

The Midwife.

THE MIDWIFE QUESTION IN CANADA.

There has been a good deal written and a good deal talked about the above question lately, but unfortunately it has been from such different view points that little headway has been made for or against a midwife scheme for Canada.

An opportunity should be given the people, who know the conditions, to express their opinions before steps are taken to have a legalised midwife scheme for the Dominion. To be sure, there are licensed midwives in Canada now, but very little is known about them, even in the parts where they are supposed to be practising.

Now, does Canada need midwives? When have other countries decided they needed them? When districts became so congested, especially the poorer districts, that doctors were not available, and when the women from foreign lands desired midwives, because they were accustomed to employing them in their own lands. *The midwives have never been found in any country to my knowledge in the sparsely-settled parts. They herd in large cities, in congested districts, and start them where you will, they gravitate to the populated centres.*

In Canada, the need for doctors and nurses has not been felt in any of the cities, larger towns, or thickly-populated districts. (The present time, when so many of our nurses and doctors are overseas, is no test, of course.) In the sparsely-settled districts there is a need. Can that need be filled with any degree of safety by midwives, as we understand them? Nurses are labouring in those places—they care for the maternity cases; they look after accident cases, pneumonia cases, sick children, and so on; they inspect the school children, they do educative work with the mothers and others; they make pre-natal visits which are filled with help and comfort for the expectant mother, and they keep a supervision of the babies until they are almost a year old. I should like to have a movie of an Old Country midwife wrestling with a poor man, caught in his engine, three fractures, and the doctor twenty miles away! Or with a pneumonia case, the doctor sixty miles away, or with a baby with croup! Some time when the war is over, and you need to be fed up with horrors, go out and talk to the people who have seen midwives at work, and you will get all you could desire. No; may the day be very, very far distant when our fair land will decide she needs midwives!

But when it is found that something more is needed, let Canada evolve some scheme without midwives or without the defects of all the midwives' schemes in existence at present.

The United States and Great Britain have had midwives. Prior to 1902, conditions were so terrible in Great Britain that rigid rules were made

for the training, licensing and supervising of midwives. And in the United States, where midwives from other lands were practising without supervision, until a few years ago, conditions became so bad that strict regulations had to be passed.

Canada must profit from all of this, and should solve her problem much more quickly and much more efficiently than those countries who had very little to guide them in the way of the mistakes of others. We in Canada know our country, we know our vast distances, we know the difficulties, we know our people, and it is *our* problem to solve, it is *our* duty, and *our* privilege to solve it in *our* own way.

In the sparsely-settled districts no one but the fully-trained woman, the woman with experience, with practical knowledge of everything pertaining to the domestic side of our life in Canada, the woman imbued with the importance of her task and with a sincere faith in the future of the country districts, will solve the problem of supplying nursing care in the isolated districts of Canada. Should midwives be brought over from the older countries in shiploads, should we turn out hundreds of them in our own land, on the old pattern, the nursing problem in the sparsely-settled districts would still be unsolved and you would find all those midwives settled in the more densely populated parts, where they would get regular work.

The above expresses the private opinion of the writer as a Canadian citizen, and as one who knows all the highways and byways of the great Dominion.

MARY ARD. MACKENZIE.

CENTRAL MIDWIVES BOARD.

The following are the questions set at the recent examination of the Central Midwives Board held in London and the provinces.

1. What is meant by the term toxæmia of pregnancy? What signs and symptoms would lead you to suspect it? What are its chief dangers?

2. How would you prepare a woman in labour before making a vaginal examination? What can you find out by making such an examination?

3. What may be the causes of hæmorrhage during the first, second, and third stages of labour respectively? What would you do in such a case?

4. Describe the mechanism of the breech when the sacrum is behind and to the right.

5. What may be the causes of rise of temperature after the first week of the puerperium, and how would you distinguish them?

6. How would you distinguish between the varieties of jaundice occurring in the first ten days of an infant's life?

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