

TROUBLE IN BABYLAND.

Mrs. Mayfield was not in the habit of attending committees; she thought them a waste of time. She had been persuaded to make an exception in favour of the local Baby Week Committee, because the secretary said it would be such an advantage to have the point of view of the young mother represented, adding diplomatically "especially such a devoted mother."

It was a very hot afternoon. The secretary was reading an apparently interminable list of suggestions as to what might be done by the committee in a weariful monotone. Mrs. Mayfield was wondering what mischief Joan and Billy were getting into, and how far the young and vivacious Auntie who was supposed to be taking charge of them was aiding and abetting their exploits.

Of course, it is never right to go to sleep at committee meetings, much as one may want to. These explanations are only offered in extenuation of the crime, for Mrs. Mayfield did go to sleep, and, what is worse, she dreamed a dream.

At first she thought it was a beautiful garden she opened her eyes upon. A second glance showed that it was not orderly enough for a garden, though flowers were everywhere. It was neither garden, field, nor wood, but had the delightful points of all three; and from somewhere near came the music of a little waterfall. And all around, among the flowers and on the grass, perched on tree branches or hovering in the air in most mysterious fashion, were innumerable babies.

Such babies! Babies with golden hair, red hair, and black hair, and babies with no hair at all; blue eyes and brown eyes; rosy cheeks all dimpled; sturdy bodies, with arms and legs that would delight the heart of any mother to behold; and not one thin or miserable baby among them. Mrs. Mayfield wanted to love and cuddle them all, for she adored babies.

They all wore the wise, considering look with which new babies survey the world; and it seemed there was serious business afoot. A brown-eyed baby very like her own Billy began to explain matters to her.

"We have asked you here to answer a few questions for us," said he. "We are having a 'Mother Week,' and there are lots of things that puzzle us about mothers."

Then came a chorus of voices. "It's ever such fun—perhaps we're going on strike!"

The first baby told them to be quiet in a very loud voice, and the noise ceased, though never

for one moment were the babies quite still. The baby went on explaining.

"Some of us come to your country sometimes to see how the babies are getting on who have gone to live there all together."

"Why do you ever want to leave this beautiful place?" Mrs. Mayfield could not help asking.

Again the baby chorus broke out: "To find our mothers, of course." And one baby added:

"They say there won't be any mothers soon; only crèches."

"That is one thing we want to know about," said the first baby. "Some of our babies don't have their mothers to look after them after they have gone to earth to find them. They take them to a place where there are a lot of other babies they don't know, and leave them there all day."

"They have to go to work to earn money," said Mrs. Mayfield; but baby after baby came up to her with question after question, not heeding her answers at all. In the background she saw a sedate baby, very like her Joan, who seemed to be making notes in a huge book.

"Some babies' mothers never have time to play with them, even when they don't go away all day."

"Some babies go to school when they are ever so little, and they are glad to go."

Mrs. Mayfield did get in a word here.

"Our schools are very nice."

"Why aren't your homes nice, too?"

"Lots of our babies get ill when they come to your country. They never get ill here."

"Some of them don't get enough to eat."

"Some babies never have a garden to play in."

"Some babies' mothers are too tired to play with them and talk to them."

Again the brown-eyed baby wound up the chorus.

"We are beginning to wonder if it is worth while to come and look for our mothers. They seem to be too busy to take care of us."

Mrs. Mayfield was beginning to protest, when the baby like Joan jumped up and called out:

"Let's play at something else now; I'm tired of this."

And all the babies danced away among the trees, the trees faded, the waterfall ceased, and a grown-up voice said:

"What do you think of the idea of having a baby show, Mrs. Mayfield?"

And as she opened her eyes she saw the rest of the committee gazing reproachfully at her.

She felt she had a message to deliver, and

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