

The Midwife.

"Trustworthy, Sober, and of Good Moral Character."

This was the character given by Dr. Frederick Rumball March, of Bradford, to Jane Emily Inglis, of the same city, by means of which she obtained admission to the Roll of the Central Midwives' Board.

The certificate of good moral character, which the Central Midwives' Board requires a midwife to produce, declares that the person signing it has been personally acquainted with her for a certain period of years, and that she is trustworthy, sober, and of good moral character.

In the case of Mrs. Inglis, Dr. March certified in 1904 that he had known her since 1889, and that she possessed all these qualifications, and on this document Mrs. Inglis was admitted to the Roll of Midwives by the Central Midwives' Board in that year. In March, 1908, she was reported to the Board for negligence and misconduct, and, as a result, enquiries were set on foot, when it was found that in 1892 the midwife was tried for murder at Leeds Assizes, in connection with the death of a woman as a result of an illegal operation. She was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to three years' penal servitude. In 1898 she was again tried on a charge arising out of another illegal operation, but on that occasion she was acquitted.

These facts were communicated to the Public Prosecutor, and, on information laid by him, summonses were last week heard before Mr. Francis at the Westminster Police Court against Mrs. Inglis, who was charged with unlawfully and fraudulently procuring a certificate of admission to the Midwives' Roll, and Dr. March, who was charged with knowingly aiding in the commission of the offence.

Mr. Leycester, who appeared for the Public Prosecutor, said that the prosecution would be only too glad if Dr. March could furnish a satisfactory explanation to relieve him of any imputation, but his statement, in reply to a communication that had he known the true state of affairs he would not have signed the woman's certificate was not considered a satisfactory answer. It was difficult to understand how the doctor who certified to personal knowledge since 1889 could be ignorant of facts which were notorious in the district of Leeds and Bradford.

Chief Inspector Talbot, of the Bradford Police, deposed that when he served a copy of the summons on Dr. March, he said "I did not know much of the woman. She was introduced to me by one of my assistants, Dr. Allen, who is now dead."

At the conclusion of the case, the Magistrate remarked that the doctor's admittedly high reputation made it almost impossible to believe that he knowingly gave a false certificate, and Mr. Leycester, for the prosecution, said that he was not disposed to press the case, but the authorities felt that these certificates should not be given by medical men without the fullest enquiry. The Magistrate then summed up the case as follows:—"In my opinion the Director of Public Prosecutions was amply justified in the course he has taken in calling on Dr. March to give an account and explanation of his act. It is very important that the medical profession should understand that certificates of character of persons who practise as midwives are not mere matters of form. That Dr. March acted carelessly and is responsible himself for being in this position is an unquestionable fact, but after the explanation I think the case against him may be dismissed."

After Mr. Conway had addressed the Court on behalf of Mrs. Inglis, the Magistrate committed her for trial to the Old Bailey, bail in £20.

The importance of an accurate knowledge of the facts testified to in a certificate as matters of personal knowledge cannot be too strongly insisted on. It will be remembered that not long ago a medical man filled in a certificate testifying that a midwife had, under his supervision, conducted twenty cases of labour, thus enabling her to obtain admission to the examination of the Central Midwives' Board, while, as a matter of fact, she had not conducted that number. In that instance the Central Midwives' Board marked its disapproval of such loose certification by removing the hospital to which the medical man was attached from its list of recognised training schools, although it has since been restored.

Before testifying to a personal knowledge of statements as facts the least anyone who accepts responsibility for them can do is to assure himself of their truth, but it is a curious fact that testimonials are often given with great lightheartedness to quite unworthy persons, of whom the writer knows but little.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)