

EXTENSION OF PERIOD OF TRAINING.

The Board, having considered the question of extending the period of training of midwives, recommend (a) That it is desirable to increase the length of training to six months as soon as arrangements can be made; (b) That this decision be communicated to the Lord President of the Council, and that his Lordship be informed that if the proposal meets with his approval the Board is prepared to consider and propose changes in the Rules to carry out this project.

The period of three months' preparation for the responsible duties of a midwife has long been regarded by those who train them as inadequate, and this important decision of the Board will give general satisfaction.

In this connection the Secretary reported that Dr. West, the representative of the Association of County Councils on the Board, who was unable to be present, was of opinion that those local supervising authorities who give scholarships would be prejudiced, inasmuch as the number of such scholarships would necessarily be decreased. He pointed out that the Local Government Board was at present considering the question of making grants for the higher education of midwives, and considered if grants were made to the County Councils in this connection it would get over the difficulty.

On the proposition of Mr. Golding Bird, it was agreed to communicate with the Local Government Board, stating that the Board highly approved of such scholarships for midwives.

A letter was received from the County Medical Officer of Health of Lancashire asking the opinion of the Board on his suggestion that it should be obligatory on a candidate for the Board's Examination to take a course of three or four months' training in a hospital or in some other approved Institution, and that she should not be permitted to receive the whole of her training under the supervision of a midwife who is not necessarily a trained nurse.

It was agreed that Dr. Sergeant be informed that the Board has passed a resolution in favour of extending the period of training to six months.

PENAL BOARD.

A special meeting of the Central Midwives Board was held on Thursday, March 12th, Sir Francis Champneys presiding.

No action was taken in the adjourned case of Miss A. J. Beatty. The Local Supervising Authority reported that she was not practising. It will be remembered the point at issue was Miss Beatty's objection to inspection. As she has not this year notified her intention to practise there is no reason for inspection, and the Board took no action.

The charges alleged against eleven midwives were then heard, with the following results.

Struck off the Roll and Certificates cancelled.—Jane Duffill (No. 974), Isabella Jackson (No. 7371), Emma Sarah Lewis (No. 3944), Emma Squires

(No. 18493), Elizabeth Thundow (No. 1833), Elizabeth Jane Tugwell (No. 23438).

Cautioned.—Mary Elizabeth Cunliffe (No. 3419 L.O.S. certificate), Catherine Shufflebotham (No. 1285 L.O.S. certificate), report asked for in three and six months.

Sentence postponed.—Martha Anderson (No. 5027 L.O.S. certificate), Eliza Covell (No. 17309). In each case a report was asked for in three and six months' time.

One case was adjourned. This was the case of a midwife who was convicted of being drunk and disorderly, at Coventry Petty Sessions on October 13th. She admitted that she had had a glass of beer, but advanced the defence that she was upset on hearing that her son was wounded at the Front. Taking the circumstances into consideration, the Board adjourned the case for three months to give the midwife the opportunity of taking the pledge, if she did not she would be struck off the Roll. The Chairman pointed out that it must be a permanent pledge for life.

In the case of Mary Elizabeth Cunliffe, the evidence was contradictory. The first charge was that the child was suffering from inflammation and discharge from eyes, and the midwife did not explain that a medical practitioner should be called in. Dr. James Fox, who subsequently attended, stated that the case was not one of ophthalmia neonatorum, but that there was a semi-solid piece of secretion in the inner canthus.

The legal mind runs in strangely cramped lines. The midwife on January 25th advised that a medical practitioner was required, and the second charge preferred against her and laboured by Mr. Julius Bertram, the Board's solicitor, was that she "neglected to hand to the husband or the nearest relative or friend present the form of sending for medical help, properly filled up and signed." The midwife's reply to the charge was that the husband not being present, nor any relative or friend available, she filled in the form, and herself took it to the doctor's house and handed it to him personally, and that he visited the child within a few hours. These facts were attested by the mother, who, with her baby, was present. There was, she said, a woman at the back doing the house work, but no one was present, and the midwife took the form herself. Personally we should have thought it to the midwife's credit, but the rules say the form is to be handed to the husband or the nearest relative or friend, and a lawyer apparently deems it an offence for it to be conveyed to the doctor in any other way, though there may be no one to hand it to!

The only charge which the Board considered proved was that the midwife had not notified the Local Supervising Authority for four days that medical aid had been sought, and she was cautioned to be prompt in such notifications in the future. It seemed rather hard that the midwife should have been brought up from St. Helen's, and been at the expense of bringing a witness also, to receive this bit of advice, which might well have been given locally.

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