

The Central Midwives' Board.

A special meeting of the Central Midwives' Board was held at 6, Suffolk Street, Pall Mall, on Thursday, May 3rd, for the purpose of hearing charges alleged against eight certified midwives.

There were present, Dr. Champneys in the chair, Miss Paget, Miss Wilson, Mrs. Latter, Mr. Fordham, and Mr. Parker Young.

The first case taken was that of Mary Alice Jackson, certified midwife, No. 3,872, who was charged with being intoxicated while in attendance on a patient, of not wearing a dress of washable material, of not taking to a confinement the required appliances and antiseptics, of neglecting the requisite disinfection of her hands and forearms, and of not cleansing the patient in the manner required in Rule E (7).

Dr. Mary Smith, Inspector of Midwives at Newton Heath, Manchester, gave evidence as to the points alleged. She visited the woman on December 4th in the course of her ordinary inspection work. The midwife had been suspended from practice by the local supervising authority because she had not the necessary appliances or washable dresses, but she found her attending a case. She was partially sleeping, speaking thickly and smelling of alcohol. She considered her intoxicated and incapable. She was wearing a black stuff dress and a shawl. She was provided with some lard and soap and water. Dr. Smith conducted her home.

Mary Alice Jackson was not present, but by letter denied most emphatically the charge of drunkenness. She said that from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. she was at work at a mill, and at 10 a.m. was called to the case. She could not, therefore, have got into the state described. She was wearing a washing apron. She was sixty-one years of age, and had been grievously wronged.

A neighbour put in evidence that when she saw the midwife at 12 noon she was suffering from nervous exhaustion.

The Board, after deliberating, considered the charges proved. They therefore directed that the name of Mary Alice Jackson should be struck off the Roll and her certificate cancelled.

The next case considered was that of Elizabeth Pattillo, No. 5133 on the Roll.

She was charged with failing to apply proper and sufficient ligatures to the umbilical cord, whereby hæmorrhage ensued, causing the death of the new born infant; of failing to notify the Local Supervising Authority of the death of the child; of not keeping a register of cases.

Dr. Mary Smith gave evidence also in this case. She said the midwife was aged 58. She was deaf and not intelligent. In March, 1905, she had no register. She did not know how to read a thermometer or take a pulse. On this and subsequent occasions she (Dr. Smith) went over the rules carefully with her. She also gave her some tuition. On January 10th the Local Supervising Authority was notified of the death of the infant referred to, by the Coroner's Court. She visited the midwife on the 11th or 12th, her appliances were not in order. She had partly

kept the Register with the aid of her daughter, but it was not complete. She could not take pulse or temperature well, she could read haltingly and write a little. The father's written deposition stated that the infant when born was a fine healthy child. A few hours after he noticed it was a strange colour. He went for the midwife, but the child was dead before she got there, its clothing was saturated with blood.

The medical evidence showed that the cord had been tied twice, with tape tied in a grannie knot.

When asked to tie a knot in Court at the inquest the midwife tied it in the same way.

The verdict of the Coroner's jury was that death was due to hæmorrhage from the cord at the birth of the child owing to the ignorance of the midwife.

The midwife's defence was that she made a great mistake in attending a case so far away; in regard to not notifying the Local Supervising Authority she communicated immediately with the Police Station and considered that sufficient. In regard to the Register it was not kept in fancy style, but in a working class hand.

The Board, after debating, held that it was not proved to their satisfaction that the lamentable occurrence of the death of the child was the result of neglect. It might have been accidental. There were cases in which the cord was too rotten for a ligature to hold. The Chairman pointed out that the midwife had tied the cord twice. They, therefore, decided not to remove the name of Elizabeth Pattillo from the Roll. The second and third charges were proved, and in regard to these she would be severely censured. They asked Dr. Mary Smith to inspect her and report in three months' time.

Mr. Parker Young dissented from the finding of the Board. He considered the midwife mentally incapable, unsafe, and a danger to the public. He considered she should have been struck off the Roll.

The next case was that of Sarah Hine, No. 20,373, charged with not carrying the necessary appliances and antiseptics, with not keeping a register and declining to provide herself with one. The midwife, who was stated to be quite illiterate and stone deaf, stated in writing that she did not attend cases alone, as she "always had a medical man at her command." She was desirous of being removed from the Roll. She would return her certificate when the Board returned the ten shillings she had paid.

The Board directed the name of Sarah Hine to be removed from the Roll, and desired the Secretary to inform her that her safest plan would be to return her certificate.

The next case was that of Mary Ann Wallis, No. 2105. The charges were similar to those in the previous case, and the midwife also desired to be removed from the Roll.

The Board directed that her name should be removed from the Roll and her certificate cancelled.

The next case was that of Mary Ann Stead, No. 9,464. In this case a patient died eventually of septicæmia. Dr. Worthington gave evidence that he was called in by the husband on the seventh day. In his opinion the patient had a rigor on the third and two on the fifth day, and one just before he was

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