

The Midwife.

THE STORK.

The pupil-midwives trained at the General Lying-in Hospital, York Road, wear a charming armlet with a neat little design of a stork. The armlet is of white linen, the stork and the letters "G.L.I.H." are embroidered in blue. "But why the stork?" someone may ask; a few details about the bird may convince of the suitability of the emblem.

The common Dutch name for the bird is *ooyevaar*, which can be traced through many forms to the old word *odeboro*, "the bringer of food." The word stork (German *storch*) comes from a word *storge*, meaning "natural affection." The Hebrews called it *chaseda*, which signifies pity or mercy, and by the Romans it was called the "pious" bird; the Emperors that merited this title had this emblem on the medals struck in their honour. The bird therefore has a happy name well justified by its character.

There are about twelve species of stork, but the one most generally known is the common or white stork (*cinchona alba*). It is a migratory bird. "The stork in heaven knoweth her appointed times" (Jeremiah). It is found in Holland, Germany, Poland, Turkey, Asia Minor, Persia, &c.; its eastern range extends to Japan; it frequently takes up its winter quarters in Egypt. It is very rarely found in the British Isles. The stork arrives in the northern countries in February or March, and returns to Africa at the end of the summer in large flocks by night. So punctual is it in its reappearance that the Persians had a festival in their almanacs, "The Coming of the Storks." They return to their nests of the previous year. The favourite spots for these are the tops of tall trees, roofs or spires; in Holland and some other countries large boxes or cart-wheels are placed on houses to tempt the young birds to build thereupon, so cherished is the bird. There is a quaint superstition that the stork never builds on a bad man's house. Four to five eggs are laid; these are white pitted with granular depressions; the incubation period is a month. Both male and female are devoted to their young and to the old birds of the flock. Who has not heard of the storks at the conflagration of Delft, who,

failing in their efforts to save their young from the flames, remained with them and perished?

In a German newspaper there appeared the following charming and well-authenticated observation on the parental devotion of the birds. A house on which storks had built their nest and hatched their young took fire. The parent birds were seen flying to a ford, where they plunged into water; they then returned to the nest, flapped their wings vigorously, then returned again and again to the water, and by means of sheer ingenuity succeeded in so soaking the surroundings of the nest that it was saved from burning; in the meantime the fire had been got under control. Though the stork is benign as a rule, if ill-treated or insulted it shows plenty of spirit. A tragic story is told of the results of robbing a stork's nest. A collector was very keen to get an egg as a specimen; he therefore climbed up and abstracted one, substituting in its place a goose's egg; the change was apparently unnoticed, and finally the hatching took place. There was much ado at the nest when the intruder was discovered. The male bird disappeared on the first day, and reappeared on the fourth day with a huge flight of storks. The female continued to sit on the nest, looking depressed and scared. A solemn parliament was then held, several storks appearing to address the rest; then, with dismal cries, the mate, followed by a great number of his allies, set upon the female and destroyed her, the young gosling, and the rude nest of twigs.

The white stork is about $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet in length; its bill is larger than its head; the gait is slow and measured, its flight high and powerful. It frequents marshes, and feeds on eels, frogs, lizards, snakes, young birds, and offal. In many towns it plays the part of sanitary commissioner, and wanders unmolested through the streets, clearing them of garbage. There are laws protecting the birds from injury, so great is the service they render.

There are numerous legendary tales and many proverbs about the stork. In Holland and Germany the little children think the stork brings the babies to their mothers, either fetching them up from a well or from under a bush. In the following dainty poem Ella Wheeler Willcox weaves this popular idea into verse.—

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