

## The Midwife.

### THE SOLILOQUY OF AN UNWANTED BABE.

He never arsted to come. Bless 'is 'eart !

Somebody very big and large said that about me when I was born four weeks ago. It's the only sensible thing I have heard said since I *did* come for certainly I should never have 'arsted to come, and I only wish I knew the way to get back.

I don't understand anything here. A long time ago where I came from there were hundreds and hundreds of little creatures like me. Some were waiting to go to mummies and daddies who were waiting for *them*. How we knew about that I can't tell you, but we did. And every time a mummy finished a little gown or put another pair of boots in the bottom drawer, her little baby in the "Never Never Land" gurgled with delight because it knew the time was drawing nearer and nearer when it would go to its own real live daddy and mummy.

But in the corner of "Never Never Land," where I used to be, the little babies were sad because there did not seem to be any daddy for them, and very often their mummies did not want them to come.

Why do people have little babies if they don't want them? Why do some daddies run away and hide, and often their mummies run away, too? It seems very strange, because, as the big person said, we never "arsted to come." They must have "arsted" us or we should never have thought of it.

Where my mummy has gone I can't tell. She's gone a long way off. I think I heard the large somebody say, "Well, pore thing, she's out of 'er trouble now anyway. She's better orf, she is. She's been treated shameful, she 'as."

Well, of course, I don't know what that means at all. I wish she could have stopped with me. If she is out of her troubles, it seems to me I am only just beginning mine, and I feel very small and lonely.

I don't know what place this is where I am; but I heard the large somebody say something about the workhouse being the best place for me, because, she said, "look at the price of milk and everythink, and then what a handful a baby is. You can't go nowhere nor do nothink with a baby to mind. And the washin' they makes no one could credit. Your own's bad enough, but you've got to put up with them whether you like it or not; but other people's kids is different. Besides there aint no one reely 'sponsible for the money."

It's all very strange. What *did* she mean?

So they brought me here.

There are no daddies and mummies here. It's a place for little babies who haven't got any.

Great, ugly people come and look at us now and then. They are called "Guardians." Its very funny as they are not in the least like the guardian angels who took care of us in the "Never, Never Land." You can't imagine *anything* more different.

These "Guardians" are very, very old indeed, and they say such *silly* things. I suppose they think we don't understand, but we do and we peep through our cots and laugh at each other. Of course, they don't see as they all wear great glasses over their eyes. Our guardian angels didn't.

"This is a beautiful nursery," they say. "'Ow much better off the children are 'ere than in their own 'omes." (Silly old men!) "And so beautiful and clean too."

Its a great disadvantage not to be able to speak, and all I can do is to howl when they poke their great fingers in my soft little face. What I thought was this (for babies can *think* all sorts of wise things, though you mightn't imagine it to look at them):—

"Old men, your nursery has the right amount of cubic air space; your cots are the latest pattern; your patent food is expensive; your nurses do their duty, they feed us by the clock, they wash us night and morning, sometimes they kiss the prettiest of us. Do you really think, old men, that this makes up for not having a mummy of your own, even if she is not a very tidy or a very clean mummy? Where I came from 'one baby one mummy' was the rule. There, of course, real mummies say 'Diddums, diddums, my precious,' to their babies, and kiss them, and kiss them, and kiss them."

I should like to ask these old, old people, when they were babies (if they ever were), if they would like to have worn a little coarse "nightie" with a blue stripe in it, and not the teeniest, *teeniest* piece of lace round the neck—not the least like the little things we used to watch mummies putting in the bottom drawer when we were in "Never, Never Land."

Often the mummies would kiss the little gowns and sheets. I am sure no mummie would kiss these.

Well, I have finished my grouse, because it does not seem any use.

I think the next best thing to having a mummie and daddy of your own is for someone else's to have you. I hear it is sometimes done. *Real* mummies often love lonely little babies almost as much as their own.

I hope these old Guardians will board me out, I believe that is what they call it. I would rather make mud pies when I am older than be so dreadfully clean.

H. H.

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