

### The Central Midwives' Board.

A meeting of the Central Midwives' Board was held at the Board Room, 6, Suffolk Street, Pall Mall, London, on Thursday, September 29th, at 2.45 p.m.

There were present: Miss Rosalind Paget, Miss Wilson, Miss Oldham, Mr. Parker Young, and Dr. Sinclair.

The Secretary, Mr. G. W. Duncan, announced that letters of regret at inability to attend had been received from the Chairman (Dr. Champneys), Dr. Cullingworth, Dr. Ward Cousins, and Mr. Heywood Johnstone, M.P.

On the motion of Dr. Sinclair, Mr. Parker Young then took the chair.

The minutes of the last meeting, which had previously been in the hands of the Board, were then taken as read, and confirmed.

The next business was the consideration of correspondence. The first letter considered was one from the Secretary of the London Obstetrical Society, informing the Board that, after consideration of the case of a certified midwife, the Council of the Society, after hearing the midwife's explanation, had resolved that her L.O.S. certificate should be forfeited, on the ground that she had certified that pupils in training had completed their cases before they had done so. The midwife in question had been registered by the Central Midwives' Board on the ground that she held this certificate.

It was moved by Miss Wilson that evidence be asked for in support of the letter. Mr. Duncan said this was the right course to pursue. If a *prima facie* case were established, the Board could then, if it so desired, call on the accused person to appear before it.

A letter was also considered from Dr. David Evans, of Cardiff, complaining of the conduct of Miss Bareham, a registered midwife. Dr. Evans explained that he was treating an infant and prescribed a dressing; the midwife visited the case between his visits and altered the treatment. He enclosed copies of letters, one addressed by himself to the midwife, the other her reply. Dr. Evans in his letter notified the midwife that if she again interfered with his treatment of cases he would take legal proceedings against her. The answer of the midwife was to the effect that Dr. Evans was welcome to take legal proceedings whenever he pleased. She would be able to answer his charges. She further suggested that he should mind his own business, providing he knew how. The Board postponed consideration of the question pending further information.

A letter from the Medical Superintendent of the Brentford Union Infirmary (Dr. Norton) was next considered. Dr. Norton wrote asking the Board's opinion as to the best position for the building of new lying-in wards, and inquired whether the educational value of these wards would be affected by their position—*i.e.*, if it would be more advantageous for them to be situated in the infirmary than attached to the workhouse.

Dr. Sinclair was of opinion that the question had nothing to do with the Board. Any architectural plans would necessarily be referred to the Local Government Board. The Midwives' Board was appointed to administer the Act, and he deprecated its assuming the functions of consulting architects, and giving advice over the head of the Local Government Board.

Miss Wilson suggested that a civil letter should be written to Dr. Norton, and that the latter should be referred to Dr. Cullingworth, who had expressed his willingness to afford any help in his power. Dr. Sinclair said that the only way in which Dr. Cullingworth could represent the Board was by acting on a sub-committee formed to deal with the matter. Miss Wilson then moved that the Board should suggest to Dr. Norton that he should inspect the maternity wards at the Kensington Infirmary, which were admirably planned. This was seconded by Miss Oldham, and carried.

Dr. Sinclair said that if he took no part in the recommendation he could have no objection to the Board making itself ridiculous, but the matter was quite outside the functions of the Board, and he should like to have his objection placed on the minutes.

A letter was also considered from the Town Clerk of Poplar urging the Board to promote legislation to compensate midwives suspended from practice under Section VIII. (3) of the Midwives' Act (*i.e.*, if such suspension appears necessary in order to prevent the spread of infection).

Dr. Sinclair considered that this subject also was outside the powers of the Board to deal with. Its duty was to administer the Act, not to suggest new legislation.

Miss Wilson moved that the Secretary be desired to reply that the Board had made a note of the matter; it could then receive consideration when any future amendment of the Act was contemplated. This would show that the Board took notice of the difficulties of the local supervising authorities. This was seconded by Miss Paget.

The Chairman said it must be remembered that women abstaining from practice under the circumstances indicated were doing public benefit by abstaining. He thought they were entitled to consideration.

Dr. Sinclair thought the question of contributory negligence on the part of the midwife must enter into the consideration of any compensation scheme. It would, however, be illogical and ridiculous for the Board to undertake to further a compensation scheme. The county courts were the proper authorities to deal with it. If the Board was not careful it would be the laughing-stock of the country. He moved as an amendment that the Secretary be instructed to answer that the Central Midwives' Board had no right to deal with the question of compensation. He thought the Board should endeavour to obtain moral force by the dignity of its actions.

Miss Paget said that if the Board threw back everyone who applied to it, it would never obtain much moral force.

Dr. Sinclair's amendment found no seconder, and the original resolution was then carried.

Dr. Sinclair asked that his amendment might be placed on the minutes.

The Chairman said that it was not his practice to enter a resolution on the minutes of a meeting unless it found a seconder. The Secretary was then directed to record Dr. Sinclair's objection to the resolution.

The Secretary announced the receipt of a letter from the Medical Officer for the county of Nottingham, stating that several midwives in the county had not notified their intention to practise, on the ground that they only intended to work as maternity nurses under the direction of medical practitioners, and asking

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