

did till Francis came, and in some measure filled the void in our hearts. We were in school, hard at work, when Mr. Clarke appeared at the door with a beaming face. 'Do you want a BABY?' he asked.

"Imagine the excitement of mother and sons. Upstairs we all ran after Mr. Clarke as hard as we could go, and there in the porch were some of our Christian women with three babies, two of them girls of about eighteen and ten months old, and the sweetest baby boy you ever saw, only five months old.

"We took possession of him with joy overflowing, and so another baby reigned over us to our infinite content.

"A story travelled far and wide about the feeding of this baby, and came back to us from Lamu. (On the East Coast of Africa north of the Equator.—Ed.). 'It was a great sight,' so it ran, 'to see Miss Mills feeding her baby; she sat with him on her lap, a boy kneeling in front of her holding a large basin of Neave's Food,* from which the baby was fed spoonful by spoonful, while all the fifty boys stood round lost in admiration.'"

A worker in the Bondei country (in German East Africa writes:—

"An African baby is ushered into the world with as much publicity as a prince, for not only must both grandmothers and another nurse be present, but all the women in the village who can squeeze into the hut, come too.

"Fortunately, the mother is used to darkness, heat, and crowding, and she and the newborn babe seem none the worse for it; indeed, the day after the baby is born the mother has been known to sit up in bed and hold her baby up by one heel, to show how strong they both were. Five days after the baby is born a Bondei mother comes outside the house and shaves her head, just leaving a little tuft on the top, and then all her friends come to see her.

"After the usual long greeting, the question is asked, 'What of the conflict?' and the mother answers, 'It has gone well, friend, here you have your father or your mother,' according as the child is a boy or a girl. Then the baby, a reddish brown scrap of humanity, with little pink soles and palms, is handed over to the visitor, who returns the compliments by giving a present of some pice to the mother with which to buy oil to rub the baby, and then together they talk over all the incidents of the child's advent, and the child's name is told.

"The *Washambala* have a curious custom; the father is not allowed to know either the

name or sex of his child till two or three months have gone by.

"An African baby then begins a struggle for existence. Very soon after its birth the mother says, 'This, my child, has no strength,' and forthwith she makes porridge of ground-up Indian corn and water, and stuffs it into the baby's mouth. If the child manages to survive this, there is still fever to contend with. The mosquitoes love the babies' soft, tender little bodies, and fevers come thick and fast, so that it is a case of the survival of the fittest. The weakly babies succumb. . . . As the babies get older," one "sighs regretfully to think of the time when they lay in one's arms, looking like little brown Botticelli babies, with fathomless brown eyes and crisp black ringlets. To African babies the battle of life begins early, and life in a heathen village soon drives away the trailing clouds of glory."

If you want to know more about African babies, read this charming book.

The Association for Promoting the Training and Supply of Midwives.

Under the auspices of the above Association, Mrs. Charles E. Hobhouse gave an address on Tuesday last on the Report of the Departmental Committee appointed to consider the working of the Midwives' Act, of which she was a member, at 23, Cromwell Road, S.W., by the kind permission of Mrs. S. Bruce. Mr. H. Cosmo O. Bonsor, Treasurer of Guy's Hospital, presided.

Mrs. Hobhouse said that the Committee were of opinion that the adoption of a double standard for midwives was undesirable, and would lead to confusion, that there was no need for the subvention of midwives by the State, in the towns they could make an excellent living, and in the country there was no serious shortage, the question of supply was one of organisation and distribution, and it was surprising how large an area a midwife could cover. Nurses employed by Cottage Nursing Associations should, the speaker said, be trained in general nursing as well as midwifery, as they might only have 10 or 12 midwifery cases in the year.

Before the general meeting a meeting of the Council of the Association was held, at which it was announced that Princess Christian had consented to become President of the Council.

The following Resolution was passed:—"That in the opinion of the Council there is a gradual and satisfactory increase in the readiness of Boards of Guardians to contribute to the funds of Voluntary Nursing Associations; and it is hoped that an impetus will be given to this movement by the recommendations of the Departmental Committee of the Privy Council."—A pious expression of opinion on the part of an Association concerned with midwives not nurses.

* No other food agreed with him.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)