The Midwife.

FOR THE BABIES OF THE MARNE.

The Maternity Hospital of the Friends War Victims Relief Committee, now well on the way towards its fifth birthday, has had an eventful history. From the day in December, 1914, when the Préfet offered us the epileptic block of the Asile des Vieillards and we fell upon it with scrubbing brushes and disinfectants under the awed gaze of the aged and the imbecile inhabitants of the other blocks, until the day we re-entered it after our five months' exile in 1918, we have lived and moved and had our being in a series of *crises*; but *crise* or no *crise*, babies have continued to pour in upon us in a steadily increasing flood, and our thousandth is well within sight.

Marie Louise, who now signs herself "votre fille ainée" in large straggly letters, made her appearance and opened the Maternity on December 9th, 1914. Her mother, a refugee from the Ardennes, arrived accompanied by six of her ofispring, leaving two more at home, or rather in the place that served as such. We had a happy little Christmas party two weeks later for them and their *companions*, by that time quite numerous, and speculated cheerfully upon how many months it would be before they were back in their own country.

Our first real taste of war came in September 1915. Until that time we had heard the continuous thunder of the guns about fifteen miles away; but one fine day shells from a long-range German gun arrived among us, and a Zeppelin gave the town a peppering in the night. We had no cellars of any kind, so we made what preparations we could against fire, put out the lights, and waited—for what did not come that time! French aviators had sighted Bertha and put her out of action.

That Christmas we thought we should like to invite all our mothers from the beginning, with their babies and other children, for New Year's Day and give them a Christmas tree. Most of them were refugees in little villages some way off. We never expected them to come, but we sent each a Christmas card and an invitation, and laid plans for about fifty. Fortunately, we had a reserve stock, for one hundred and fifty guests arrived. They came the night before; they came first thing in the morning; they walked miles and miles. One carried her baby twenty-two kilometres. In their year and a-half of exile this was their very first festivity, and they made the most of it.

We started the ward for sick babies in 1916; we had always held a weekly baby clinic, and now and again kept in one or two that needed constant care. As our numerous family increased, more and more room was needed, so we opened a little ward of seven cots that soon overflowed. Next year we needed twenty cots and the *hôpital-pouponnière* became an established fact. All that year, too, we were evacuating women and children from the bombarded town of Reims, sending the children on into the south or centre of France in the care of various French societies.

When New Year's Day approached we thought with horror of the squash of the last year's party. There would be at least *double* the number. So we borrowed the Town Hall of Châlons, where we had three hundred guests! All that autumn the *crises* had taken the unpleasant form of difficulties over papers and passports, and we could not get workers out from England. We were terribly short-handed. It was the hardest winter known in these parts; fuel was almost impossible to get. Our one means of lighting, kerosene lamps, failed for lack of oil; food and milk were very scarce—in fact, almost the only commodity that did not fail was babies. They came thicker than ever, as it grew more and more impossible for the poor women to stay in the miserable places they called home.

So overworked were we all in March, with no new workers coming, that we held a meeting to consider asking the Committee to close the Maternity. The relief workers met with us, and in the face of the desperate need to help these poor women, we decided that whatever happened we would carry on. The relief workers offered their help. Little did they (or we) know how soon we should have to call upon them.

Like a bolt from the blue came one of the thin yellow official telegrams early in April, asking us to come at once to Reims to evacuate the Maternity there. Permits at that time took at least three days, but that flimsy yellow paper was potent and we were off in less than two hours. Not only the Maternity but the civil hospital had to be evacuated under very heavy fire. Our cars worked from 5 a.m. till 11 p.m. all week. Surgical and medical cases went to the Hôtel Dieu, but maternity cases and babies came to us. From the villages, too, they came pouring in; we brought away thirty or forty babies under three, at once. On our heaviest night we had three hundred extra children on our hands. Food and clothing seemed to arrive by magic just in time, mostly cases from America, and a special providence averted the epidemics we imagined with horror among so mixed a crowd. Air raids were very bad all that spring, but we are some distance from the centre of the town, and fortunately escaped damage. We had many patients from the town (not refugees), as they felt safer with us than in their own houses.

The raids became much more serious and caused the evacuation of the Hôtel Dieu in the spring of 1918. Its maternity ward was evacuated to our hospital. Three months later, at the time of the German advance, the Maternity Hospital at Epernay was also evacuated to ours, which was left the only Maternity hospital in the Marne, if

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