

## BABIES

It is a relief to turn from snow to babies, because although snow and babies have a good deal in common, such as apparent and beguiling innocence, softness and whiteness, yet there is a marked contrast between them. Snow is cold and chilly, whereas babies are snug and warm.

Quite suddenly, in the midst of the snow age of 1947, I came into intimate contact with wards full of lovely and intriguing babies of various shapes and sizes. All appeared happily oblivious of the desperate, yet historic weather conditions around them, and many chuckled happily from beneath mountainous piles of snowy-white wool and hot-water bottles. I envied them. None of them had chilblains on their microscopic toes, and although one of them had a tiny red nose, like a rosebud stuck in the middle of his cherub-like face, I gathered from Sister that he had been drinking nothing stronger than milk to warm his little body.

Taken collectively, they were just babies, but on further acquaintance with each small person I was astonished at the diversities of character revealed by the impish glances of some, by the solemn, fearful steady regard of others, and by candour, shyness or boldness. Shall we do a round and meet a few of the Prime Ministers, miners, teachers, nurses, and even the Mr. Shinwells of tomorrow? A wful thought!

First, here is Sandra, aged 12 weeks. Just a tiny bundle of humanity with dark and serious eyes and a dark downy head peeping out from an all-enveloping blanket. After lengthy and serious contemplation, an utter transformation is ushered in with a chuckling smile. Sandra is positively adorable

and a scamp, and is quite well enough to be off home. But what would Sister do without her?

Next is Rodney, aged five, just recovering from pneumonia and not yet ready to be interviewed by the Press, so we'll pass on to Michael. Now, Michael is a clever boy and beautiful to look upon and papa's darling, and he knows what he wants. He's had a nasty finger and a big, septic, painful gland in his neck, as well as an extra ration of homesickness. The war seems to have passed by Michael very comfortably, because to-day he ordered fresh salmon and ice-cream to follow the usual dinner, which he obviously mistook for his aperitif.

Next came two of the sweetest little compact bundles—one, we hope, may be a miniature Winston Churchill, and the other a Queen in a happy home of the future. Both are blue-eyed and fair-haired angels—at the moment, and their claim to fame is their smile. One tries to smile more often and more entrancingly than the other, but both are stars of equal brilliance and both are beautiful.

Ah, here is little Billie—a classical case of pyloric stenosis; first baby, aged four weeks, and a boy! Billie

has been through the mill, which appears to have aged the little chap, for at the moment he looks like an old man. But we mustn't offend him, and perhaps in a week's time he will have regained his lost youth! Ann is a more serious, fair-haired and blue-eyed girl. Unfortunately, poor Ann burnt her legs, which are painful and trying; they've brought dark shadows under her pretty eyes and many a restless night; but she's brave and clever and is getting much better. Ann's native home is Sweden, and she has the lovely fair skin of the Northerners.

Peter is a fat and healthy-looking boy who is obviously fond of jam for his tea and not too keen on this business of washing. He thinks the soap ration ought to be cut still further, and the butter and jam ration increased. He is only a little tot, and has not yet threatened to write to Dr. Summerskill about his cut sweets this month, but given a few years and I wouldn't like to prophesy his actions. Even now he looks ready for anything, with his saucy, jam-decorated little face.

Alma and Doris are two prim little maidens of five and six, and both follow present fashions very assiduously. Doris's plaits, about 3 inches long, stick out at a rakish angle and are tied with a flourish of white bandage and the bows well spread out. The collar of her nightie is carefully brought out over her pretty little bed-jacket, and her top sheet beautifully smoothed out with her own two fat little hands. Pride of appearance and general smartness are Doris's virtues! Alma strictly copies, and one has to be very careful not to tread on any of their little toes by finding the smallest detail out of order!

You mustn't miss little Tommy before you go; he is only 14 months and is dimpled, round,

fair and fat. His wisp of hair is daily brushed upwards, at right angles, and he is a perfect "Mabel Lucie Atwell" model. He has a big voice which is often heard in loud lamentation. His griefs are many and short-lived; his chief worry is the out-size of his tummy, which no amount of excess rations seems to completely fill. He often vaguely remembers his mammy, when his eyes again water noisily. When he has visitors, or can throw his furry rabbit about, or pick his little yellow chicken to pieces—all is well and his smiles are of the sweetest, like April sunshine after showers. Tommy has a "weak" chest, which probably accounts for it!

His neighbour is little Susan. She is demure, adorable and a vision of loveliness. Her fair lovely hair, blue eyes and ravishing smile are famous throughout the hospital. Being a woman, she fully realises that her beauty cloaks a multitude of sins. Her generosity knows no bounds. With a gracious gesture she presents her nappy to any passer-by, or her precious sweets, after removing them from her cupid's bow mouth.

There are many more attractive babies here, but time is short and paper scarce!

G. M. H.



WHAT IS THE PHOTOGRAPHER DOING?

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