



Kewpies Born in Missouri

ORIGINATOR OF WORLD'S NEWEST DOLL

Writes of Her Life and Work for Readers of Toys and Novelties

BY ROSE O'NEILL



I WAS born some time ago in Wilkes-Barre, Pa. When I was a young girl my father got a place of about 300 acres in the Ozark Mountains in Southern Missouri—very wild, enchanting jungle. I have spent much of my time there ever since, when I am not in New York, or Paris, or Italy. I have a large, foolish house, painted green to fit the forest, completely covered with trees and vines and sitting on the bank of a brook in honor of which the place is named Bonniebrook. This house is full of books, pictures, divans, Navajo blankets and phonographs. I ride ponies, write stories and poems in hammocks and make pictures in a den in the tree-tops.

To come to the Kewpies; they were born about four Christmases ago in the Ladies' Home Journal. For several years before, when I illustrated love stories for the magazines, I used to make headings and tail pieces with a few top-knotted cupids in them, doing some quaint thing connected with the story. The editor of the Ladies' Home Journal cut out some of these little fellows, sent them to me and asked me to make a series for children with them, kindly offering to have the verses written for me.

"I'll write my own verses," said I, proudly; and I sent him an illustrated

letter full of Kewpies; the name I invented, as being "little" for Cupid. In that letter I put fragmentary verses and drawings and outlined the Kewpie character and possible future deeds to be distinguished by kindness and funniness and philosophy, besides being cheerfully idiotic.

The Kewpies moved later to the Woman's Home Companion, where they are in their third year. The numbers of the first year are already out in book form and the later ones will be in their turn. Hundreds of letters about them arrive from children all over the world, also from their kind parents, grandmas, maiden aunts and bachelor uncles. Well, they began to utter such

things as, "I wish we had a Kewpie we could hold," or "Could you make us a Kewpie to hang on the Christmas tree?"

I put my finger to my brow and—produced Kewpie Cut-Outs. Kewpie Klubs were formed. New mothers wrote me their babies were Kewpies, and they were training their hair in top-knots. Then about two years ago doll factories began to write, saying "Make a real Kewpie doll. Can you model one in clay?" I had never modeled in clay—but I did. I made a Kewpie doll. Then I picked a doll house and they told me to go to Germany, to the Thuringer Forest, where the people do nothing but make toys, never stopping to play with them, and show the doll factories how to make them. I did.

I left my lovely Capri in the Bay of Naples, where I live a good deal of the time, completely surrounded by roses, and I went twice to Germany. And, the Thuringer toy makers said, "Look, here



ROSE O'NEILL AT WORK ON ORIGINAL KEWPIE MODEL

comes a new woman." But they were not afraid of me long, because they found me so harmless and Kewpieish.

And some months after, when I had returned to New York, Kewpies were coming into the harbor by the ship-load and people were writing to me every day to let them make Kewpie ice cream moulds, Kewpie postcards, Kewpie calendars, Kewpie shirts, Kewpie cradles, Kewpie ear-tads, Kewpie cups and saucers, Kewpie spoons, knives, forks, shoes, stockings, baby carriages, Valentines dinner cards, table decorations, cotillion favors, Christmas hangings, nursery friezes, hoods, coats, union suits, caps, baby jumpers, rattles, writing paper, slates, tablets, nursing bottles—must I go on?

So I began to gasp whenever a pyramid of letters was cast upon my table, and I called loudly to a true and tried business man to open the letters where I could not see him do it.

