

The Midwife.

THE FRIENDS' EXPEDITION TO FRANCE.

THE MATERNITY HOSPITAL AT CHALONS.

Châlons-sur-Marne—to give it the correct title—is a place of considerable historic interest, and a few brief facts of the past may, perhaps, not be out of place, because, contrasted with the present time and events, they make a special appeal to the imagination. It is the capital of the Department of Marne, and has, or had, many beautiful buildings, including a cathedral, the early portion of which was built in the thirteenth century, museums, a fine library, and a school of *Arts et Métiers*. Present-day history affords a potent reflex of the past, and should be of special interest to all of us who are looking hopefully for victory. The early Huns (as distinguished from the present re-incarnations) fought a battle under Attila, whose power was then broken near the town of Châlons in the year 451. Nearly 1,000 years later the English unsuccessfully besieged it. The sharp and beautiful contrast here is, that the invasion of the English to-day is one of peace and love; they have come as "Friends"—health missionaries—sons and daughters of consolation, to heal, to comfort, and console.

Only those who have been in the countries where war is being waged can fully realise—because they have *seen*—the sum of the misery and desolation which are the products of war. Miss Pye, former Secretary of the National Union of Trained Nurses, is one of these—shall we say fortunate?—people. In some respects they are certainly very fortunate. In a very interesting lecture, illustrated by lantern pictures, she graphically and vividly described the work of the Expedition which went out to France under the auspices of the Society of Friends, and of which she was appointed organiser.

This particular district was devastated by the hostile invaders in the autumn, when they endeavoured to reach Paris across it. It was then a prosperous part of France, the centre of the champagne industry and also of prosperous farming. Now all is changed, and this fair country is laid waste and the homes of 2,500 refugees have been burnt to the ground. The Society of Friends, desiring to bring help to the unhappy victims, equipped more than one expedition for that purpose. The first unit consisted of three doctors, 11 nurses, 10 orderlies and one trained social worker. All the nurses sent out were members of the National Union of Trained Nurses. Permission to enter the country had, of course, first to be obtained from the French War Office and French Home Office; there was, however, no difficulty—on the contrary, every courtesy and facility was afforded the Expedition. The *difficulties*, which were very real ones, began when the work began. Miss Pye explained that social

work is much less developed in France than in England; there is, for instance, no Soldiers' and Sailors' Association. Enormous provisions were required, large stores of clothing were needed also for these penniless destitute people, who were herded together in barns and outhouses. In some of the villages not one house was left standing. The French Government could not help the Expedition in the way of transport, there was no railway communication; they made themselves independent of such help by their fleet of five motor-cars, which proved to be invaluable and indispensable. The special object of the Society of Friends appears to have been to bring help to expectant mothers, whose condition was the most pitiable. Many of these poor women were the wives of prosperous farmers, whose husbands were fighting. The farmsteads had been burnt, and the women and children rendered destitute.

A Maternity Hospital, therefore, was the urgent need of the hour. The Government allowed them to take over a building which had previously been an asylum for 57 epileptics, who had been the charge of *one old woman*! It will be readily understood what a condition the building was in when vacated by the pitiable victims. It took a fortnight's hard work to cleanse it of dirt and vermin and disinfect it, and make it safe and suitable for its new purpose. Other difficulties to be combated were bad water supply and bad and insufficient sanitary conveniences. The supreme difficulty, however, appears to have been what to do with all the other children of the expectant mothers! Obviously they could not be parted; so this building, called a Maternity Hospital, had to be arranged and equipped to provide accommodation for entire families as well. The courage and resourcefulness of the workers, who of course were mostly midwives, were equal to the emergency. In addition to the lying-in ward with 25 beds, other rooms were set apart as crèches, dormitories, dining-rooms, &c., and they set to work and soon had all in working order. All the mothers and their belongings had to be fetched in the motor cars and some of them from distances of 10 or 20 miles. Miss Pye was much impressed, not only by the deep gratitude of the mothers and their relative contentment, but also by the surprising absence of bitterness against those who had caused all the misery. She never heard a word of animosity expressed by any of them. Their philosophic response to the inevitable was: "To be at war is to be at war." The work of the Expedition also entailed considerable district visiting. The expectant mothers had to be visited beforehand, and particulars of their condition tabulated; everything appears to have been done in a thoroughly business-like, methodical and professional manner. Incidentally, the

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