

The Central Midwives' Board.

A meeting of the Central Midwives Board was held at Board Room, Caxton House, Westminster, on Thursday, October 10th. The Chairman, Dr. F. H. Champneys, presided.

Resignation.

Dr. T. W. Eden's resignation of the position of examiner was accepted.

Report of Standing Committee.

The report of the Standing Committee was then received, and various recommendations made by it adopted. The committee reported that it had considered a letter from the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department as to the Board's request that the convictions of all certified midwives in Police Courts should be reported directly to the Board and enquiring whether and in what manner, the existing system of report by the Local Supervising Authority under Section 8 (4) of the Midwives Act had failed. On the Committee's recommendation the Board decided that the Home Secretary be informed that there are Local Supervising Authorities who fail to discharge their duties under the Midwives Act.

The Board agreed to inform Dr. C. Bickerton Blackburn, Hon. Sec. of the Australasian Trained Nurses' Association who had inquired as to the possibility of arranging that nurses registered by the Association in Australia should be enabled to practice as midwives in Great Britain without passing its examination, that it regretted it had no power to comply with the suggestion. (The Australasian Trained Nurses' Association is a voluntary society, not under State control, so that its certificate is not comparable to one which is conferred by a Board appointed by the authority of Parliament.)

In reply to a letter from the Clerk to the Somerset County Council inquiring as to the conditions under which the Local Supervising Authority's power of suspension arises, it was agreed to reply: That there need not be a visible focus of infection before the power of the Local Supervising Authority to suspend arises. That there must be reasonable grounds for apprehending infection in a particular area. The question of what are reasonable grounds is a matter for the decision of the Local Supervising Authority in each case. A contravention of any of the rules laid down by the Board for the purpose of preventing the spread of infection (Rule F) would afford reasonable grounds. In reply to a further question, in regard to the enforcement of the Rules, the Board replied that notwithstanding that the L.S.A. alone has the power of suspension and then only for the purpose of preventing the spread of infection, there are no means of enforcing an order of suspension except by a report to the Central Midwives Board.

In connection with this question of suspension, Dr. Stanley Atkinson moved that it be added "that suspension is primarily for the protection of patients and not for the punishment or discipline of certified midwives." Miss Paget supported

this, on the ground that hardship was liable to arise, as suspension was regarded as reflecting upon the midwife who might be quite free from blame. Sir William Sinclair, having regard to the serious effects of puerperal fever, thought any such qualification undesirable, and the resolution on being put was lost.

We wonder what would be the effect of a decree of the General Medical Council suspending from midwifery practice for a time all medical practitioners who had come in contact with puerperal infection, combined with the refusal to admit that there was a possibility of the practitioner's freedom from blame in the matter. We scarcely think that medical practitioners would be content to remain under a cloud without a vigorous protest.

A letter was read from Dr. R. J. Paton, of the Newport and Monmouth Hospital, inquiring whether it is essential that candidates for the Board's Examination should be taught the operations of applying the forceps, version, and stitching a ruptured perineum. He had, he said, always taught that if such operations were necessary the midwife should at once seek medical assistance, but the Superintendent Midwife held that as midwives had to be ready to meet all emergencies, it was requisite that pupils should receive instruction on these points. The Board agreed that Dr. Paton be informed that the Rules do not permit midwives to perform such operations.

The applications of Barbara Dixon, Barbara Hardie, Louisa Lawrence, Jane Leach, Margaret A. Nixon, Mary Ann Reid, Amelia Martha White, Rebecca Burnell, and Mary Ann Satherley for removal from the Roll of Midwives on the grounds of old age, inability to continue practice, inability to comply with the Rules, or ill health, were granted, and the Secretary was directed to remove the names from the Roll. The application of the Edmonton Union Infirmary for approval as a Training School was granted. Nine applications were refused, and the consideration of the applications of two other institutions postponed.

The following were approved as teachers: A. B. Batley, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., Katherine R. Drinkwater, M.B., B.S., J. T. Hewetson, M.D., F.R.C.S., W. M. Young, M.D.

The following midwives were approved for the purpose of signing forms III. and IV.: Elizabeth Gilroy, Lavinia Nash, Ruth Melinda Broughton, Ada Colbeck, Harriet Rebecca Foreman, Helina Freer, Sarah Annie Molling, Ann Regan, Martha A. M. Wellicome.

The Secretary's Report of the August examination was received, and it was agreed to record on the minutes the passing of the Notification of Births Act.

The next meeting of the Board was fixed for October 31st, at 2.45.

The London County Council will award in January six scholarships to students in midwifery.

The value of each scholarship will be £25, and the training will extend over six months.

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