

The Local Government Board and the Central Midwives' Board.

AN IMPORTANT CIRCULAR TO POOR-LAW GUARDIANS.

The following important circular has been addressed by the Local Government Board to the Clerks to Boards of Guardians:—

MIDWIVES ACT, 1902.

RULES OF THE CENTRAL MIDWIVES' BOARD.

Local Government Board,
Whitehall, S.W.,
29th July, 1907.

Sir,—I am directed by the Local Government Board to draw the attention of the Guardians to Section E of the new rules of the Central Midwives' Board, recently approved by the Privy Council for the period ending the 30th of September, 1909, a copy of which is enclosed.

Midwifery Practice in Poor-Law Establishments.

It will be observed from Rule No. 25 that nothing in Section E applies to "certified midwives exercising their calling in Workhouses or Poor-Law Infirmaries under the supervision of a duly appointed Medical Officer." The Central Midwives' Board have by Rule 24 provided that certain of the Rules shall not apply to midwives exercising their calling, under the supervision of a duly appointed medical officer within hospitals approved by them, and in addition to these there are others which would not be appropriate in the case of a midwifery nurse in a Poor-Law establishment under the supervision of a medical officer. At the same time, the Board consider that the Rules are valuable as an indication of the precautions which are necessary, in the opinion of the highest authorities, to secure the safety and well-being of women during and after confinement; and the Board think it advisable that they should be adopted in midwifery practice in all Poor-Law establishments with such modifications as the circumstances may render necessary.

Appointment of Midwives in Workhouses and Infirmaries.

In this connection, the Board have had under consideration the arrangements for the attendance upon midwifery cases in workhouses and infirmaries.

The Orders in force in the several Poor-Law Unions contemplate that the Medical Officer of the Workhouse or Infirmary, as the case may be, will be responsible for all cases of child birth occurring in the institution, and the Board have objected to the appointment of midwives who should take sole charge of women in labour. It appears to them, however, that, having regard to the fact that the Midwives' Act, 1902, has now been for some time in operation, the objections which they have entertained to the employment by Guardians of midwives acting in that capacity in responsible charge of women in labour have ceased to

be generally applicable. Where, therefore, Guardians desire to appoint midwives for the indoor poor, the Board would be prepared to consider applications for the purpose, and to issue any Order which may be necessary to enable effect to be given to the proposal. It must, however, be understood, that in all such cases the Board will require that the midwife shall not only be a certified midwife (*i.e.*, a person whose name is on the Roll of Midwives), but shall have passed an examination held by the Central Midwives' Board, or shall hold one of the certificates specified in Section 2 of the Midwives' Act. It will also be necessary, when a certified midwife is thus employed in a Workhouse or Infirmary, that the Medical Officer should be at once sent for in all cases of difficulty (*see* Nos. 18 and 19 of the enclosed Rules), and that all other requirements of the Central Midwives' Board, as laid down in their Rules in force for the time being, should be strictly observed, so far as they are applicable to such an establishment, including the keeping of a Register of cases similar in effect to that prescribed by Rule 22. The Board may add that, in those cases where the Medical Officer of the Workhouse is entitled to fees under Article 182 of the General Consolidated Order (or other similar Article in the Order in force in the Poor-Law Union) for midwifery cases attended by him, it will be desirable that it should be ascertained, before any proposal is submitted to the Board, that he would be willing to consent to the new arrangement.

Payments to Medical Practitioners called in on the Advice of Midwives.

The Board desire to take this opportunity of bringing under the notice of the Guardians their views on a question which, as their correspondence shows, has been a source of considerable difficulty to Boards of Guardians and other local authorities. The Board refer to the question of the payment for medical assistance in those cases where, under No. 18 of the enclosed Rules, a midwife has advised that such assistance should be obtained.

With regard to this matter the Board may refer to the provisions in Articles 182 and 183 of the General Consolidated Order, where these or similar Articles in other Orders are in force, and also to the enactment in Section 2 of the Poor-Law Amendment Act, 1848 (11 and 12 Vict., c. 110).

If, where the Articles referred to are in force, the District Medical Officer attends in cases of the kind above mentioned, he will be entitled to the payments for which the Articles provide, should the woman be actually in receipt of relief, or should the Guardians subsequently decide that she was in a destitute condition, although no order for his attendance was given by a person legally qualified to make such order. Moreover, the section alluded to empowers the Guardians "if they think proper, to pay for any medical or other assistance which shall be rendered to any poor person on the happening of any accident, bodily casualty, or sudden illness, although no

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