

selected without any notice given to at least one of your nominees on the Central Midwives' Board is a matter on which your Lordship is naturally the proper judge, but the absence of any certified midwife from the list of the Committee has caused painful surprise to all who are familiar with the questions, which will come under consideration. Many of these women are well fitted by training and education to be of great service in the deliberations which will form part of the proposed work.

If your Lordship could contemplate the appointment of a Committee to investigate and report on the curriculum and supply of medical practitioners from which all doctors were excluded, you would realise a parallel situation.

The admission of the evidence of midwives as witnesses before the Committee will be no equal substitute for the appointment of midwives on the Committee itself.

As President of the Midwives' Institute for the past fifteen years, and as nominee of the Privy Council on the Central Midwives' Board for the past six, I feel it my duty on behalf of the 26,000 women on the Midwives' Roll to enter my earnest protest against an exclusion which is as unjust as it is unwise, and, holding this opinion, I find myself unable to sit any longer on the Central Midwives' Board as your Lordship's official nominee.

I have the honour to be, My Lord,  
Your Lordship's obedient servant,  
J. WILSON.

### Unqualified Midwifery.

The practice of midwifery by unqualified persons has recently been the subject of inquiry at several Coroner's inquests, owing to deaths which have occurred subsequently.

Dr. Lovell Drage recently held an inquest at New Barnet into the circumstances attending the birth of the still-born child of Mrs. Giles, of East Barnet. A neighbour of the mother deposed that she was present at the birth, and that the child never breathed. Mrs. Whittington came, and said that the child was dead.

Mrs. Emily Whittington, of East Barnet, who was the next witness, said that she did midwife's work. She was not a registered midwife, but was trained at Queen Charlotte's Hospital as a midwife in 1900. She had been a midwife for 27 years. She did not know that she ought to register until Dr. Milne spoke to her, and the Superintendent of Midwives gave her some advice two months ago. She had not taken any fresh cases since. Replying to the Coroner, she said that she had been in New Barnet six years, and had a doorplate on her house with midwife upon it all that time. She was engaged to attend Mrs. Giles in the capacity of midwife. She saw Mrs. Giles at 8.15 a.m., when she was not very ill. She told the patient to let her know if she felt worse, but she was not called again until too late. She did not undertake to stay with people; she popped in and

out like a doctor. When called the second time the child was born, and it was dead. Questioned further, she said that the certificate she had received from Queen Charlotte's was destroyed. She first put up a plate as a midwife 24 years ago.

The Coroner read a letter from the Secretary of Queen Charlotte's stating that he could find no one of the name of Whittington in the hospital register anywhere near the date given. Her tale was a most unlikely one, for if she had been a pupil she would have only been there a few months; to have been there three years, she must have been either a Sister or Staff Nurse, and the hospital had never had either of that name.

Mrs. Whittington said that she had a certificate. In reply to the Coroner, Mrs. Whittington said her age was 42. She admitted that she did not assist at births at 15 years of age, and the Coroner observed that her memory was defective.

Dr. Milne, the next witness, said there was no reason why the child should not have breathed. With proper treatment it might have been made to do so.

The Coroner said that "the fallacy of one of the chief arguments put forward in relation to midwives had that morning been exposed. It had been argued that while doctors could not be expected to remain for hours in anticipation of births, the good ladies, the midwives, would remain and give every assistance. That was what never happened. The law on the subject was boomed with the sounding of many trumpets, but mothers were just as badly off as before."

It must, however, be pointed out that Mrs. Whittington was not a certified midwife and that certified midwives are enjoined by the rules of the Central Midwives' Board not to leave a patient after the commencement of the second stage of labour.

The jury returned a verdict of "Still-born."

At the Barnet Petty Sessions, Mrs. Whittington was summoned for using the name of midwife without being certified under the Midwives' Act. Mr. Godsell appeared for the Herts County Council. He said it was important that women who complied with the Act should be protected from competition of women unregistered, and women not on the roll must be taught that they could not advertise themselves as midwives. When a woman advertised herself as a midwife people were entitled to assume that she was properly qualified. The position of the defendant was one of open defiance. Every chance had been given her to remove the notice on her door proclaiming that she was a midwife. Full information had also been given her as to how she could obtain a certificate, but she continued to defy the local supervising authority.

Miss Burnside, Inspector of Midwives, testified to having asked Mrs. Whittington on three occasions to remove the notice from her door, and to telling her that she would be prosecuted if she refused to do so. Mrs. Whittington's answer was that she meant to fight the matter out.

She was fined £2 and 12s. costs, or 21 days failing distress.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)