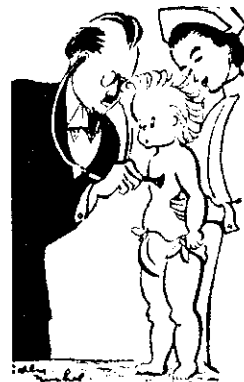




HAVING A BABY IN WARTIME

"A Fine Way Of Saying 'Yah' To Hitler"

BECAUSE we feel that the question of having, or not having, a baby in wartime is a very important one for New Zealand women to-day, we reproduce in part an article from "London Calling," in which Mrs. Winifred Holmes, a regular broadcaster for the BBC, describes her experience of motherhood in wartime England



"**Y**OU'RE going to have a baby... now!" That was the first reaction of quite a lot of my friends when I told them my news last winter. And then they either looked at me pityingly, or said I was crazy. "A baby in wartime—how improvident!" was what they meant.

But there were others who said: "That's the best news I've heard for ages!" "Something thoroughly sensible and normal in a lunatic world."

What did I feel about it? Well, I agreed with the last people. In fact, I

wanted very much indeed to have another baby—I've got a small daughter of six already—not only for her sake, but because I felt it would be a fine way of saying "yah!" to Hitler. You see, all last winter I was living and working in London. And that meant raids.

I couldn't do anything to stop those droning murder-machines that came over every night to kill and maim and destroy; but I could answer back by adding another life. Another life to make up in some small measure for those they were snuffing out so wantonly and horribly and greedily.

I was working then in a Government Department, and my work took me bicycling all over London, looking at

shelters and rest centres and husbands' hostels, and all the things we did to help people get through their ordeal. I saw many sad and tragic things, and many wonderful things. Old people in rest centres, who had lost all they possessed, who said with shining faces: "We're lucky to be alive; others are worse off than we are." And patient mothers and fathers in little family groups down by London's docks, settling themselves in for the night in the cellars of some big, old warehouse or on a draughty platform of the Underground: "We're all right, mate; we're safe 'ere. Don't you go worrying about us."

And as I came cycling away towards home, bumping over pot-holes and skirting round bomb-holes, through the black-out, through the twinkling fire-works of the barrage, past "incidents" where mutilated people, children, too, were being dug out of the wreckage of their homes, I wanted to shout out loud: "I've got a secret—your courage and your patience and your agony will be avenged. Out of this city of death new life is stirring, new life that can't be defeated."

Away from London

But of course I did nothing of the sort. I arrived home tired, usually, and thankful to be back safely under my own roof—like a child playing "it" I felt I was only safe when I was home, though of course it was no safer in our little house in Chelsea than it was anywhere else. And Jack, my husband, would scold me and tell me I oughtn't to do so much, and when was I going to stop doing these crazy things and so on. In the end, three months before she was born, I had to stop doing them. Reluctantly, I was forced to obey my doctor, who said bluntly and firmly that if I didn't give up my tiring job and leave London, she wouldn't be responsible for my baby or myself. That was that. I had to. And you know, secretly, I was rather relieved. I was feeling tired and strained, and the raids were beginning to tell on me. I was getting nervous. And I'd never been nervous before. Once or twice a bit frightened, but not often, and not really nervous. Now, when the sirens wailed and the bombs crashed down, I had a sick feeling inside me: "You oughtn't to be here," I thought. "It's not right now that you're responsible for another life as well as your own." So we shut the house, as we couldn't let it, and went to stay with friends in the country, where I could have a good rest.

No Trouble About Diet

Now I'm very keen on a mother's diet in pregnancy. One worry I had with this baby was: could I get enough of the

right things to eat this time? I didn't want a baby suffering from malnutrition. But I needn't have worried. As soon as my doctor signed my application form, I was able to get a pint a day of fresh milk, at less than half the usual price, under the National Milk Scheme.

Then my own regular chemist kept me supplied with bottles of halfbut-liver oil, orange juice and calcium tablets, and I got all the vegetables, fruit and eggs I wanted where I was staying in the country. The other rations were perfectly adequate. Just to show you that I'm not making the best of a bad job, I'll tell you that this wartime baby weighed three ounces more at birth than peacetime Henrietta did, and Henrietta was seven and a-half pounds—a good normal weight.

Coupons and Baby Clothes

Clothes, however, presented more of a problem. I'd been stupid enough to give away most of Henrietta's baby things. Rationing had just come in, and planning a new baby's wardrobe on 50 coupons was quite a puzzle. You'll realise that when I tell you that one single Turkish towelling nappie takes a whole coupon! Two ounces of wool takes one coupon, and a carrying shawl four coupons! Still, it can be done with careful thought and good arithmetic, and now that Christina is 11 weeks old, I'm finding that what I got was perfectly adequate to start off with.

Of course, I begged, borrowed, or stole all I could from my friends. Everyone's doing it now in wartime, and I was lent a folding bath, a Moses basket, and a fine Shetland shawl. People gave me some jackets and things they'd knitted before rationing came in. When people came to see the new baby, they brought little offerings like "baby safety-pins"—things that are not couponed but very useful! They were slightly shamefaced about it, but I was delighted. Instead of flowers, a friend who keeps chickens brought me eggs, and another brought me tomatoes!

I had a lovely three months in the Surrey countryside, and I got the raids right out of my system and felt fine. I helped to pick and bottle and preserve the fruit in the garden for our winter larders. And I waited patiently for my wartime baby.

At last August came, and I went into a convent nursing home in Guildford, where the nuns, Franciscans, are all hospital-trained, and are wonderful nurses. It proved to be the ideal place to have a baby in wartime, as it was so peaceful and gentle and remote from

(Continued on next page)

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