

# The Midwife.

## MIDWIVES FOR CANADA.

On November 11th we published the report of a meeting convened by the Colonial Nursing Association with the active support of the British Emigration Association held at Sunderland House, when Lady Piggott, founder of the Association, and Chairman of the Canada Committee, presided, the object being to arouse public interest in supplying midwives to Canada.

It appeared to the writer, who was present at the meeting, not only that unpractical suggestions were made, but, to be quite frank, that a good deal of nonsense was talked.

V.A.D. workers were to be asked to take up this work after the war. War widows, preferably those of officers, but also dependents of sailors and soldiers in a similar position, were to train at once and qualify as midwives so as to be able to undertake maternity work under central medical supervision. Not only war widows but sporting V.A.D.'s were appealed to. "Here," said one speaker, "was a chance to make the way of the V.A.D. nurse. Once she had found her vocation she was not going to give it up. . . . There was a free life for a horse, and a woman's spirit answering to the call—there where women were wanted. They might go out with sad hearts but trained—sacred thought—through the gift of sympathy." Well, that kind of thing may appeal to a Sunderland House audience, but, when it came to be considered by practical nurses in the Dominion, it evidently sounded a little thin.

### MISS ARD MACKENZIE'S VIEWS.

We were not surprised to receive for publication a letter on the subject from Miss Mary Ard Mackenzie, R.N., B.A., Chief Superintendent of the Victorian Order of Nurses in Canada, and a past President of the Canadian National Association of Trained Nurses, expressing her opinion, as a private Canadian citizen, on the proposition, and we gladly gave prominence to it in our issue of January 6th. Miss Ard Mackenzie is one of the most honoured members of the nursing profession in the Dominion, and is acquainted with its nursing conditions and nursing needs from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

### THE PROFESSIONAL VIEW.

Miss Ard Mackenzie's view is that there is need for nurses and doctors in the sparsely-settled parts of the Dominion, but the need is for the fully-trained nurse, who has therefore a knowledge of obstetric nursing, and the qualified physician, that the woman who goes to the sparsely-populated districts must be able to cope with *all* emergencies. "Nothing short of that," says Miss Ard Mackenzie, "is acceptable to the Western people, as the writer has heard them express

themselves many times over." Further "Canada is willing to welcome the fully-trained woman for work on the prairies if she has the qualifications necessary, no matter whence she comes. Her people are able and willing to pay well for efficient service, and they do not wish, and will not accept, charity, certainly not from other countries. And Canada is able to solve her problems herself."

### THE AMATEUR VIEW.

It might be supposed that the opinion of so high a professional authority would be received with the consideration it deserves, but, to supply Canada with midwives "whether she wants them or not," is evidently a pet scheme concerning which criticism is neither expected nor desired. Lady Piggott has not followed the ordinary rules of journalistic courtesy by writing to this JOURNAL concerning Miss Ard Mackenzie's letter which appeared in its columns, but criticises it in another paper (to which Miss Mackenzie had briefly written to correct a mis-statement), in which she states "the facts of the case."

They are, that so long ago as 1910, the Colonial Nursing Association and the British Women's Emigration Association, "having received most terrible accounts of the loss of life and sufferings of mothers and infants of pioneer settlers in the outlying districts of Canada, communicated with the V.O.N. with a view to possible co-operation. A most uncompromising reply was received."

In 1916, Mrs. Joseph Chamberlain (now Mrs. Carnegie) "saw Sir George Perley, asking him to co-operate, by inviting the President of the V.O.N. to modify their original view and to join the C.N.A. and the B.W.E.A. in remedying the deplorable lack of maternity nurses on the prairies. . . . It having been made perfectly clear to him that no rivalry or interference with the work of the V.O.N. was intended "the President wrote, 'I expect in the out-of-way parts of Canada the midwife does work, but public opinion in the matter requires to be created, and the V.O.N. will not take it amiss, or raise any objections, if an approach is made to any other organized body in Canada to act.'"

Scarcely a cordial invitation to send over English midwives. It was, however, regarded as having "smoothed away any possible friction with the V.O.N.," and Lady Piggott states "the C.N.A. entered into correspondence with the Women's Auxiliary Association, and the United Farmers' Associations of Alberta and Saskatchewan," and negotiations are now being carried on with the Women's Sections of these associations.

She adds that those whom it is the aim of the C.N.A. to assist are the poor settlers and emigrants from this country, and concludes—

"It is at this moment when, after infinite pains and personal trouble, the C.N.A. and the B.W.E.A.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)