

## The Midwife.

### The Central Midwives' Board.

A meeting of the Central Midwives' Board was held in the Boardroom, Caxton House, Westminster, on Thursday, April 9th. The first business on the agenda was the election of Chairman, and Dr. Champneys was again elected to this office, and Mr. Fordham to that of Hon. Treasurer.

#### REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE.

Amongst the business reported by the Standing Committee was the conviction of a midwife at Salford, Sarah Showeross, who was fined 10s. and costs for practising without notifying the Local Supervising Authority. It was agreed to refer the matter to the Penal Cases Committee.

The Standing Committee also reported letters from the Medical Secretary of the British Medical Association, as to the statement in the Board's letter to the Privy Council of February 15th, referring to the hostility existing in some districts between the medical profession and midwives.

It was agreed to reply that the statement referred to was grounded on communications to the Board, on communications which have appeared in the *British Medical Journal* and Supplement, and in the Medical Press in general, in the Nursing Press, and on facts within the knowledge of the Board.

#### AN INSPECTOR'S REPORT.

In this connection, at the request of Mr. Parker Young, a report recently presented by Miss Florence M. Bernard-Boyce, Inspector and Superintendent of Midwives for the County of Norfolk, to the Sanitary Committee of the Norfolk County Council was read. Miss Boyce said in part:—

"I beg to call the attention of this Committee to a matter of considerable importance, bearing upon a case which was recently investigated by me. In one of the districts of Norfolk a woman requested the local doctor to attend her in her coming confinement. He refused on the ground of non-payment for his services at her previous confinement, at the same time recommending her to the local midwife. In due course the woman was attended by the local midwife on the 30th December, 1907, who found the patient was developing dangerous symptoms which, under the rules of the Central Midwives' Board, compels the midwife to at once send for medical aid. The midwife sent a messenger for the local doctor at 8 p.m. on that date. The doctor again refused to go, simply on the ground of non-assurance of his fee. On the messenger's return to the house of the patient he was despatched seven miles in another direction, to request the attendance of the doctor who resided there. Time, 11.30 p.m. This doctor also refused to attend the case on the ground of non-assurance of his fee. The messenger returned to the midwife, who sent him to again request the attendance of the local doctor, but he was absent. Time, about 2.30 a.m. The midwife, finding that the patient was sinking fast, sent once more for the local doctor with an urgent message. The doctor finally

arrived at 4 a.m., and the patient died at 4.30 a.m. This is a typical case of the difficulty which is arising all over the County of Norfolk, under this incomplete Midwives Act of 1902, which compels midwives to send for medical aid in difficult cases, and no mention is made as to whom medical practitioners shall apply for their fees. The Local Government Board, in a circular issued by them on the 29th July, 1907, have clearly pointed out to all Boards of Guardians that they have full power to pay these medical fees without any previous relieving order being issued if they think proper; but, unfortunately, many Boards of Guardians, both in this county and elsewhere, do not think proper. In connection with this subject, I enclose with this report an extract from Act. 11 and 12 Victoria, Chapter 110, Sec. 2, which clearly empowers Guardians to pay these fees without any previous order. I understand that the medical men in the County of Essex have refused to attend any emergency summons from a midwife. Also in the East End of London the medical men have issued their refusals, and from correspondence I have received, I fear that the same movement is unfortunately spreading in Norfolk. Under these difficulties many midwives are threatening to retire from practice. This is a most serious condition of affairs for the mothers of the county, for if the medical men refuse to attend, and the midwives withdraw from practice, a fresh evil will arise—neglect at childbirth."

Mr. Parker Young said he had asked for this report to be read, because it confirmed what he had stated at the last meeting, that women are losing their lives, and will go on doing so, unless action is taken by the Government.

#### OTHER BUSINESS.

As the result of a letter from Dr. C. Nepean-Longridge, suggesting that midwives should possess some knowledge of the warning symptoms of cancer of the uterus, the Chairman undertook to draft a leaflet on the subject for distribution to midwives, teachers, and Local Supervising Authorities.

The applications of six midwives for removal from the Roll, two on the ground of old age, and four on account of inability to comply with the rules, were granted.

The following applications for approval as teachers were granted:—Dr. Elsie M. Inglis, Dr. W. H. Wright, and Mr. C. Vere Nicoll, M.R.C.S., and Mr. G. B. Messenger, L.M.S., S.A., pro hâc vice.

The application of Miss Elizabeth F. Edney, 29005, for approval to sign forms III. and IV., was approved.

In connection with the action to be taken on the Board's resolution of March 19th, as to the payment of fees of medical practitioners summoned to assist midwives in emergencies, the Standing Committee recommended:—

1. That the Privy Council be asked to furnish the Board with a return showing the Boards of

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