

## The Midwife.

### THE MATERNITY HOME FOR BELGIAN REFUGEES, FOLKESTONE.

When the first rush of Belgian Refugees arrived at Folkestone, it was quickly realized that one of the urgent needs was a maternity home, as many of the women arriving were pregnant. Mrs. Muir, a wealthy philanthropic resident, promptly took the matter in hand and wisely began by asking Miss Jones, a trained nurse whom she knew well, to take charge. An empty house in the Sandgate Road, recently a coal office, was lent and very quickly furnished through the kindness of Mrs. Muir and others, all the rooms were fitted with gas stoves, so that the poor weary folk should not suffer from the chilliness of the ordinary English house. But almost before the house was ready a poor lady arrived and her baby born. She had fled from Brussels in her dressing gown, and her husband without stopping for overcoat or boots, before the invading hordes.

Very rapidly the house filled, and the next house (fortunately empty) was also lent. So great was the rush that over 60 people were being fed daily (these were simply the expectant mothers and their families, of course others were being cared for elsewhere), and the two houses with their eighteen to twenty rooms were filled to their very utmost capacity.

Whole families came in together and would not be parted for fear they should lose their dear ones, as many have done, as well as their material belongings.

It was then absolutely essential that a maternity home proper should be arranged, and yet another house in the same road was taken and fitted up solely for the maternity cases. To this house the mothers are taken at term and are kept until they are convalescent, and ready to return to their families and friends.

Everything possible is done for their well-being and comfort; they are given of the best of everything and Mrs. Muir's great wish is that in every way they should be treated as honoured guests.

The wee bassinets have been made from Japanese baskets, well and softly lined and furnished with dainty soft blankets and sheets, all except one which was made from a banana box by two servants, but it was just as comfy and represented just as much, possibly even more, care and sympathy as the others, and one likes to visualize the pleasure of those two, working busily during all their spare time to help other women in their sore and pressing need.

The babies all looked so sweet in their dainty little nighties and white woollen shawls, and in spite of all past horrors the exquisite joy of motherhood illumined the faces of the young

mothers with their first born; they were indeed supremely happy for the time being. Truly, "Sorrow may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Many and terrible are the stories of suffering and privation, not to mention other horrors through which these poor people have gone. One young mother, who was there waiting her third child, was so haunted by the sight of her home burning that nothing seemed able to turn her thoughts from it, and in her sleep she would start and cry "Brûlé, brûlé." Now she has been installed in a cottage near by with her family, and it is hoped that the loving sympathy by which she is surrounded is gradually effacing some of the past horror.

Another mother with her two tiny children, who is there awaiting the third, is with the help of her own mother and a nurse endeavouring to win her baby of ten months back to health, with, it is now hoped, some slight chance of success. She was possessed with the fixed idea that buttermilk, and only buttermilk, would save the child, so buttermilk, is being obtained from a far distant farm at some expense, and the child seems to be improving somewhat.

Still another mother pathetically shows the key of what was once her home and says, "C'est ma maison, c'est tout que j'en ai," which is literally true as it, with many others, has been razed to the ground.

One poor thing was on board a boat for five days, going back and forth from coast town to coast town seeking refuge and finding none, until she was landed at Folkestone and there found a haven of rest. Another spent days in a cellar whilst the Germans bombarded the town, and so each one adds her tale of woe and suffering until one's heart and eyes fill, and throat contracts, and one turns to the new life just opening, praying that it may at least benefit in the future by the suffering of the present.

A large majority of the babies born are, as is right, boys, and christening days are grand fête days for all concerned.

Of course one expects the names to be patriotic, but one hardly thought to hear that not only were the boys called Albert but George Raymond Nicholas as well, thus personifying in their own wee bodies the Entente Cordiale. Miss Jones, the Lady Superintendent, adores and is adored by all the children; being a real child lover and full of sympathy for her guests she spends herself unsparringly to make them as happy as possible, and gave them a grand fête for St. Nicholas. There was a Christmas tree, with useful presents for everyone, provided by many kind friends, and the sixty who were able to be there happily kept their fête although in a strange land.

Some few husbands are with their wives, and so soon as health permits are drafted on to other parts of the country:

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