

## The Central Midwives' Board.

### DISCIPLINARY CASES.

A Special Meeting of the Central Midwives' Board was held at the Board Room, Caxton House, Westminster, on Thursday, July 12th, beginning at 9.30 a.m. and ending at 6 p.m., with only one hour's interval for lunch.

There were present, Dr. Champneys (in the Chair), Sir William Sinclair, Dr. Dakin, Mr. Parker Young, Miss Paget, and Mrs. Latter; the law being represented by Mr. Julius Bertram, M.P., Mr. Fordham, L.C.C., and Mr. Duncan (Secretary).

The Board met in order to hear and judge of charges made against eighteen midwives.

The charges were made by medical men, the local supervising authorities of the L.C.C., Inspectors of Midwives, patients, and two lady doctors (Dr. L. Gregg and Dr. Mary Smith).

The charges being, lack of cleanliness, for not using antiseptics, and not wearing washable dresses; for lack of ignorance in the use of thermometers, this being a source of danger, as the Midwives were unable to detect symptoms of puerperal fever in its early stages; there was one case of loss of memory from old age and one case of drunkenness.

The two most interesting cases were the only two who appeared themselves, each bringing their own lawyer with them.

Firstly, Ita Feldmann, certified midwife, No. 5,787, appeared with her lawyer and an interpreter, who spoke Yiddish and English, as Mrs. Feldmann could not speak English. She nevertheless appeared in the uniform of an English nurse.

The charges against her were very strange, as it appears she had been in the habit of sending her husband to attend confinements when she herself was engaged at others, and in one case she employed Mr. Feldmann instead of sending for a medical man when the patient was ill.

The charges were made by Mr. A. T. Swinson of the L.C.C., who stated that when he called on Mrs. Feldmann and asked for an explanation of her conduct she showed him certificates written in Russian, which she had translated into English and which she explained qualified him for this work. In one case Mr. Swinson stated that he attended a patient whose genitals he had lubricated with a piece of cotton wool dipped in castor oil and whom he left to attend to another case, the woman remaining in labour for three days. The lawyer then said that Mr. Swinson had no evidence to give except his own statements, whereas his client had several witnesses who were her patients and who were ready to deny the charges made against her, also a nurse who had worked under her.

There was a very large number of friends of the accused sitting in the passage ready to give their help and sympathy, and though one could but admire the bond and "esprit de corps" which exist amongst the Israelites, at the same time one would have liked them to show an equal amount of veracity in their statements, for those who appeared on behalf of the accused told such garbled tales, which tallied

so badly with the register kept by the midwife and the information given previously that one could but agree with the Board, who accepted Mr. Swinson's statements, and decided to strike the midwife off the Roll.

One amusing moment came when Dr. Champneys took the interpreter to task for inaccuracy in translating, for, as he informed him, though he did not know Yiddish, he knew German enough to see that he was being inaccurate. The interpreter felt this, for, a few minutes later, he said: "I am translating every word *true*. I tell the truth always, and people say, 'This man is a *Christian!* He tells the truth.'"

It was truly pathetic, knowing how Jews are treated in other countries, and how in very self-defence they must lead a life of deceit and lying.

With regard to Mr. Feldmann's certificates, the explanation must have been that he had attended in Russian hospitals as male attendant, and as they have to pass examinations he must have obtained certificates of some sort, on which he and his wife were trading.

The next midwife who appeared (also with her lawyer) was Eliza Willis, certified midwife No. 310, of Binfield.

The charges against her were made principally by a locum, a Dr. Hardenberg and were the following: Mrs. Willis had attended a patient suffering from Tuberculous Abscess on the 3rd and 4th of April, and on the 5th had delivered Annie Barlow, not having disinfected herself or her clothing.

That having sent for a medical practitioner on the 8th, she had neglected to forward a copy of the record to the local supervising authority.

That on April 15th, on the occurrence of a rise of temperature in the patient above 100.4 Fahr. with quickening of pulse, she had not declined to attend alone or advised sending for a medical practitioner.

That a registered medical practitioner having been sent for on April 16th, she had again neglected to send a copy of the record to the local supervising authority.

That she did not wear washable dresses.

That when called to a confinement she did not take the required appliances or antiseptics.

Mrs. Willis was a clean, wholesome looking, respectable middle-aged woman who appeared in a washable dress and navy cloak and bonnet. She brought a bag with her, containing four washable dresses, blouses and skirts, not always matching in colour and texture, but beautifully clean, mended, braided at the foot and tidy. She also produced a bag of appliances, lined with a clean washable material containing all the requisites.

Her solicitor raised a new point by stating that written evidences were not witnesses and that the paper given him was of no value as the witnesses had not appeared. He further stated that there were inaccuracies in the dates given by witnesses, that Mrs. Willis had been thirty years as nurse in the parish and had 229 cases, out of which she had only lost a breech case, the medical man not having been able to arrive in time, that she was so loved and

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