

brought before the Board, and after inquiry the names of the following 17 midwives were struck off the Roll, and their certificates cancelled:— Ellen Anders 17401, Mary Jane Banks 8170, Sarah Ann Blackledge 6282, Frances Box 3984, Sarah Brettell 14101, Annie Broomhead 4991, Mary Brown 2473, Sarah Ann Chapman 7465, Sarah Dawn 8160, Rebecca Ann Gill 20368, Catherine Hawkins 4765, Jane Heath 19572, Margaret Kirby 6127, Jane Perkins 16690, Margaret Riding 8082, Eliza Southall 9432, Mary Jane White 2151.

On Friday, the 19th inst., 12 cases were brought before the Board. Six midwives were struck off the Roll, and their certificates cancelled, as follows:—Ellen Birkett 4295, Mary Ellen Darlington 2981, Jane Annie Gambrill 22218, Mary McLaren 2225, Jane Rayne 423, Mary Ann Freedom Wilkinson 20312, Kate Martin 16002 was censured. Ann Robinson 19665 and Katherine Wraith 6381 were cautioned. The case of Mary Ann Bradford 2648 was postponed, and in two cases no action was taken by the Board.

Taking a general view of the cases brought before the Board, by the doctors, inspectors, and local supervising authorities, the majority were caused by old age, ignorance, and poverty, and the letters these illiterate women wrote were as pathetic as they were amusing. There were two cases of drunkenness, and one of apparently deliberate murder of a child, which the midwife tried to pass off and bury as stillborn.

As one sat there, hour after hour, and heard the letters of these poor women read, or saw them appear before the Board, one could but feel that the days of Sairey Gamp had not vanished yet, and that the laws of evolution are slow and cruel, and one was reminded of the French proverb: *On ne peut pas faire une omelette sans casser des œufs*. And thus it was, that though in some cases the Board found it very hard to decide to strike off the midwife, yet they felt that in the cause of reform and of the safety of women in childbirth the thing had to be done. Dr. Stanley Atkinson, acting for the Midwives' Institute, took very particular pains to see that full justice was done.

The hardest cases were those where ignorance and dirt were combined, and no other apparent act of negligence or wrong could be brought forward, and where the midwives pleaded poverty and lack of knowledge in reading and writing, and seemed to feel that weighing that in the balance they were not receiving justice. They had practised for 20, 30, or 40 years, and this was the first time that their skill had been questioned. They could not read or write, therefore they could not understand the rules nor keep the register. Was this a crime? they seemed to ask. "Their hands and nails were dirty." How could they keep them clean, when they had to do their housework and blacklead their stoves and fireplaces, and, cruellest of all, if they were dirty and drank, what about their *patients*?" One midwife stated that the very patient who was accusing her was so dirty and poor that she had not paid her yet, though she had lent her a night-

dress, and given her food, and added "that she had slept in the same bed with 4 or 5 children, got drunk on the third day, and had been drunk ever since, and her dirt was the talk of the street."

The evidence in many instances brought out facts very discreditable to accepted standards of living amongst the poor, and those who are responsible for those standards. Close attention to the sorrowful stories disclosed during the inquiry made one wonder after all if these poor women called upon to pay the penalty were the real criminals, or if those responsible for the education, and, therefore, the well-being, of the people were not primarily to blame for their ignorance?

E.R.W.

The Midwives' Defence Association.

A Meeting of the Midwives' Defence Union was held at the Midwives' Institute, 12, Buckingham Street, Strand, on Wednesday, July 17th, at 8 p.m., to receive the report of the Executive Committee, with draft rules, and to elect a Council and officers for the ensuing year. Mr. Watts, Secretary to Queen Charlotte's Hospital, who has acted as Chairman of the Executive Committee, was voted to the chair. The minutes of the inaugural meeting having been read by Miss B. M. Worrall, one of the conveners, and confirmed, the Chairman presented the following report:—

REPORT.

The Executive have pleasure in reporting on matters referred to them by the Union on April 5th.

They have met four times, and have drafted Regulations dealing with the objects of the Union, the conditions of Membership, Subscriptions, Meetings of the Union, Officers, and the Council, and now submit them for the consideration of the members.

With regard to the Hon. Officers, the Executive Committee consider it would be well not to fill the office of President for the present.

A communication has been received from the Medical Defence Union, suggesting the advisability of altering the title of Midwives' Defence Union to avoid possible confusion, and this is submitted for the consideration of the Members.

THE DRAFT RULES.

The Report having been accepted, the draft rules were considered *seriatim*.

The principal points on which discussion took place were as follows:—

The name of the Society. Miss Breay suggested that to obviate the possible inconvenience of having the same initials as the Medical Defence Union it might be well to revert to the original name, Certified Midwives' Defence Union. This was seconded by Miss Worrall.

Dr. Fremantle, Medical Officer of Health for Hertfordshire, advocated the substitution of the word Association for Union.

Miss Burnside, Inspector of Midwives in the

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