, the tricks he played us! In one of my letters on 'Shakespeare's Women,' I tell of the pleasure it gave me when

grown up to see the stall of lovely dolls at the Soho Bazaar—and, lo! to behold one dressed in a costume 'such as worn by Miss Helen Faucit' in a play then acting. This was a surprise and a joy nearly as great as the possession of a new doll used to be. You ask what sort of dolls I was fondest of. Large waxen dolls were my greatest admiration, but the humbler kind had their place

in my regard, and helped to play their parts as gipsies, etc. As for the eyes and hair of my waxen beauties, they might be of the colour the doll-maker chose to make them, so long as the eyes were *large and round*, and could open and shut, and the hair abundant. The tow colour, which has prevailed so long for the hair, was not then in fashion. I think I have pretty fairly answered the questions you have asked me, and am, dear madam, yours truly, HELENA FAUCIT MARTIN."

Helena Faucit Martin.

The god-child referred to is the child of Mrs. Ritchie, who, as is well known, is herself a daughter of Thackeray, and is perhaps the most exquisitely *feminine* woman writer of the day. Mrs. Ritchie was very much attached to dolls, so that it is curious that her little daughter should have had no love for them; though, perhaps, the reason is to be found in the child's answer, that she had a whole shelf full of them upstairs.

But to return to Helen Faucit. Is not something of the imaginativeness of the great actress to be discerned in the little girl, who made "stories about her dolls," invested them with good and evil dispositions, and placed them in all sorts of situations and adventures?

Where is the lover of Thackeray who does not want to hear all about the childish pleasures of his much-loved little girl? Mrs. Ritchie's pen is ever graceful, and her letter needs no comment of mine:—

"Would that one of my dolls had ever

I loved
my rulers dolls
as if they were
my nieces

FACSIMILE OF WRITING FROM MRS. RITCHIE'S LETTER.

survived to be included in such courtly company! They all came to violent ends, and caused me so much sorrow that, at the comparatively early age of four, I determined to have nothing more to do with them. I used to tie their heads on with string, and not look for two days; but it was no use: they never grew again. I loved my sisters' dolls as if they were my nieces long after I had given up any more direct affection; and now, quite late in life, I had just begun to be really in sympathy with my grand-children's dollies, when my own little girl suddenly ceased to take an interest in them, and I found my own somewhat flagged. I shall look out with much interest for your article. It is a most happy idea, and believe me, truly yours,
ANNIE RITCHIE.

Truly yrs
Annie Ritchie

Mrs. Mona Caird's letter is particularly interesting, as showing how, even in her youth-

ful days, her tastes and thoughts inclined to the subject of marriage: and her amusing confessions show us that little Miss Mona was an observant, shrewd child, whose clear eyes were incessantly watching the drama of life that was being played beneath them.

"I have no dolls extant—at least, none that could be got at now. I don't think there are any other details; the only thing that occurs to me is that in my dolls' house family, the two elder daughters, 'Augusta' and 'Emily,' were always receiving proposals of marriage from their neighbour, Mr. Smith, a wealthy bachelor in blue serge and a red tie, with black china eyes, and an exquisite complexion. The sisters always discussed these proposals in a truly business spirit, taking into consideration Mr. Smith's house and property, his coach and four (about one-fifth his own size), and other attractions of a worldly sort to induce an alliance. I presume these did not satisfy the ambition of the sisters, who

remained always at home, to the grief of the younger members of the family, over whom



MRS. MONA CAIRD.
From a Photo. by H. Mendelssohn.

they tyrannized. Mr. Smith's affections seemed to oscillate in pendulum fashion from one sister to the other; his china features expressed

no preference of any kind. All this was reproduced from life in unconscious satire—indeed, the whole history of that dolls' house and its family—with the pompous parents, the ambitious elder daughters, the innumerable younger ones; with the servants, visitors, and relations—photographed pretty exactly the impressions which the work of grown-up people was making upon my mind at the time. The picture was not very flattering to my neighbours.—I remain, yours truly,
MONA CAIRD."

Mona Caird

If we are justified in looking upon a little girl's affection for her doll as a sure promise of the maternal affection which she will afterwards show her offspring, then this instinct is by no means an insignificant one; and it should be a source of satisfaction to those who regard true motherhood as something infinitely high and precious, to learn that nearly all the celebrated women who have responded to my inquiries have cherished a passionate, and at times almost human, affection for their dolls. Miss Jean Ingelow, one of the sweetest of our modern singers, whose beautiful little poem, "When Sparrows Build," will remain in our memories so long as we remember anything, writes:—

"Dolls in my infancy were not my chief treasures—I preferred a Noah's ark or picture-book. The first doll for which I felt a real and deep affection was my doll 'Amelia,'

The first doll for which I felt a real & deep affection was my doll Amelia

FACSIMILE OF WRITING FROM MISS JEAN INGELOW'S LETTER.

whom I had when I was about seven years old. I was taken to a shop that I might choose her myself, and pay for her with my own half-crown. She had a pair of kid shoes, flaxen hair, and smiling blue eyes. I had a little chest of mahogany drawers to hold her clothes, for I need hardly say that they would take off. Some of them (and I remember them all to this day) were of my own concoction. The first thing I made for her was a white petticoat which had a real button and button-hole in the band. When 'Amelia' was taken out for a walk she

was generally arrayed in a beautiful cloak, which had been made for her by our old cook. It was of purple silk, and had a white silk lining, was not unlike the long cloaks of the present day, was drawn in at the back, and had some real gores. With this, 'Amelia' wore a hat with a very large red rose in it. When she came in, her cloak was duly folded up and laid in her drawers. 'Amelia' had several beautiful frocks with sleeves; her underclothing, as a rule, was devoid of these appendages, for I made it myself, and could not manage to put them in. You ask what sort of doll I liked best—such dolls as 'Amelia.' There were several Dutch dolls in the nursery. They were common property, and were called 'it,' but the wax dolls were 'she.' However, a wooden doll has one advantage over all others—this—that you can put it into a doll's bath and wash it with real soap and water. When an interesting game was going on in the nursery, the dolls were set in a row on a chest of drawers that they might see it, for, of course, it must be dull to be shut up in 'the play closet' while other people are enjoying themselves. The Dutch dolls also were allowed to look on, but in my opinion a wooden doll—even one with joints—is not capable of attracting real love. But the life of dolls almost always ends in a catastrophe. When I had adored 'Amelia' for a long time, we once went out for a long walk and took the wax dolls with us, and baskets, for we were to gather buttercups and purple orchis. In course of time we came to a small, clear pond. The temptation was great. We let ourselves be left

behind, and before we were found out we had undressed the two wax dolls and dipped them in. Alas! they were carried home dripping in one of the baskets. They were set up in a high cupboard to dry—they did not dry, but shortly after they disappeared. My next doll had black eyes like beads—she inherited all my dear 'Amelia's' clothes, even to the purple cloak and hat—but I could not (as it were) find out her name, and I changed it several times before one could be fixed upon. This is a very bad sign. Eventually her name was 'Priscilla.' But nothing signified; I

had found out by this time that 'Simple Susan' and many other sweet old stories, both in prose and verse, were very delightful reading. That I read them over and over till I knew them by heart was nothing to 'Priscilla'; I liked them just the same, and did not love her. The reign of the dolls was over.—I am, very truly yours, JEAN INGELOW."

Jean Ingelow

Miss Ingelow's letter will go straight to the heart of every little girl who loves her wooden family, and who has healthy, ruthless brothers. For what could be truer than that pathetic sentence, "the life of dolls almost always ends in a catastrophe"? The poetess might with truth have added, that where there are boys, the life of a doll is almost a tragedy, ending in violence. For boys are the natural enemies of the doll race (in spite of their having a sneaking love for the despised creature), and the instinct to destroy, and damage, and utterly exterminate them is as strong in their breasts as is that of cherishing them in the hearts of their sisters.

Mrs. Fawcett, who is generally regarded as the typical woman who unites masculine intellect with feminine charm, says:—

"I adored dolls, and had many whose lovely features and fascinating frocks, beds, etc., I can still vividly recall. I don't think dolls exactly awoke the maternal feeling in me; because I remember, when I once had the misfortune to break my sister's doll, I thought honour and honesty, and everything else, compelled me to offer to give her mine in exchange and compensation. I

don't think this was maternal; but I well remember the anguish of making the offer, and the wild, incredulous joy with which I heard my sister decline it. I thought her the most nobly generous creature in the world, and could not picture myself being offered my doll and saying 'No.' My favourite dolls were of moderate size, about in the same proportion to my size as a baby is to a woman's. I had one enormous doll, but I looked upon her as an inferior being—of coarser mould. She was so big that her shoes had to be made by a shoemaker. We



MRS. FAWCETT.
From a Photo. by Watery.

gave great consideration to the choice of her name, and finally selected 'Beren-garia,' because that had also a gigantic flavour. But my best-beloved dolls had more homely names: 'Grace,' 'Amy,' 'Louie,' etc.—Yours very faithfully, M. G. FAWCETT."

M. G. Fawcett

Miss Philippa Fawcett, who has distinguished herself in mathematics, shared her mother's partiality in this respect; and she adored, and affectionately cared for, two huge dolls, called "Dover" and "Calais," which were brought from the Paris Exhibition. It will be news to a good many people, that it was little Philippa Fawcett who really uttered

the words which *Punch* has since made famous. The little girl was playing with her doll one evening, when some visitors were announced, and she was told to run away and take the doll; whereupon she said, reproachfully, and almost tearfully: "Oh! don't speak so loud. I try as

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MISS PHILIPPA FAWCETT.
From a Photo. by Owen, Salisbury.

hard as I can to prevent her finding out she is only a doll!"

Mrs. Stanley, the artist, and the wife of the great traveller, writes:—

"I have such happy recollections of my doll-days that I most readily answer your questions. I played with dolls till I was fourteen

or more. My sister, Mrs. Frederick Myers, and I had two distinct *tribes* of dolls: dolls which we carried about and cared for in quite a maternal way, and dolls we played with, as I shall afterwards describe. Our doll from the age of seven to nine was a lambskin. We tied one end round into a ball for the head, and dressed the long, folded end in long clothes. We combed and parted the wool for the hair, and always saw in the featureless, woolly face the sweetest, most innocent and infantine expression. 'Tobina,' the lambskin baby, belonged to me alternate days. She was mine on Monday, my sister's on Tuesday, etc. I was fond also of a heavy armful of a doll. I dressed up a long, hard sofa bolster, painted a face on linen, and tied it round the upper part, and sewed on the top a wig we had for private theatricals. This doll, 'Charlie,' was very sturdy and heavy, and might be called a realistic sort of doll. We cared much more for our dolls than children, as a rule, seem to do. We always put them to bed, and on cold nights gave them additional wraps. We considered these senseless playthings alive and human—we endowed them with characters, we made them speak with certain intonations, so that my sister could recognise which of my dolls was speaking. But the real interest and occupation of those 'laughing days' was making our paper doll family.

We began their manufacture at three years old, and continued till our teens. My sister and I, we each had a family consisting of another and thirteen children. These were drawn and coloured on stiff paper, and carefully cut out: the adults measuring about three inches,

the children varying according to age. Each child had its particular cast of features, expression, and colouring. Of course, the family lived in a well-appointed dolls' house. As the paper dolls got torn, or soiled, or crumpled, two hours daily were spent in renovating the family. We were always careful to keep the likeness, so that each member was recognisable, though attired in some new dress. As we grew older we drew better, and turned out some creditable little specimens. We had a special box for the family in evening dress; so that, an invitation coming suddenly, our dolls were always ready to appear in fashionable attire. We also had a supply in walking-dress, hats, cloaks, muffs, and tippets. There was even a reserve in



MRS. STANLEY.
From a Photo. by Mrs. Meyer, Cambridge.

bathing costume when the family went down to the seaside (a soup-plate of water), but they could never remain long in the water, the colour coming off and the dolls becoming pulpy if too long immersed. Making our dolls was a never-ending amusement, and taught us to draw and paint

*I remember thinking after the twelfth
Christmas of the paper family that for
a change we really ought to have a
funeral*

long before we could read or write. Our attitude towards these paper dolls was that of a gentle Providence. We ordered their lives, we gave them mimic joys and sorrows, and they afforded us most absorbing entertainment. But, of course, we did not feel for them the same love and solicitude we felt for the big, portable dolls. I remember thinking after the thirteenth christening of the paper family, that for a change we really ought to have a funeral; but that event was postponed by my sister, who said she did not feel up to the effort of mourning, that the family grief would necessitate playing in a minor key, and that all the dolls would have to be repainted—at once—in black. So there was a betrothal instead—a big ball—and afterwards the marriage was broken off. Even to this very day, my sister and I sometimes talk over the families, and wonder what has become of 'Joshua,' the elder daughter, or her cousin 'Moggie,' and we wonder whether 'Tommy' ever got into the army after all, considering how very backward he was as a small paper boy in a very bright Scotch kilt. I am, however, going beyond the bounds, and answering too much in detail the questions you put to me—but I have not invented anything; dolls' lives and our lives were interwoven. We hardly ever did lessons. We played nearly the whole day, and we were happy from the moment we opened our eyes till we closed them at night.—Yours truly, DOROTHY STANLEY."

*Yours truly,
Dorothy Stanley.*

*- My harp
and Piano were my
dolls and I actually
never possessed
a real one all my
life*



From a Photo. by Sarony, New York.

There is something pathetic about Madame Albani's childhood. She says:—

"I am sorry to say that I can give you but very little information about dolls, as my

*Believe me
Very faithfully Yours
M. Albani*

FACSIMILE OF WRITING FROM MADAME ALBANI'S LETTER.

acquaintance with them has been of the slightest. I began to study music before I was four years of age, and I was obliged to give up so much time to it that there was none left for playthings. My harp and piano were my dolls, and I actually never possessed a real one all my life. I believe they are most interesting creatures to most little girls, but I was never able to study them sufficiently to be of any service to you now.—Believe me, very faithfully yours, M. ALBANI GYE."

Miss Braddon (Mrs. Maxwell) was more fortunate. She says:—

"I was passionately fond of dolls from my earliest recollection of anything in the way of a plaything, and I played with them, dressed them, worked for them, and made

believe about them until I was in my teens. Dolls and dolls' houses were my dream of bliss, and my amusement alternated between literary composition and dolls' dressmaking. The only rival for the doll in my affection was a toy theatre. — Believe me, very truly yours, MARY MAXWELL."

Mary Maxwell

I should like to digress for a moment here, and call the attention of readers who have no remembrance of the dolls of forty or fifty years ago to the accompanying illustration. This group of dolls (kindly lent by Miss Ethel Thurston) were dressed nearly half a century ago. At that time dressed dolls were not in the market; and the notion of dressing them as babies and children, which is the popular one nowadays, had scarcely any vogue then. Their toilettes, carried out with great elaborateness, are exact reproductions of the fashionable Court dress of the period. One of the dolls represents the Duchess of Kent, and wears a full white satin skirt, tastefully trimmed with pink roses and ruchings of narrow white ribbon, and a long bodice sewn with beads, over which, coming into a V in front, is a blue velvet outer bodice and long, rounded train, embellished with gold beads and lined with white silk.

The male doll in military dress represents

the Duke of Cambridge; whilst the other, in spite of his having something of the air of a stage policeman, is meant to be the Prince Consort; and in both cases the tailoring is of a very superior kind, every detail in the way of buttons, orders, belts, and so forth, being carried out with accurate realism.

A few of the ladies who have kindly responded to my inquiry seem to be exceptions to the general rule, amongst them being the Princess of Wales; Miss Frances Power Cobbe, who loved the woods

and living things better; Mrs. Bishop, the famous traveller, who had but a moderate



PRINCE CONSORT. DUKE OF CAMBRIDGE.



DUCHESS OF KENT.

passion for her doll, "Don Quixote"; Miss Jane Harrison, who disliked dolls; and Mrs. Sutherland Orr, who, curiously enough, conceived a great fondness for dollies as she grew towards womanhood.