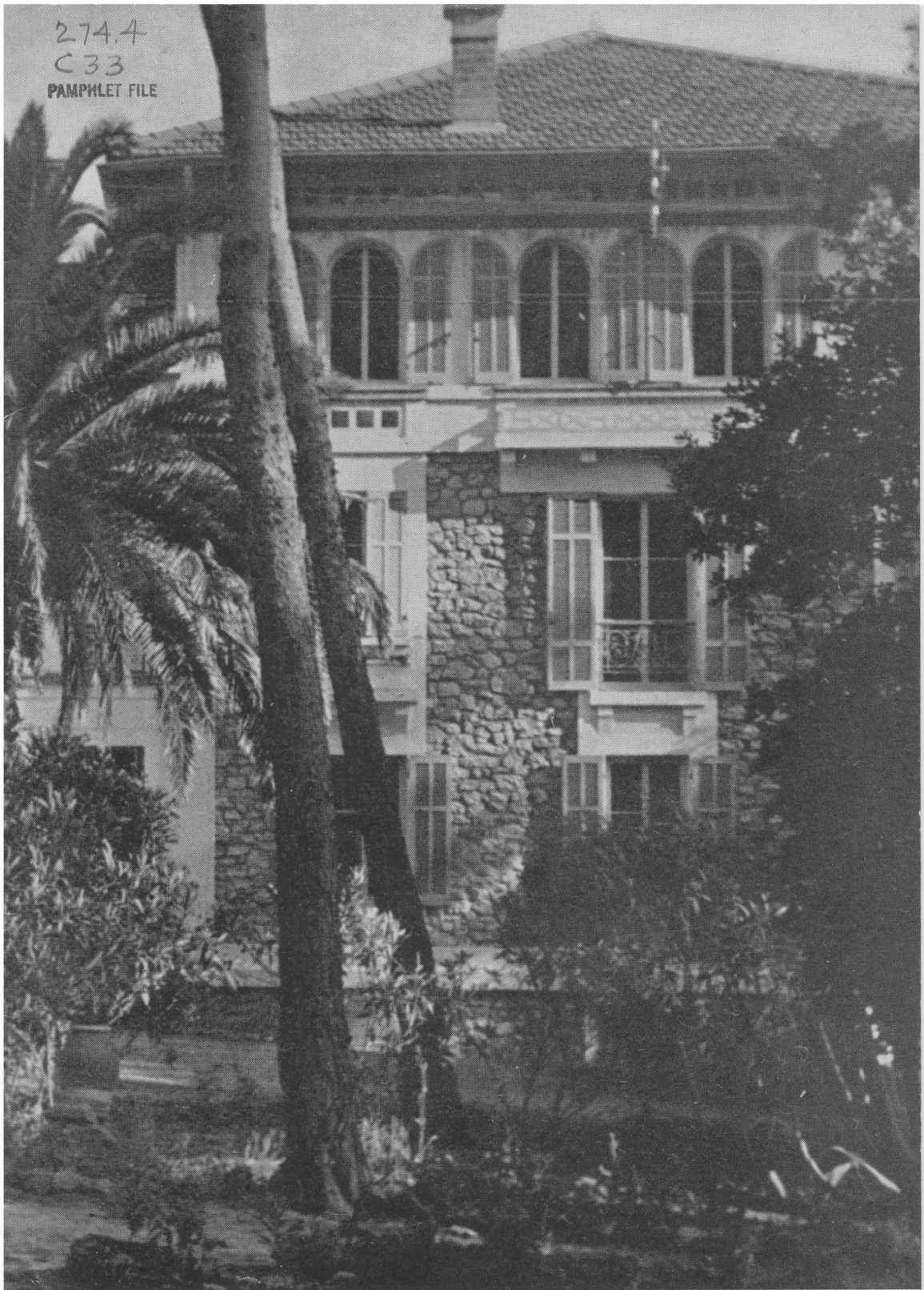


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REFUGE des PETITS, HYERES, FRANCE



THE STORY OF A REFUGE IN FRANCE

by A. SEYMOUR HOUGHTON, JR.
and G. M. PERRET

*After the verb "to love" — "to help"
is the most beautiful verb in the
world. (Suttner)*

The fronts in the present war are many and varied, and not all of them are necessarily military. There is one non-military front that many people consider of vital importance to the future welfare of the world: this is the Children's Front.

Today's youth is the hope of the new world that must arise tomorrow from the ruins and desolation of war.

When the lights went out in Europe in September 1939, many of us wanted to do our bit to save from wreckage this precious human material. This desire to be of assistance was soon fulfilled in the case of a small group of Americans. After the outbreak of hostilities we began receiving appeals from friends who loved France, asking us to help care for the evacuated children, of which there were already many thousands. It will be remembered that, at that time, the French government had adopted the policy of evacuating children from the northern and eastern border regions. The parents were given little warning and the little ones were packed off to new homes in central and southern France. There, after a long and tiresome trip, separated from their families for the first time in their lives, amid new surroundings, these youngsters were supposed to live until they could once more return home with safety. Emotion, shock, change of scene, unfamiliar faces weighed heavily on them, and many needed medical attention. However, it was most difficult to give them adequate hospital care, because the military authorities had already requisitioned most of the existing hospitals in preparation for the impending surge of wounded.

We were therefore asked if we would not come to France and do hospital work among the children. We accepted and, grouping about us those people whose love of France and interest in children were equally great, were able to found our organization.



The Station Wagon donated by the Red Cross must have had elastic sides for on this day it held forty-two youngsters, five adults, and a home-made express wagon. The "Bus" does all the marketing and serves as an ambulance in an emergency.

At this time the Prefect of the Nièvre Department wrote saying that he sorely needed help, as about 40,000 evacuated children had been placed in his district and that hospitals were entirely lacking to care for them. Fortunately a friend in the Nièvre who knew of our plans offered us his own house as the hospital. This was a beautiful Louis XIII chateau with a large wooded park, ideal for convalescent children.

The first step, therefore, was to register with the Department of State in Washington in order to obtain permission to raise funds in this country for our work in France. However, without the generous aid and support from the start of the Central Bureau for Relief our task would have been much more complicated. The great assistance rendered us at all times by the Central Bureau's able secretary, Miss Antonia H. Froendt, has solved many of our problems. For example, the Central Bureau has always most kindly deposited all donations that have been given us, as well as many times rounding out sums with money entrusted to it for work among the children of France.

Furthermore, the only supplies we have ever been fortunate so far in receiving directly from the United States since the fall of France were delivered to us by the Rev. Clayton E. Williams, who started on his successful errand of mercy from the offices of the Central Bureau. He brought us much-needed supplies from home as well as a small quantity of soap and some highly prized foodstuffs from Lisbon.

After organizing workrooms in this country that would send us a continuous flow of garments, sheets and other hospital material, securing equipment, an ambulance and making certain that our means were sufficient to guarantee a year's work, we left for France.

Upon our arrival, we at once went down into the Nièvre, which lies half way distant between Paris and Vichy on the Loire River. Knowing the region well from long residence, we found ourselves surrounded by willing helpers, all anxious to participate in the work of getting the hospital started.

Matters were proceeding in a very satisfactory manner when the fateful month of May arrived, bringing with it all that total warfare implies. That period is all too present still in everyone's mind. Once again the highways and railroads were



*Innocent Victim — No parents, no name, no home.
(cf. text, Page six)*



Man Working!

crowded with a packed mass of fleeing humanity. At first it was the Dutch, the Belgians and the Luxembourgers, but shortly it was once more the lot of the French from the border provinces to take to the road as they had been forced to do 25 years before. Many who made up this sad procession were for the second time leaving their homes and farms and shops, starting forth on another voyage of woe, of broken hearts and of desolation.

EXODUS

Night and day they poured through the Nièvre, hungry, tired and in need of consolation. Existing canteens were taxed to the utmost, others were opened to feed the hungry. The people, with almost no exceptions, opened their homes to allow the refugees a place to sleep, but soon even this did not suffice and straw for them to sleep on was placed on the floors of schools and public buildings. The highways were so jammed with moving vehicles that crawled along inch by inch with frequent stops that many people caught between villages slept in the cars or in the fields.

Many highly dramatic accounts of this exodus have already been published, along with a great wealth of action photos that show all too vividly the sadness, misery and hopelessness that was the lot of the refugee. In this manner most people have undoubtedly obtained a clear picture of what the situation must have been. However, unless one has personally lived through such an ordeal, it seems to me quite impossible for anyone to imagine what it truly represents, with whole families separated, persons lost, wounded or lying dead along the road.

One June morning we in the Nièvre awoke to learn that there were no longer any trains for civilians, that the post office and telegraph station have been closed, that the barracks had been emptied and that the police had been withdrawn. During that day and the one following the Germans occupied the Nièvre.

Shortly afterwards the Armistice was signed and with it the end of a world was consummated. People, who the day before had had only one idea: to seek safety, to get away at any cost and at any sacrifice, halted where they were and took stock of the situation, trying to piece together a picture of what it all meant to their country and to themselves. Life was stopped, all civilian activities seemed to have

ceased. Sending a letter from one town to another took days, a 'phone call to a point nearby required 24 or 36 hours and even then no assurance could be given that it would be put through. A cable we sent to New York at this time required 18 days to be delivered. Newspapers did not appear or, if they did, were not distributed outside the city where they were published.

Trains running sketchily were crowded with soldiers, automobiles were no longer allowed to be driven without a special permit, and so refugees remained rooted to one spot, waiting. They began to take an inventory of what remained. Many knew already that dear ones had been killed. There were those who had hardly been conscious before of the fact that beloved parents had become separated from them or, if they were, had always thought that the next stopping place would see them reunited once more. Now they realized that the search would be a hard one. All day long the radio blared forth the names of refugees seeking the whereabouts of relatives, long scribbled lists of names were posted in town halls and post offices, asking for information about families that had become disrupted. It seemed at this time as though one-half of France were hunting for the other half.

Cards were also printed by the authorities and distributed through the post offices. On them a refugee could fill out information about himself and his family, where they had formerly lived, where they were now staying and so forth. These cards were then forwarded to a central point, where they were classified and served to answer inquiries from other refugees. In this way many families were reunited. But by far the saddest of all at this time were the small children who had become separated from their parents. We can ask ourselves how it was possible that one could lose children. Here are some examples that show how this happened.

We met one frantic mother who had been carrying her baby in her arms. Tired out, she had placed the little one on an ammunition caisson to rest. The driver, all unknowing, had sped off, carrying the child with him without hearing the frantic mother's cries. Once at a way station a mother left the train momentarily in search of food or milk, and before she returned the train had departed, taking her children to an unknown destination. We knew of small children who had wandered off and were lost in the crowd.

Stories of this kind, both personally witnessed or picked up from refugees themselves, convinced us that the most urgent problem was that of the lost children. We had learned in the meantime that our chateau had been occupied by the Germans. We knew also that new hospitals were less needed because, hostilities having ceased, there would no longer be great numbers of wounded to care for and so the army would shortly return the local hospitals to their rightful owners, the civilian authorities.

We thought therefore that by far the most logical work for us to do was to organize a center or home for lost children.

In spite of lack of news, in spite of letters being returned to their senders, one day we heard over the radio that the offices of the American Red Cross and the American Friends Service Committee, those admirable Quakers, had been moved to Marseilles. We decided to go to that city and acquaint these groups with our new plans and ask them for help, as we would be starting from scratch once again; in fact we learned there that all of our supplies shipped from home, including the ambulance, had been lost, either through seizure, sinking on the ocean or diversion to England or North Africa to prevent them from falling into German hands.

We were most cordially welcomed by the Red Cross and the Quakers, who promised full cooperation and assistance. We were to learn later how splendidly these promises were to be kept, when the Red Cross gave us a Ford station wagon to replace ours, medical supplies and blankets, and the Quakers, milk and other indispensable things. This direct help from the Quakers has been continued up until the present.

With these guarantees received, we then asked the French government for its approval, which we obtained in a letter signed by the Minister of the Interior. The next step was to find a place suitable for housing small children where we could settle with some hope of remaining for an indefinite period, as there was now no longer any question of working in the Nièvre, which was in Occupied France. We needed above all to find a place with a good, equable climate, where we would not need too much coal and where locally-grown foodstuffs would help fill the larder, already distressingly wanting in many essentials. The southern part of France offered these advantages, as many districts are famous for their market gardens and this region is the warmest in the whole country.

After searching diligently but unsuccessfully about the region of Marseilles, we

went to Hyères, a town situated on the Mediterranean, not far from the seaport of Toulon. There we met with immediate good fortune, as we found a hotel, formerly patronized by American and English winter visitors, that entirely suited us. Although the owner had had, up to that time, no idea of moving out, we easily persuaded her that this hotel, called the "Espérance", was the very spot we had been looking for. To begin with, its name means *hope* and that was exactly what we wished to bring once more into the lives of French children. Then it was ideally situated in the pine-clad hills of Costebelle, overlooking the sea and only two miles from a fine beach.

Hyères has long been famous as a winter resort. Queen Victoria spent some time there and the American writer, Edith Wharton, owned a chateau in the town at the time of her death. Today there are still several elderly English ladies in Hyères, some having lived in the town more than fifty years. They are all fine, courageous women and do honor to their country.

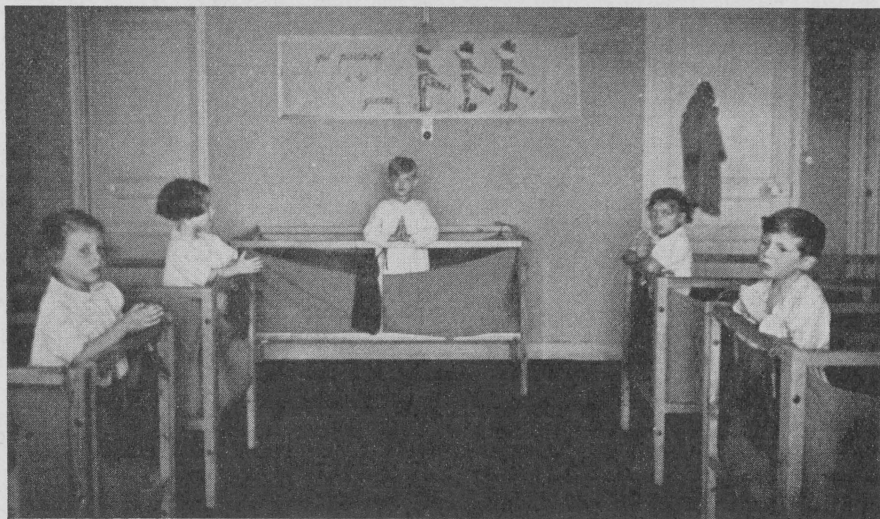
Furthermore, having the most equable climate in France, Hyères has long been noted as a center for convalescent children. We knew that our search had come to an end and the "ESPÉRANCE" became the "REFUGE des PETITS" or Child Shelter.

HOUSE FURNISHINGS — WAR STYLE

The first of our many tasks was accomplished but by far the most arduous ones were only beginning. The hotel, furnished to receive adult guests, had to be transformed for our youngsters and at a time when already in France there was little to be bought in the markets.

As no children's furniture such as cribs, chairs, benches and tables was any longer obtainable, we were forced to call upon a local carpenter to make all these things for the Refuge. We drew pictures to scale of what we needed and the carpenter found enough wood, nails, bolts and other hardware to supply us with furniture for between 55 and 60 children. Except for the infirmary, where we placed repainted second-hand metal cribs, all the others are of wood and are both quaint and serviceable. Another problem was to find enough ticking for mattresses. We were able finally to supply each crib with a mattress, stuffed with sterilized seaweed.

A kind merchant in Toulon consented to sell us dozens of small sheets, the kind he formerly furnished sailors for their bunks at sea. Now that practically all shipping had ceased, he said he could give them to us, although he knew perfectly well that it would be a very long time indeed before he could replenish his stock. Once sold,



"Bon soir, petit Jésus, Bénissez tout le Refuge, nos familles, toutes nos mairaines d'Amérique, et Tonton Seym, et faites que je sois bien sage."

it is almost impossible now to restock any merchandise. An empty shelf usually remains empty. With the blankets that we received and these sheets, our cribs were now ready for their little occupants.

While the work of furnishing the house continued, we had to hunt up clothes for the children who were filling the Refuge, arriving for the most part with sadly depleted wardrobes.

Fortunately for us, the system of textile and leather rationing did not go into effect until the winter of 1941. This made it possible for us, with the help of kind and generous shopkeepers, to lay in enough clothing and shoes for our immediate needs in spite of the growing scarcity of all things.

I think it right to say, at this time, that nowhere did we ever encounter lack of understanding nor ask a favor of a business man or shopkeeper without meeting with immediate help. All of these men and women, shocked and bewildered by the enormity of the disaster that had befallen them, looked with objectivity upon the general situation and realized that the future life of their beloved country depended on the children who tomorrow would be responsible for its destiny. We were going to care for some of these children, therefore, we were to be helped as much as possible, even though this aid entailed in some cases personal sacrifice and loss.

However, not a single store had enough of any one thing to satisfy our demands, so we spent many days tramping up and down the streets of Marseilles and Toulon, hunting for shirts, underclothes, pajamas, socks, shoes and all the many other articles necessary for our big family.

Here we would find 2 nightgowns, there 4 pairs of socks, 6 underdrawers, at another shop some trousers, then a few little woolen shirts and sweaters, and thus it went. A very good friend, who traveled much, never forgot to ask, whenever she entered a store, whether there were not a few pairs of underdrawers called *petit bateau* to be had. These she would send to us from all over Unoccupied France.

Tooth brushes were also a knotty problem until we finally enlisted the help of friends, who thoughtfully remembered to ask for tooth brushes at every opportunity.

In this piecemeal manner we finally succeeded in stocking the closets at the Refuge and knew that one problem was momentarily settled. But this was not true for long, as we soon learned, and the relentless search for clothes and shoes went on for months. This would still be one of our greatest preoccupations if government rationing and ever-increasing shortages had not settled it rather preemptorily for us.

At present we have between 55 and 60 children at the Shelter. There are five principal classifications of children whose ages run from 2 to 8 years. These comprise the lost children, those who have been orphaned, others who have been expelled from the forbidden zone in Alsace-Lorraine, children with fathers lying in distant prison camps and others still whose fathers have disappeared in order to carry on the struggle elsewhere.

Our youngsters are sent us mainly from the many French relief organizations caring for war victims. These agencies make formal requests for admission of their children to the Refuge. They include among others the French Red Cross, the Secours National, the Social Service Bureau of the Navy, the relief organizations of the departments and cities and then private ones such as those directed by Robert Thiriez, the thread manufacturer of Lille, evacuated to Toulouse, the agency for expelled Lorraines in Lyon under the direction of Mlle. Segolène de Wendel and many others.

The only formalities we require are a medical certificate of good health and non-contagion and a case history to show that the child is really a war victim.

PAGES FROM THE CASE BOOK

The many cases that come to our attention are varied and often their stories are most tragic. Here are a few of them.

During the frightful exodus of June 1940 when millions were fleeing before the invasion, a little boy baby* was found lying on the body of a dead woman, bathed in a pool of that woman's blood. The shrapnel that killed her, mangled his left foot. Picked up by an orderly of a mobile hospital unit, he was cared for by one of the

* cf. picture on Page two.



A Blind Father brings his two children to the Refuge.

nurses. They called him Jean-Jacques but on his ration card his name, age and birthplace were necessarily left blank. No one knew—or probably ever will know—anything about Jean-Jacques. Taken under the protection of the courts, he can have no definite legal status until after the war, when something will be done for him. Sent to the Refuge, as our youngest boarder, everyone loved him as he was as happy as the day is long, rarely fretted, and seemed to say with his big dark eyes that this new life with all the milk he could drink seemed pretty good after the severe campaigning he had been through. Also he might have added: "We scarred veterans know better than to grumble, when others are so much worse off than we."

Our attention was called to another worthy case, that of a brother and sister whose father was blinded by a head wound and whose mother became blind after an attack of scarlet fever. The parents learned new work at the institute for the blind and a grandmother came to care for the children. This was a great help, as she went to market and did the housework. Unhappily, last winter while standing before the grocery store in one of those interminable lines that dot all war-torn countries, the old grandmother, cold and tired, dropped dead. Paulette and little Roger were left to shift for themselves. It was a hard life, as by the time their tired mother could get around to the stores after her return from work, there was little food left to be purchased.

Placed before this distress we decided to take the children and now Paulette and Roger have come to the Shelter. She is a helpful little girl, as all her life she has had to mother her baby brother. He at first was a difficult child, but seeing that all the others behaved well and obeyed, he soon adapted himself to do likewise and has completely forgotten how to be moody.

Henri and his younger sister, Colette, have good reason to be proud of their hard-working mother. However, the struggle became too unequal for her strength and the Shelter was asked by the social service bureau of Grenoble to admit those two. It was learned that Henri's father contracted consumption during his tour of duty in the Maginot Line, where he was mobilized. He was mustered out and sent to a sanatorium to die. After his death his widow, an orphan herself, sold their meager belongings piece by piece to help feed and clothe her tiny children. Finally, with no other resources, she came to the social service bureau to ask for help. Sick

herself from overdoing, the bureau fed the family from the municipal soup kitchen. But this was only a stopgap. A new home must be found to care for the two older children at least, so that the mother could rest and then find a job. At the Shelter the children are happy, the mother is well again and working, and young Henri has assumed the responsibility of writing a postal each week to his mother to keep her informed of Colette and himself.

Little blonde Evelyne's father left for the front in 1939. He came home on leave to Marseilles twice. His coming always brought her great happiness because she deeply loved her daddy. During those first months Evelyne's mother accepted the new situation, as French women have been forced to do every generation or two for many centuries. Life became harder for her but government allocations and their small savings made life bearable.

Then came the fateful months of May and June. As time progressed conditions became more alarming and father sent word only once that he was all right and then, with the increased fighting, there was only silence. At first it was to be expected, few women were lucky enough to hear from their men, but as month followed month and still no word, deep anxiety took root.

After the Armistice men were demobilized, word was received that many were held prisoner, still others were reported killed in action. But never a word about little Evelyne's father. The meager savings ran out, food was hard to find and the little girl, always delicate, began to grow thinner and paler.

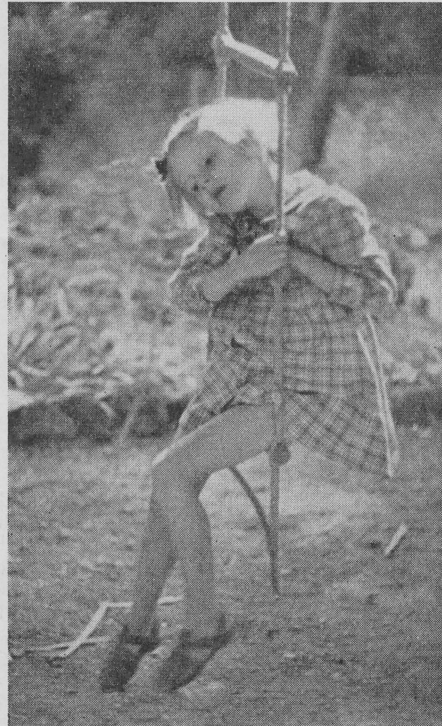
In October of 1940 the Ministry of War sent Evelyne's mother a little printed slip with the news that her husband, a private in an artillery regiment, was reported missing in action—nothing more. The state of twilight between war and peace in which France lives has made it impossible for the government to grant pensions in such cases of uncertainty; therefore this widow receives only a small allocation for herself and child.

At this time Evelyne was hospitalized, as she developed running sores back of her left ear. She was cared for near Hyères by the City of Marseilles and after 4 months was discharged as cured. With no place for her to go, the Shelter was asked if there was room for her and in February she came to us.

A beautiful child but very wan and ethereal looking, a breath of wind could have carried her off at that time. Today she is growing fat and the smile has returned to her eyes and lips as she works and plays with the other little children.

All of our little ones have stories as tragic as these few that we have picked at random, but space is lacking to give them all.

To care for these children, fortunately we have been able to select a group of refugee girls who are young and yet experienced. Each girl is either a trained nurse, teacher or nursery school teacher and fully qualified to handle the many problems and tasks that abound. Being young, they are happy and gay and are able to bring sunshine and love into the lives of our little ones. These girls are satisfied and like their life at the Refuge, where they are assured of a home and so no longer have to wander about looking for work that will keep body and soul together until times change.



Evelyne

Refuge is not an idle word for the girls helping us, as the following examples will show. One of our teachers, Mademoiselle Q, 20 years old and an orphan, was expelled from her home in Metz. Given only a few hours' warning before her expulsion by the Gestapo, she was allowed to take with her simply what she could carry in a small suitcase and no more than a few francs in money. The only family she has are three brothers, all prisoners of war.

One of our kindergarten teachers, Mademoiselle G, has not heard from her father in far-off West Africa since the early spring of 1940. The fathers of Mesdemoiselles P. and D., nurses, are both officers in the regular army and prisoners of war. In our domestic staff our cook's husband is a prisoner and some of the maids have been expelled from their homes.

If in France there are few families who have not suffered directly from the war, there is not one at the Shelter who is not a war victim.

The Refuge is thus one big family, united by a common distress—war. Each girl has a dormitory of 6 to 10 children whom she cares for completely, bathing, dressing and helping them at meals, but above all she is a loving guardian angel.

HEALTH AND HYGIENE

Upon their arrival the children are not incorporated at once into their new life, but are isolated for 10 days or 2 weeks. This period was found to be necessary in spite of medical certificates as one little boy and his sister, each with a clean bill of health, came down with the measles the day after their arrival. Eight days later more than one-half of the children caught the measles and before we finished we had to go through whooping cough, chicken pox and even a few cases of pneumonia.



SOME OF THE STAFF

These seven girls, directly responsible for the children, are all war victims, either evacuees, orphans or daughters of prisoners.

If epidemics sweep with devastating rapidity through schools, where children are healthy, how much more fertile the field is at the Shelter, filled with children, whose health has been undermined by lack of food and hardship.

There is hardly a child that comes to us without some sort of skin disease to be treated. Many of them have impetigo and other eruptions and sores caused by filth and overcrowding. Then there have been frostbitten toes in the cases of children who have been insufficiently clad or have been forced to live in unheated rooms. We have to shave many heads, as this is the only sure way of cleaning up lice-infected hair.

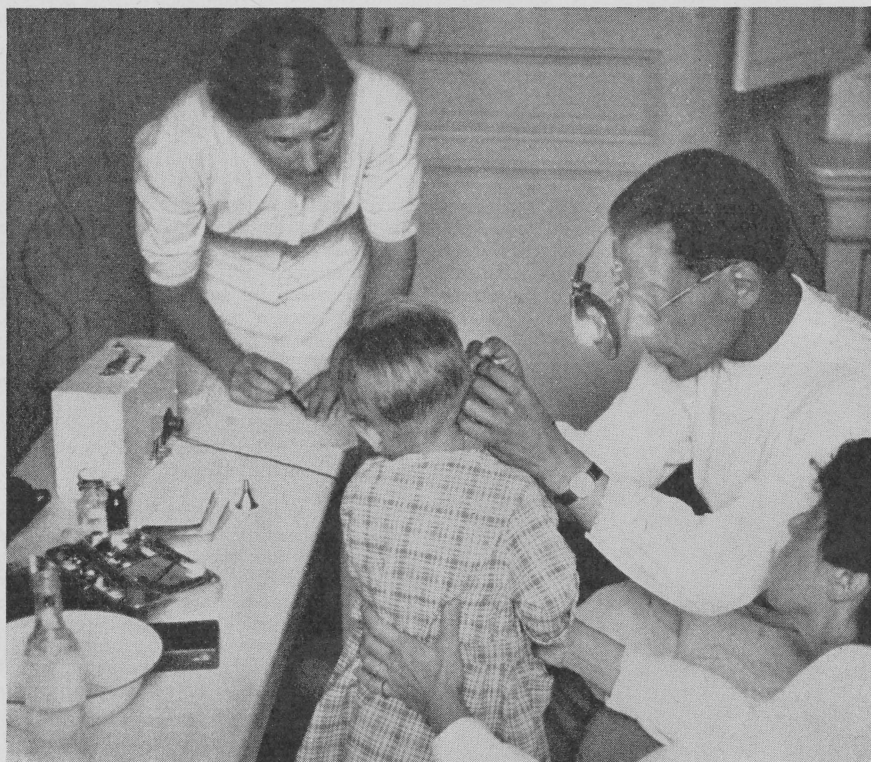
Medical care is essential for these children even after the many eruptions and sores have disappeared, following treatments coupled with cleanliness and a sound diet. Our nurses are capable and can care for all the small things that continually arise among any large number of children, but for more serious disorders our doctor is always on call.

In fact Dr. Guiol makes routine visits at least twice a month, but he never passes the *Espérance* without stopping to inquire how things are going and to have a chat. He is the true old-fashioned doctor, filled with good common sense and

realizing from his long experience that children are easily upset and just as easily set right. He gives all the children, who have not yet had them, anti-diphtheria inoculations, tubercular tests and vaccinations for smallpox. Being chief of the medical staff of the hospital of Hyères, he is able, at any time, to have our little ones admitted to the children's ward.

The eye, ear, nose and throat specialist also knows the Refuge well, as some children have to have glasses fitted and then there are others with infected tonsils or other complaints to be treated.

The free dental clinic at the hospital cares for the children's teeth, sadly neglected since the war and in poor condition generally from bad diets. Every Thursday morning six boys and girls are taken to the clinic. At first this is quite an ordeal for even the most courageous, as there is much drilling, filling and even pulling to be



The Nose and Throat Specialist at work.

endured. However, each one shortly becomes reconciled and they all look forward to Thursday, as it means going to town and seeing the shops and all the people in the streets; in fact the much-coveted ride in the station wagon works wonders and the most rebellious soon accept their fate. This is so true that some Thursdays there are too many victims to be led to the slaughter and we have to weed out the impudent one or ones who want to go, at the risk of having a tooth pulled, just for the ride in the car.

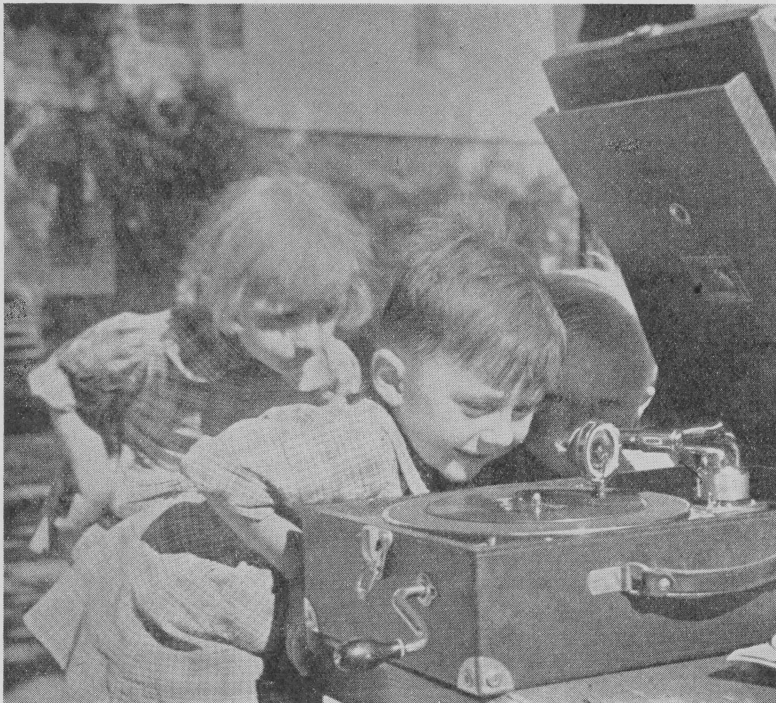
We strive to allow nothing to escape our attention, as we are convinced that part of our job is to put our wards into the best physical condition during their stay at the Refuge. Thus, when they leave, they will have gained such a head start along the road to health that it will help to carry them through the many new hardships awaiting them.

"OUR DAY"

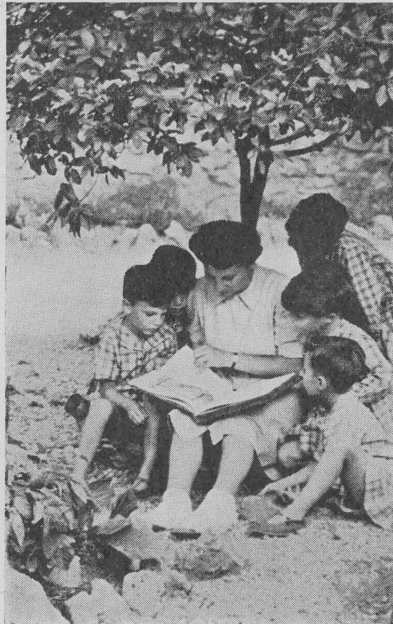
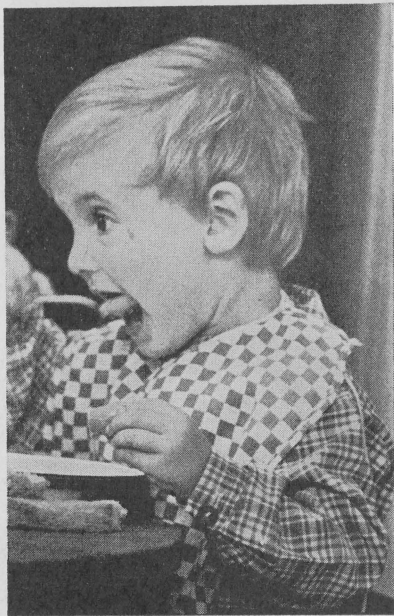
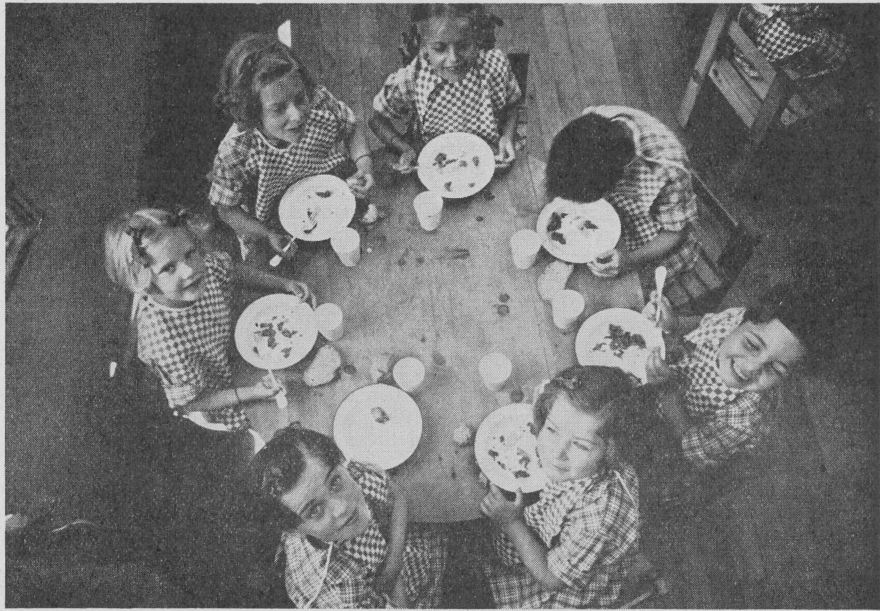
The day's routine at the Shelter is very full. From eight, when the children arise, until bedtime at seven, there is something doing all the time. Breakfast at 8:30 with milk and bread or milk and Bledine, a breakfast food of flour and malt, is followed by classroom work by the older ones. Here they learn not only their 3 R's but geography, history and drawing. There are several periods each week of talk about America, the land of the godmothers and godfathers, as they call the Americans whose generosity is responsible for the Shelter. It is hard to imagine what pictures these children draw in their minds of their godmothers and the land far away. That they think often about them is evidenced by the remark of one very young boy the first time we played a child's record in French on the phonograph, that had been loaned to us by an Englishwoman for the duration of the war. He was not sure what was happening in the black box until he saw, to his complete amazement and satisfaction as well as everyone else's, a "little bit of an American lady" about an inch high who was hiding in the box. Although no one else actually saw the lady, all believed she was there and were perfectly happy.

While classroom work is going on, the very small ones model in clay, draw and learn to work with raffia, or else they play outdoors in the sand. The local carpenter has made easy puzzles, blocks and other objects with which they learn to think and coordinate their movements. After the class work calisthenics follow. During most of the year it is possible to hold these exercises out in the garden amid the pines, where the children benefit greatly.

Luncheon at 11:30 is the main meal of the day. When we are fortunate they have a small piece of meat—once and possibly twice a week—2 vegetables and fruit, the smaller children having a cup of milk. But before they begin their meals all the children repeat the blessing, which expresses their thanks for what they are receiving from unknown friends in a far-off land.



Music from America.



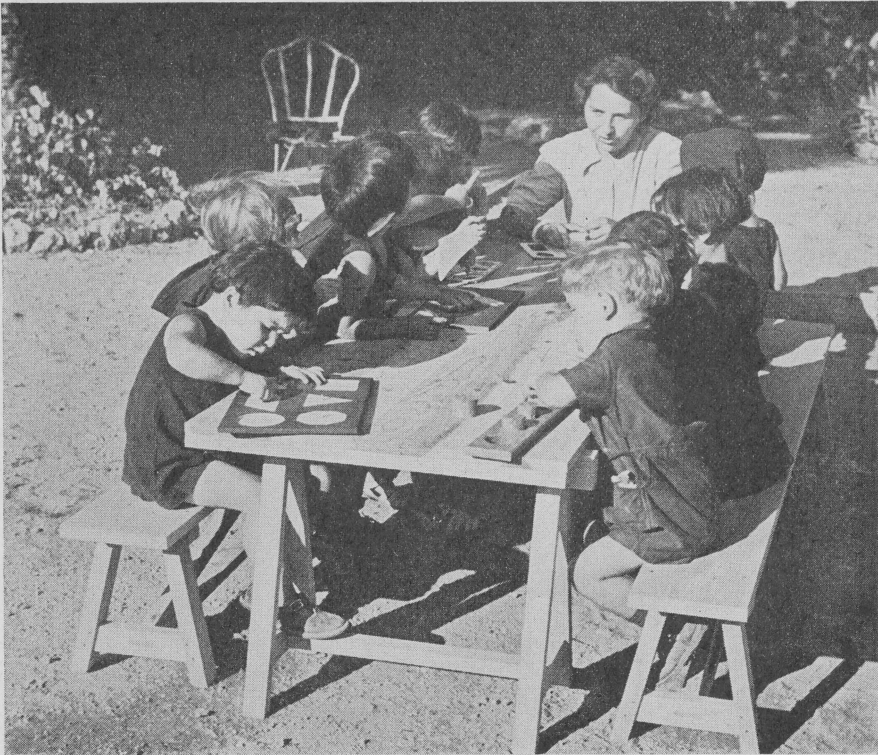
Pictures that need no words.

After naps, which play an important part in helping to build up weak little bodies, there is more school for the bigger ones five afternoons a week, while the babies go scampering up the paths and through the woods. After their milk the older children, released from school, follow them. It is well known that hours of classroom work are longer for French children than for our own.

During the summer months each child, grouped according to age, goes swimming twice a week. We have limited swims because the beach is two miles from home and that long walk each way does tend to make the children lose some weight in the great heat.

They have to walk because we cannot think of playing taxi as our gasoline ration is too small—5 gallons for November—for all our needs.

In fact gasoline has become so precious that a decree was issued during the summer of 1941 making it mandatory for all trucks and buses, possessing the highly



School still keeps, even for the tiny tots.

valued "autorisation de circuler", to be equipped to burn other fuels than gasoline, such as charcoal, anthracite coal, illuminating gas and calcium carbide.

However, once we did bring the children home from the beach, as that afternoon we had gone down there on business and stopped to bring them home. It was quite a load for the station wagon, as we packed in 42 children, 5 adults and even a toy express wagon.

They all love to paddle about in the warm water or play on the sand. Although many had never seen the ocean before coming to the Shelter, they have taken to the water like champions and play in it with their big rubber balloons and toys without any fear.

Supper after such a full day is quickly over and little tired children are led off to bed before seven-thirty. After prayers, in which they never forget to mention their American godmothers and fathers, they are tucked in and each child is kissed a loving good night by a young girl. Any child who has not been good, however, is not kissed good night, but this does not happen often. This is terrible punishment, terrible because these little ones are starved for affection; they crave tenderness and receive great amounts of it because we all realize that their little lives have been, all too often in the last months, quite barren of parental love and tenderness. They are receiving this in large doses in their new home and their happy, smiling faces bear testimony that it agrees with them.

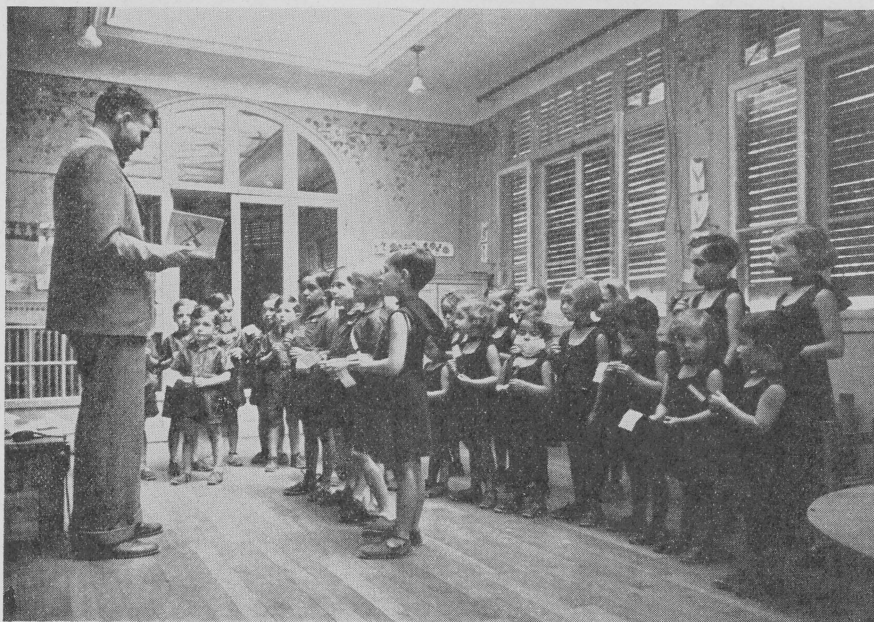
"GIVE YE THEM TO EAT"

We were speaking a little before this of the children's meals. Food remains our most pressing problem, as we serve more than two hundred meals every day.

All Europe at the present time uses a rationing system of one kind or another. Each person has a ration card and receives a certain quantity of food at stated intervals according to his or her age or type of work engaged in. This method gives equally to all the right to have many things but it does not guarantee in any way their acquisition.

For example, children from 3 to 8 years of age have the right to drink about one glass of milk a day. In many localities even this small quantity is not obtainable and so, many children have to go without. We, at the Refuge, are able to find our daily ration by sending a man for it 4 or 5 miles into the country on a bicycle. However, this single glass a day is far from sufficient for growing children, so we are lucky that the Quakers have made it possible for us to increase this ration to 3 and 4 glasses a day by supplying us with powdered and canned milk.

The Shelter is placed in the same category as the hospitals, although it is not one. Thus, we have been able to taste meat once and sometimes twice a week,



THE FOURTH OF JULY
"Tonton Seym" and the children celebrate Independence Day.

whereas householders eat it only twice a month as a general rule in our part of the country. Before this same meat is sold, all the fat and most of the bones are removed, so that there is no possibility of supplementing the meager monthly grease and oil allotment. Moreover, in the Var we never see lard and only very rarely crisco or margarine. However, each person does receive some cooking oil, called "huile nationale," which is undoubtedly a mixture of olive, peanut and some other oil that smells sometimes as though it had passed through the crankcase of an automobile. Butter has all but disappeared from the home, as we tasted it only at very irregular intervals over many months, and then only a very small piece was given to each person. A piece that one could spread very thin on half a dozen slices of bread and no more.

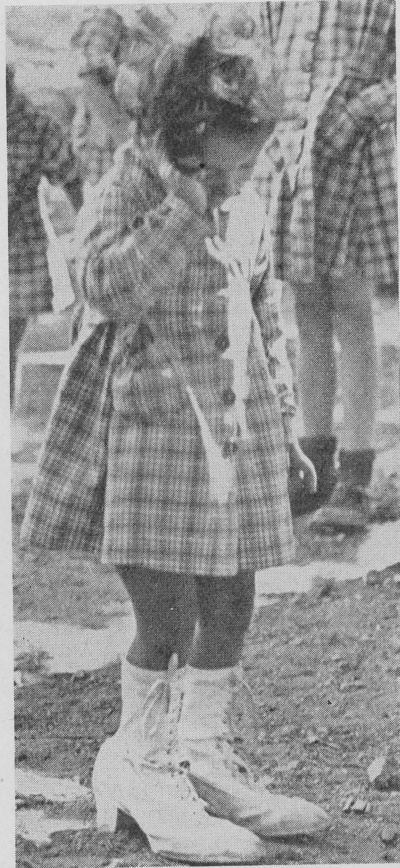
Potatoes likewise disappeared completely from the markets for many months. When the new crop was ready the ration cards gave each person a pound or two every ten days. This meant potatoes for about three meals after each distribution.

It is difficult to realize how much we all missed the humble potato, a vegetable taken so much for granted by us that its presence is hardly remarked. Its absence over a lengthy period, however, creates a great void, especially when the whole diet is so very restricted, and most of our children, during the months they went without, lost considerable weight. Potatoes on the table again were certainly more joyfully received than would have been some long forgotten dessert.

This is especially true when we remember that rations of bread have also been cut to 100 grams per day for little children and 180 grams for older ones. Spaghetti and macaroni, of which huge quantities were formerly eaten, have been rationed to only a couple of meals a month. This is all definitely insufficient for growing children and the reappearance of the potato relieved us of some worry, but momentarily only, as no one could know how long the rations would last.

The taste of eggs had almost been forgotten by many, when in June each person was allowed 2 eggs per month. However, out of the first allotment of 6 dozen or 72 eggs, 39 of them were bad and had to be thrown out, or they would have hatched very shortly. If only we had had some grain we could have started a chicken farm. Speaking of chickens, we tasted chicken once when we had the good fortune to find an old fowl that had to feed 60 persons! And all of them considered it a real treat. During the fall, eggs once more vanished from the market, but the French Red Cross has promised us eggs for children under 6 years of age.

When we came to Hyères on the seacoast we thought of course that fish would form a staple on our menu. Alas! The children have tasted it only at the rarest intervals, because armistice regulations make it impossible for boats to go far from shore, because gasoline is scarce and because floating mines make fishing a dangerous business at all times.



*Of course every child has shoes —
Certainement! (Cf. Pp. 16-18)*

STRETCHING THE RATIONS

In order to overcome the food shortage, we tried raising a pig on the leftovers from our kitchen. These were too few and far between and so we finally gave up and slaughtered the animal before there was much fat on its bones. When I told the butcher it was a shame to kill such a small, scrawny animal that weighed only 75 kilograms, he replied, that he agreed, but that he had been forced to kill one for his own shop that very same week which weighed only 32 kgs. So we ate our fresh pork and sausage with great contentment and stretched the lard as far as it would go in fattening up our diet.

The resourcefulness of the pastry cooks during the past year has amazed even the French. Allowed to open a day or two a week, the "patisseries" may sell cakes and cookies into which no regular flour used in bread making has found its way. New recipes have been created, using chestnut, palm or peanut flour and even the



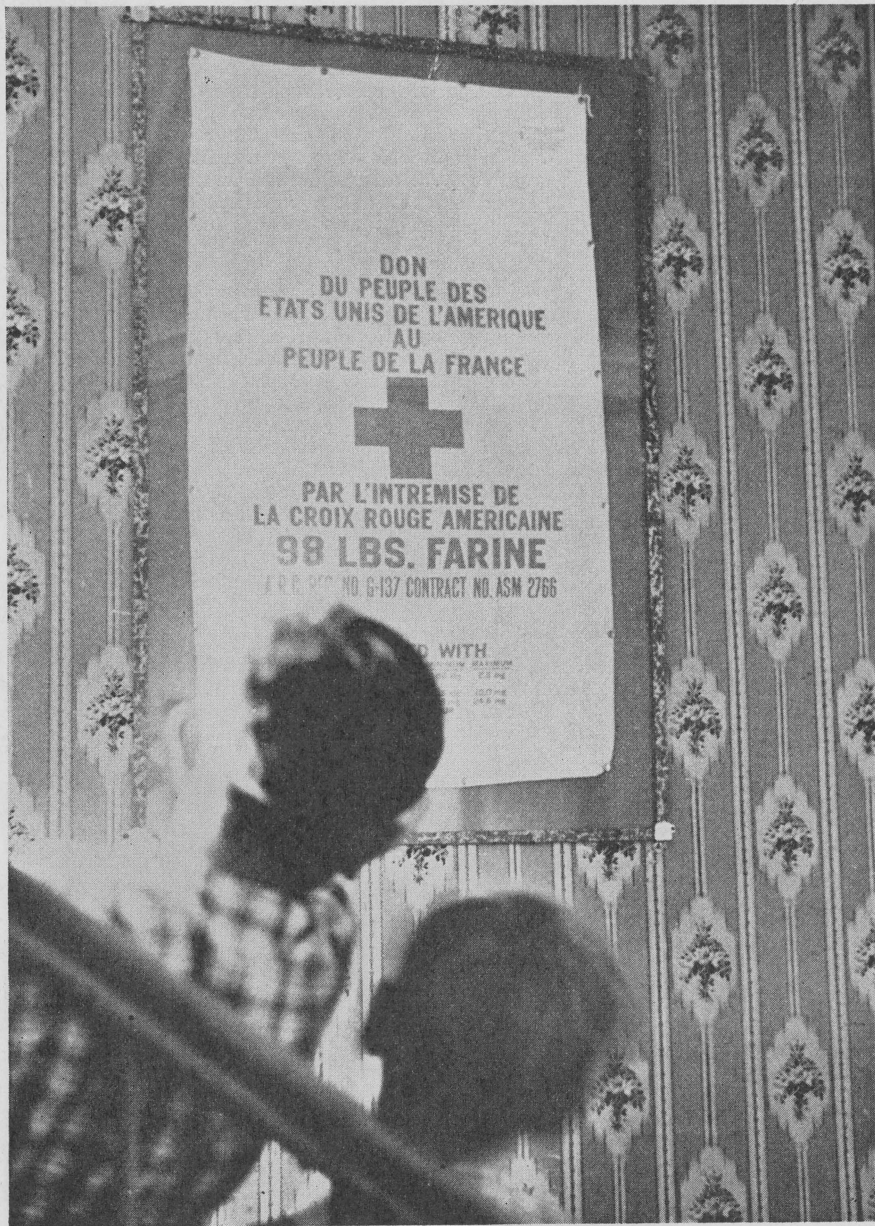
Pastoral Symphony.

lowly millet seed is not overlooked. For sweetening a sugary or syrup-like substance extracted from the wine grapes and called "raisinet" is often used. Whipped cream is forbidden but somehow the cooks manage to fill their trays with most appetizing looking and tasting goodies. The children at the Refuge love them, when they come on the table as a Sunday treat.

By spending much time each day on the problem of feeding our little ones, we have succeeded in our task. This would not have been possible, however, without the friendship and cooperation of the shopkeepers and merchants in Hyères and the American Friends Service Committee in Marseilles.

SHOES, AND HOW TO GET THEM

There is another problem which is becoming more and more pressing: how to clothe and shoe our youngsters. At present each person has a textile ration card attached to the food card. This textile card has numbers or points printed on it and must serve for a certain period of time, usually six months. With this it is still possible to buy certain things. For example, a handkerchief may require 2 points, a pair of under-drawers, 6 points and a shirt, 10. A yard of woolen material may



A FLOUR SACK WITH A HISTORY

We framed and hung an empty sack in the hall in gratitude for the shipments of flour France received from the United States.

These useful sacks are cut up into clothing and sewed on the electric machine, a gift of The Singer Company.

take 50 or more points and therefore is practically unobtainable, as a six-months' textile card only contains 30 points. This method reduces most effectively public buying without creating too much discontent, as everyone is treated in the same manner. In fact at present, when a housewife enters a store, she asks the salesclerk what materials are on hand that can be put to such or such a use. Before replying, the clerk will ask whether the prospective purchaser still has any points left on the textile card. After this preliminary skirmishing, a sale may be completed.

Another method is employed as regards obtaining a new pair of shoes. This method is more complicated and requires more time before the new shoes are bought, if ever. We at the Refuge have had only too much experience, because a child seldom arrives with shoes in good shape. This means fitting him at once with a new pair.

To begin with, it is necessary to fill in a form for new shoes, supplying the age of the applicant, the size and type of the shoes desired as well as other details. This request is then handed to a committee which meets at regular intervals to vote on the merits of each case. This committee has the power to send an investigator to find out whether the applicant does not possess a pair of shoes in the closet at home that can still be worn. Weeks and even months may then pass before the demand is acted upon.

At the Shelter we usually wait for two or three weeks before receiving our shoe coupons or "Bons." Once when we had asked for coupons for 18 pairs of shoes and more than five weeks had elapsed with no answer, I went to call on the assistant mayor and told him of our plight. After learning the facts, he replied he did not doubt that 5 weeks seemed a long time but that, unless the authorities gave Hyères an increased number of coupons to allocate, it would be 8 years before everybody in the city could buy a new pair of shoes. There was little that could be said in answer to this, nevertheless a few days later we did receive our 18 coupons.

REHABILITATING YOUNG SOULS

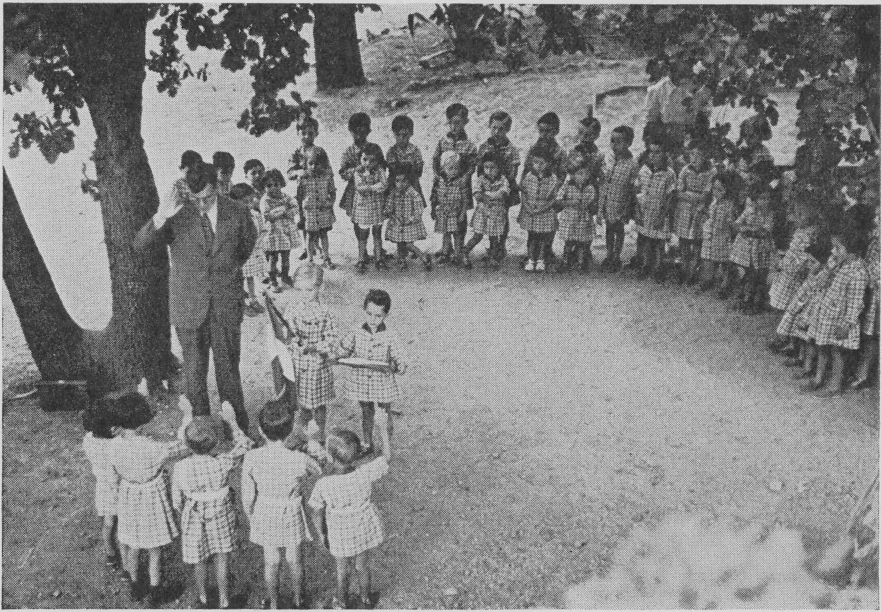
We have been most fortunate in being able to clothe, house, feed and care for the children put under our care. We do not believe though that our duty to these little ones ends there. We feel that it is also up to us to make these children understand the meaning of honesty, obedience, truthfulness, discipline, loyalty and



Sunday-go-to-meeting-clothes (and behavior)

so forth. Many come directly from refugee camps, others from homes not their own, and so have had far too little parental guidance and teaching. This is quite normal when we consider what the lot of all Frenchmen has been for more than 18 months. Many of the youngsters, along with undernourishment, have very naturally been deprived also of opportunities for learning these primary lessons. We wish therefore that each Sunday morning the bigger children go to church.

We have also inaugurated a system of captains. Each week each dormitory furnishes a captain chosen from the best behaved boy or girl. It is a great honor to be captain and it is also a great responsibility because a captain must keep silence in his room, help his comrades, run errands, set the table, represent his group when visitors come to the Refuge. Along with these and other grave duties there are many great and good compensations. For example, the captain wears at all times a white Sam Browne belt as his badge of office and everyone owes him obedience. In the afternoon he may choose the walk in the country where he wishes to go. If



The Future Citizen of France.

there is an extra dessert at his table, it belongs to him. On Sunday morning when they go to church, it is the captain's job to carry the money for the collection and to give each boy and girl a piece of money to put in the plate. This is one of the most appreciated prerogatives that go with a captaincy.

The ceremony of naming and swearing in the new captain is most impressive. It is called "La Prise d'Armes" or changing of the guard. After nap hour on Saturday the whole Shelter is drawn up, usually under the trees. The outgoing captains carry the French flag, the flag of the Shelter, and a tray with the Sam Browne belts and the decorations which are given a child each time he has been captain. This decoration consists of a red bar on which is sewn one white stripe for each week served as captain. The newly chosen children are called forth from the ranks, the belts are placed around their shoulders, each one raises his or her right hand and swears to be good, obedient, truthful, honest and a good captain. Then each in

turn, before the assembled crowd, solemnly steps forward and kisses the folds of the French flag to bind his newly-made promise.

The ceremony is dramatic and is intended to be so. Many visitors are welcomed at the changing of the guard, as we are proud to have them witness it and prouder still of the results we are obtaining from our system of captains. In fact, when the antecedents of some of our children have been learned, the results are amazing and some parents and visitors express surprise at them. We feel, however, that it comes from a very natural reaction to the encouragement and stimulation we give the



TRAINING IN CIVICS

Young squad captains assume the responsibilities of group leadership by kissing the French flag while other group leaders and the "rank and file" stand solemnly at attention.

Leaving politics to the politicians is a mistake no free people can afford to make. The children at the Refuge learn early that a citizen has responsibilities, and the "leaders" learn that the citizen has rights as well as duties.

children. By placing responsibility on their shoulders and elevating them for one week above their comrades, we stir up an awakening desire in the others—and the spirit of emulation is only human.

Wearing the white belt is a very great honor. We were very proud, therefore, when the American Automobile Association gave us eighteen boy traffic patrol belts. When the children receive these, they will be the happiest and proudest folk in all France.

Being human, some captains do fall by the way occasionally and have to be given a helping hand. Others almost fall but scramble up alone.

One of our little boys, who might have been Mark Twain's picture of Tom Sawyer, has always been a most difficult child. Since losing his father in the war, he had known nothing but hunger and privation until coming to the Refuge, where he is either very good or very, very bad as the mood may be upon him.

Once in a while he earns the right to be captain and then he does try very hard to live up to his pledge. Knowing, however, that the strain of a whole week's responsibility would be too great, he is made captain from Saturday until Wednesday. One Tuesday, the day before he was to be relieved from duty, he was seen by a nurse

to throw his belt in the corner of his dormitory and to shake his head, mumbling that the weight of the belt on his shoulders was too much and that he could no longer stand the strain of being good. His room-mates looked at him in astonishment and asked whether he had forgotten his promise and his kiss on the folds of the flag.

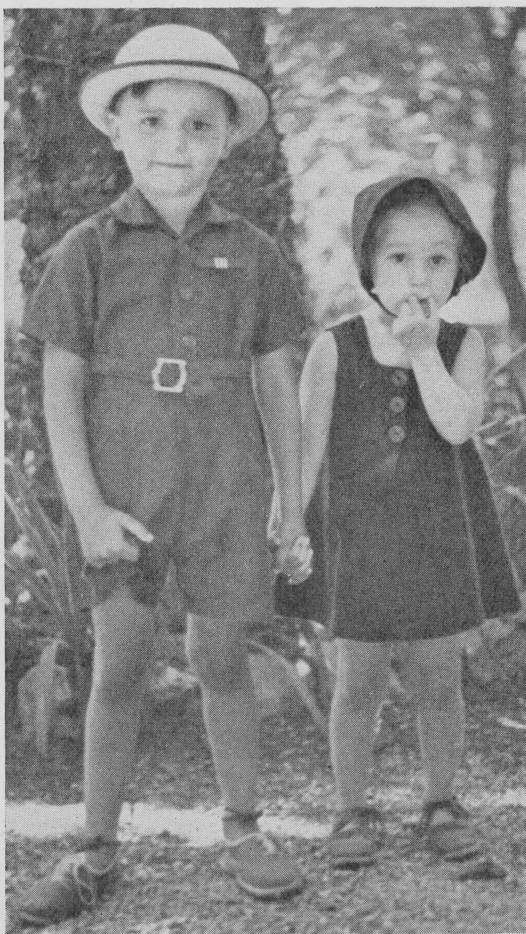
He should think twice, they said. He did, and after a few instants, went and put on the belt, saying he guessed he could be good a little longer. He was until being relieved in due course the next afternoon. Then all his pent up energy burst forth and he was a very bad little boy until that evening. No one said a thing to him, however, as we all realized the importance of the victory he had won.

The example that one captain has set must be matched and even surpassed. Some of the children seem to have no trouble in adapting themselves to their new life. One youngster, who loved to dawdle on the stairs, pulling himself along by the rungs in the bannister, had often been told he should walk up the stairs like a man. He was told this many times, but this advice never seemed to sink into his mind. One day, while he was captain, he suddenly started up the stairs at the head of his roommates and, wonder of wonders, instead of holding to the rungs he walked up with his head erect and hands free, remarking for all to hear that "Tonton Sem" walked that way and henceforth so would he.

Another one did not like carrots and each time they appeared on the table there was much fuss and tears before the detested vegetable was eaten. One evening it happened that he was captain when carrots were served. He was given only a very small helping so that his dignity of captain might not suffer. When second helpings were passed, the nurse neglected to fill his empty plate, as she thought she would help him carry out his role. He noticed this and asked for some more, insisting that as he was captain, he must set a good example for all to follow.

We have no idea of putting too much responsibility on these children. No one is chosen arbitrarily but each must win the right to be a captain, a highly coveted honor. Competition is keen, but no child is ever captain for two consecutive weeks, so that each one has ample time to recover from being a shining example of uprightness before being thrust forward once again.

The Shelter is indeed an oasis of happiness in a land of great misfortune. However, we must not believe that the French are downhearted or discouraged about the final outcome. They are confident for the most part that their country will once



"Tom Sawyer of the Hyeres"

again arise and take its place among the free nations of the world. They know that much suffering and anxiety will be theirs before this comes true; nevertheless they await the day with steadfast courage and unshaken faith.

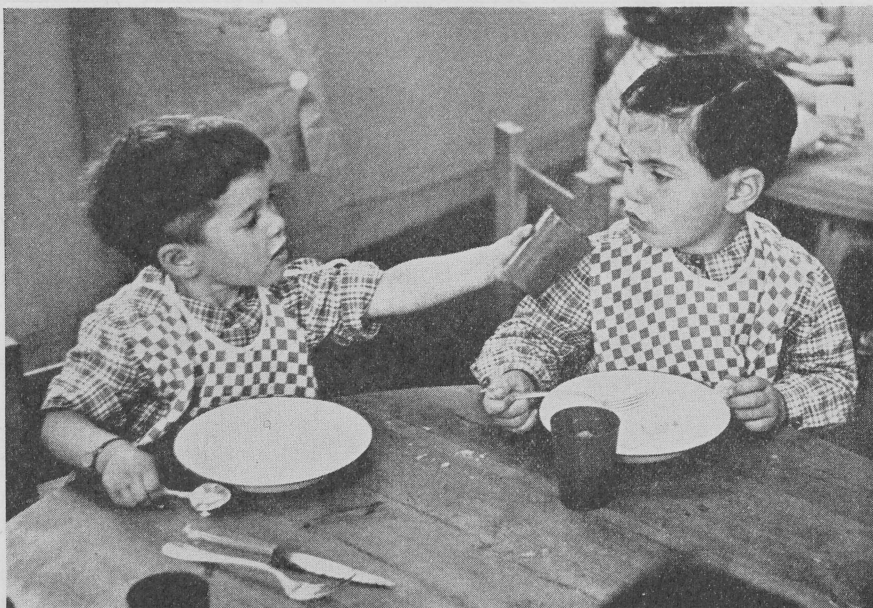
Until this day arrives, they must carry on, making the best of a bad situation, often hungry, cold in winter, and poorly clothed and shod, but above all powerless at this time to shape their own future by coordinated action of one kind or another. This sitting idly on the side lines, boiling over inside with frustrated rage, is by far the most difficult role to bear. Sustaining the morale of these people, who feel that they have become mere spectators in this great drama and are powerless to act, is part of the task of relief. This result must be obtained indirectly, however, as our efforts are aimed at helping the children. Through them and because of them, the elders are willing to persevere and not despair.

We feel very strongly that a relief station, no matter how small, plays a very important role in sustaining morale. Parents, friends or just plain people when they see the smiling faces, healthy looks and decently clad youngsters at the Refuge des Petits, for example, realize that their country has not been forgotten, but that friends of former days are still friends when there is need. Encouraged by this thought and knowing that as long as the children are cared for there is hope, these people grit their teeth and are determined to hang on always a little longer.

A mother who, after a whole year of separation from her children, had finally been able to afford a trip to Hyères, sent us a letter when she returned home. "Never will I forget", she wrote, "the Refuge, that American home where I saw my children so happy and well cared for; why even little Riri did not want to come home with me. I think it was because he has grown to love you all so much, and for my child's love for you I thank the Almighty. It helps me to bear up until freedom returns to my country."



There is still sunlight, and salt air, and a shining beach.



"Look! Meelk! from ze Queekers!"

Among other letters of appreciation we have picked out at random one written by a gentleman who lived 4 years under the German occupation from 1914 to 1918. He is president of a refugee committee that has sent us many children. "We, the fathers," he wrote, "were saved from hunger during the last war by you Americans. Today you have come back to save the children of these same grateful fathers. Such examples of generosity give courage and confidence to all here in our group of exiles."

Often the simple gift of a layette to an expectant mother or to her worried husband changes the whole outlook—from despair to hope—not only of this family but of all their friends and the many others who see or hear about the layette. The hope that this small gift brings into many bleak lives is entirely disproportionate to its value. Two dozen sorely needed layettes can do more towards encouraging a whole community than any number of hopeful broadcasts from abroad.

Psychologically, the effect of rations of powdered or condensed milk distributed through the channels of foreign relief go further toward strengthening the will of a people to hold on, than any other type of propaganda short of victories themselves.

We must carry on, we will try to carry on, because the morale of the world greatly depends on the power of resistance of the children's front. And the Refuge des Petits is a small sector on this children's front. Our patrons have always fully understood what this means. Actually, there is so very little opportunity to do anything tangible for France that we are confident there will be others whose understanding generosity will enable us to perform our duty.

The Refuge des Petits was created in the hope of bringing succor to children who had suffered more than their share from war conditions. It was founded during a critical period of the war. It has aimed at alleviating distress during the most critical collapse of a nation. It must be there doing its job when the final victory is won; until such time as fathers may return from distant prison camps, where they are paying so dearly for liberty; until families are allowed to see once more their beloved homes in the forbidden zone; until France stands free again; until peace comes to the world.

REFUGE DES PETITS
CHILD SHELTER
COSTEBELLE
HYERES

Télégr. : ESPERANCE-HYERES

TELEPHONE-HYERES : 0.95

To Our Friends:

Before turning the last page of this brochure I wish to dedicate its contents to all who have helped us since 1939, to the generous donors, founders of the Refuge des Petits, to the organizations that have given us their aid so abundantly, to the faithful friends in France who joined forces to help the luckless war victim children and last but not least to all of our unselfish collaborators who daily surround these little ones with great love and kindness.

I wish likewise to transmit in behalf of the children at the Refuge des Petits their thanks to those numerous friends whose names appear on the "table d'honneur" on the opposite page, as well as to those groups listed below:

Alliance Francaise, different chapters
American Friends Service Committee
American Red Cross
American Society for French Medical and Civilian Aid, Inc.
Central Bureau for Relief
Emergency Aid of Pennsylvania
French-American Wives
French War Relief, Inc.
Junior Emergency Relief Society
Relief for French Refugees in England
Singer Sewing Machine Company, etc.

My last words in closing this booklet will be for all our friends,

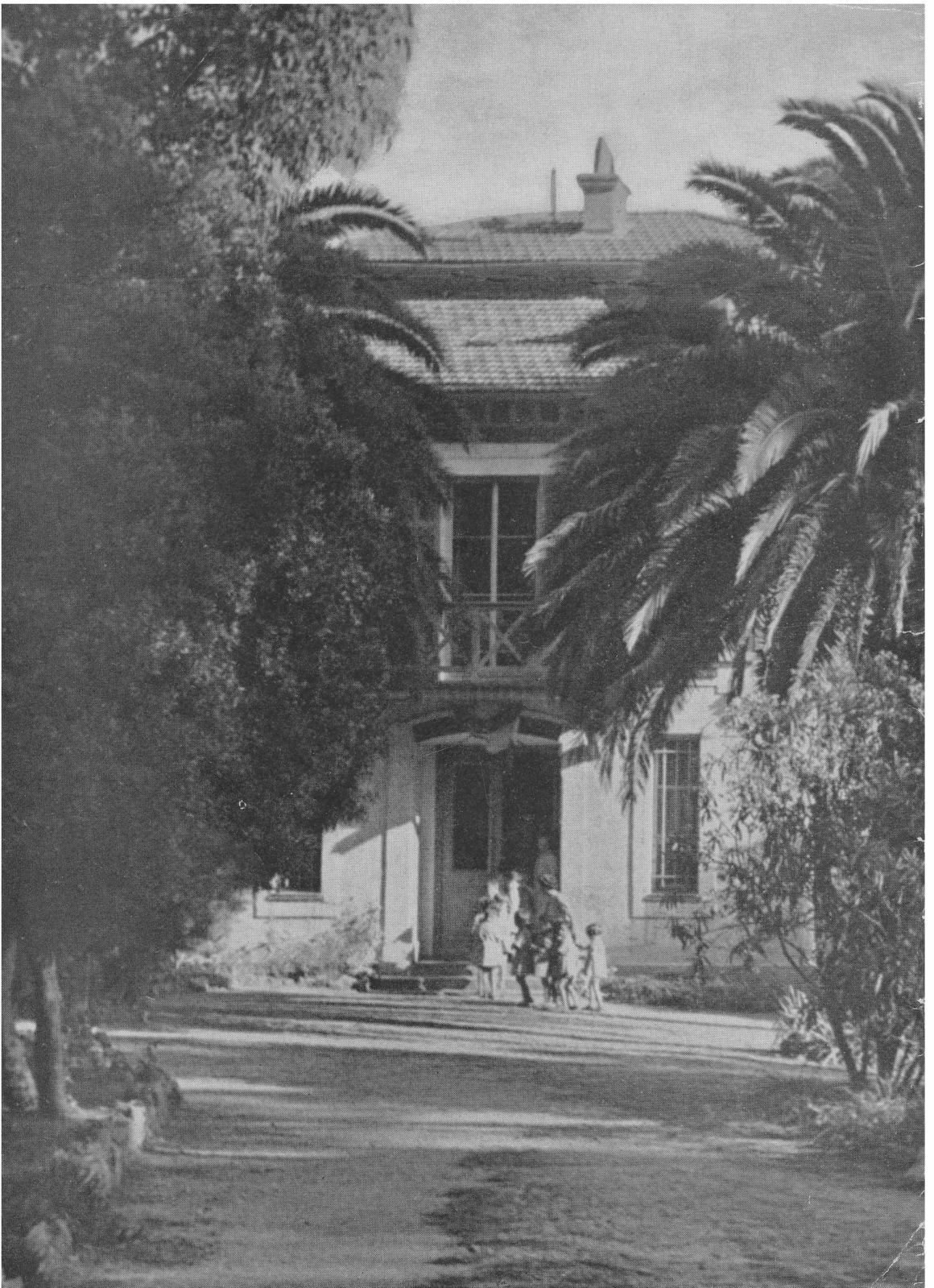
THANK YOU!

A. SEYMOUR HOUGHTON, JR.

THE CENTRAL BUREAU FOR RELIEF OF
THE EVANGELICAL CHURCHES OF EUROPE
297 FOURTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, U. S. A.

will be glad to accept gifts for the "Refuge des Petits. Checks may be made out simply: "Central Bureau for Relief—Hyères."

RICHARD B. SCANDRETT, JR.,
Treasurer.



CHILD SHELTER . . . HYERES . . . FRANCE