

About the origin of the name “nénette”

“Nénette » spontaneously evokes a girl’s first name and it is from this first name that the brand, in fact, stems. But we have to go way back, to the eve of the First World War, to find its origin:

“ it would appear that the Nénette and Rintintin characters or dolls were invented in 1913 by the designer Francisque Poulbot, author of the street urchins of Paris which bear his name” is what we learn on the www.malraux.org site which also quotes this sentence from Picasso to Malraux: “...you know the old couples? (...) Corneille and Racine, Ingres and Delacroix, Corot and Daumier, Cézanne and Van Gogh, Nénette and Rintintin... ».



During the Great War, these two dolls made of scraps of wool became veritable mascots, protectors of the soldiers on the front and the people. Found again on the site www.malraux.org: “The popular success of Nénette and Rintintin was immense in France. We really carried these mascot dolls with us, we sent the soldiers fighting on the front postcards with their likeness (...). The couple also served as nicknames to designate the young soldiers and their girlfriends. Nénette and Rintintin survived the war. Children’s books will describe their various adventures”.



Adventures that are forgotten today. But the two first names went into posterity another way.

For Rintintin, we owe it to the American corporal, Duncan who, in September 1918, near Toul in Lorraine, adopted two puppies found in a bombed kennel. He names them Nénette and Rintintin in remembrance of French children who had offered him the famous good luck dolls, then he took his puppies to the United States where, known for his performances, the male, Rintintin, started in 1922 a career as a Hollywood actor, up to the famous television series of the 1950s (with the 4th by the same name, descendant of the Lorraine ancestor). Source: <http://latrentequatrefnso.unblog.fr>.

Nénette owes her subsequent notoriety to Mr. Henri Richaud, creator of the "nénette", who gave this name to this soft brush in reference to the good luck doll of the Great War. Why? He did not have the time to reveal this to us. Maybe the silky cotton threads which the fringe is woven of reminded him of the wool that the little characters were made of? Maybe this choice was also, on a wider scale, a form of tribute to the generations that lived through this period?

Strange relationship, in any case, between a very French product for the maintenance of the car and an American canine hero of Westerns, both so symbolic of the Fifties and Sixties that just because of this, they both, but separately and without any connection between, earn right to a chapter in the book by Jacques Gaillard « Qu'il était beau mon Meccano ("How beautiful my Meccano was") », published in 2009. This connection does however exist and reveals, for those who know their respective origins, an aspect unknown today of the First World War.