

PIONEERS.

TRAINED MIDWIVES FOR U.S.A.

We talk glibly of pioneers, but how few realise how much goes to their making, courage, resolution, fortitude, endurance, knowledge, altruism. The pioneer must be prepared to endure loneliness of body and spirit, for he marches in advance to prepare the road for the main body, to meet with difficulties, for the road is assuredly rough, to endure, for it may be many years before he gains his objective; he must be equipped with knowledge necessary for the successful prosecution of his aim, and he needs to be inspired by a regard for the welfare of others, as the guiding principle of his self-imposed task.

It is always a delight to meet pioneers in our own profession, and recently we had that pleasure when we received a visit from Mrs. Breckinridge, R.N., well known to our readers for her fine work as Directrice, with Miss Evelyn Walker, of the Social Hygiene and Child Welfare Work, under the American Committee for the Devastated Regions in France, which had its chief centre at Soissons.

She is now turning her attention to the needs of isolated districts in her own country, more especially in the State of Kentucky. Her sympathetic heart is touched by the high maternal death rate in childbirth in the sparsely populated regions in the Appalachian Mountains, and she realises the need of well-trained midwives to attend women in childbirth.

There are few trained midwives in the United States of America, and therefore unless a doctor is in attendance midwifery is in the hands of unqualified men or of ignorant and unskilled midwives.

The need of the women in the Appalachian Mountains the only mountains of size between the Atlantic seaboard and the Rockies—has made a strong appeal to Mrs. Breckinridge, who is a highly-trained nurse and public health worker, and she came to this country last autumn to obtain her midwifery training at the British Hospital for Mothers and Babies at Woolwich, so that with the knowledge thus gained she can return to give skilled help to her compatriots.

It is interesting to learn that these people are mostly of old American Anglo-Saxon stock, robust in constitution, simple in their language. They live for the most part in log cabins and frame houses, and the songs you may hear sung there to-day are old English and Scottish ballads, such as "Barbara Allen."

Mrs. Breckinridge's scheme is to begin work on a private basis, its extent being determined by the interest and financial support she is able to secure from her own circle of friends, though she will hope to make the work partially self-supporting. The old style midwives charge from two to five dollars for attending at the time of confinement. Mrs. Breckinridge proposes not only to give skilled attention at this time, but also to pay ante and post natal visits for a similar fee.

In a country of some 300 square miles there are probably 10,000 people located, chiefly by the sides of creeks. She calculates that, for the work contemplated, a midwife could cover a three-mile radius in all directions. Having gained the Certificate of the Central Midwives' Board, she has now gone back to America to develop her plans, but will return to this country in the autumn for further experience, when she hopes to take back with her two midwives, at least, to help to develop the work, which must have great attractions for any midwife possessed of a love of her kind, and inspired by a spirit of enterprise and adventure. The people among whom she will work welcome any one who comes to them with sympathy, and give their trust to those whom they find worthy of it. They are most kind and hospitable, so much so that they have been frequently

exploited, for the commercial element penetrates even the solitudes of the Appalachian Mountains. Midwives to whom the work appeals must be good horsewomen, for all their journeys to and from their cases will be made on horseback, and they will carry their equipment in their saddle bags.

Mrs. Breckinridge has visited some fifty-three women in the mountains and heard their tales. How the old midwives use hog's grease as a lubricant, and dose them with concoctions of sweet apple tree bark, and many other details.

To save the lives of mothers, to relieve and prevent suffering, to help them to bear healthy children and to rear them in accordance with hygienic principles is a high aim to set before oneself. It may, it will mean, a life of hardship and strenuous endeavour, but a life also which is soul-satisfying and consequently happy. Moreover, when an effective demonstration of the value of the work of midwives has been made, maybe the State will take it up, and organise it on a comprehensive basis.

QUEEN CHARLOTTE'S MATERNITY HOSPITAL.

Lord Howard de Walden presided at the annual meeting of the Governors and Subscribers of Queen Charlotte's Hospital, Marylebone Road, N.W., held on Monday afternoon, when it was announced that a Supplemental Charter of Incorporation had been granted by which the name of the Hospital was changed from "Queen Charlotte's Lying-in Hospital" to "Queen Charlotte's Maternity Hospital," and women became eligible for election on the Committee of Management. Subsequently, Lady Howard de Walden Mrs. M. E. Christie-Miller, Mrs. Ernest Dent, and Mrs. Walter Seligman were elected members of the Committee.

In moving the adoption of the Report the President said that there had been an increased number of patients during the year, a large number of whom were emergency cases. He was in hopes that they would have been able to enter on a rebuilding scheme; but they had found the difficulties greater than they had anticipated. To reduce the large overdraft at the bank the Committee were reluctantly obliged to borrow £8,000 secured on the Hospital freehold, and it now amounted to £5,540. They would have to do their best to raise the balance and the Committee wished to point out that the Hospital was still in debt to the amount of £17,000.

KENSINGTON GUARDIANS CO-OPERATES WITH BOROUGH COUNCIL.

At their last meeting the Kensington Board of Guardians agreed to accede to the request of the Advisory Committee to the Maternity and Child Welfare Committee of the Kensington Borough Council to provide at St. Mary Abbots Hospital accommodation for the confinement of women living in the Borough whose home conditions are not suitable for this purpose.

POST GRADUATE WEEK FOR MIDWIVES.

The Twelfth Annual Post Graduate Week for Midwives will be held at the General Lying-In Hospital, York Road, Lambeth, S.E. 1, from May 26th to May 30th.

THE LEICESTER AND LEICESTERSHIRE MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION.

The Committee of this Association, of which Miss Pell-Smith is President, reports that this year has been marked by increased interest in the Association; more members have joined, and all meetings have been well attended. Much useful work has been done by the Committee, and the Treasurer has to thank them for their co-operation in helping her to reduce expenses so that the financial condition should be more satisfactory.

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