

MINETTE.



WITHOUT a doubt Minette was the prettiest child in Jacques' foundling hospital.

So cheery and bright was she that everyone loved her, and after a while the matron gave her the name of Sunette: "for," she said, "the little thing seems to flood every place where she happens to be

with sunshine."

One day, as the tiny girl sat on a little circle of closely shaven turf, where stood a fine marble statue of Hebe, that some patron had given to ornament the hospital grounds, singing, as her habit was, at the top of her bird-like voice, one of the young physicians came that way and asked:

"What is beneath you, my happy baby?"

"Grass," replied the child, promptly, pulling her scant check skirt about her dimpled knees; "or do you see a bug or an ant, or any creeping thing?" and she looked about her uneasily.

"Nothing of the kind, little one," said the young man, laughing. "What is beneath the grass?"

"Dirt is," said Minette, shutting her rosy lips very tight. "I know, I saw Paul, the gardener, plant a rose tree."

"Very good. What is beneath the dirt?"

"Don't know." And the rosy lips pursed themselves in a puzzled expression.

"I will tell you, my small beauty," said the young doctor mysteriously. "It is China, and the people who live there look like the pictures on madam's tea-set, and on the fire-screen in the old doctor's room. If you sing long enough and loud enough they will hear you and come, bringing whatever you like best."

"I would like best a mamma and a papa."

The answer was at once forthcoming, and the lips tightly closed.

"And a wax doll and a kitten?"

"No, my mamma and my papa will get what else I want. I shall sing for them."

"Well, I must say that, considering the circumstances, you have very clear ideas of parental responsibilities," and the young man went laughing on his way, laughing again as he paused a moment at the hospital door to lis-

ten to Minette, who seemed to have tuned her pipes anew in order to raise her Chinese benefactors.

"You are a happy infant!" said a nurse-girl, next day, who was crossing the bit of a park, and could not resist the temptation of speaking to Minette--few people could.

"Oh, it is not just simply because I am happy that I sing," confided the little girl. "Have you heard that China is just beneath, and if the funny people there hear me sing, they will come, bringing me just exactly what I am wishing for most of anything? The good Dr. Octave told me so." This with a sideways perk of the small head and a questioning look in the blue eyes.

"That is all very well," said the maid, settling her white muslin cap on her head with both hands, "but I fear he did not tell you that you must not be forever singing the same song, for the queer people in China, who dwell beneath you, will not come until they hear the song they best like."

"Oh, dear!" sighed Minette, petulant for just a moment. "It may be that I do not know the song they like best. I will sing them all over, and if they do not appear, you, Babette, must teach me another."

"Will you be pleased to teach me a song that I do not already know?" was the little girl's quaint request of nearly every stranger who entered the grounds after that.

Sometimes the petition was granted, sometimes it was not, but everyone went away with a pleasant thought of Minette hung like a picture on the gallery of memory.

One morning a lady and gentleman came quietly in at the gate and walked about, silently regarding the children playing here and there. As usual Minette was on the circular bit of turf at the base of the statue of Hebe. For she supposed that only in that spot was China directly beneath her. She was singing a quaint little Provençal love-song, taught her only the day before by a produce vender, and as the new-comers paused to listen, she said very sweetly:

"Will you please to teach me a song that I do not already know how to sing?"

"You will first have to sing me the ones you do know, my little girl, so that I may be sure of teaching you one that you do not."

"Will you indeed stay to hear them all?" asked Minette, eagerly. "No one has ever done that."

"I think we will," and the lady sat down on