

The Midwife.

Midwives' Act Committee.

The twelfth meeting of the Departmental Committee appointed by the Lord President of the Council to consider the working of the Midwives' Act, 1902, was held at the Privy Council Office on Wednesday, May 12th. Mr. Almeric W. FitzRoy, the Clerk of the Council, in the chair.

The following witnesses attended:—Mr. Sydney Stephenson, M.B., F.R.C.S.; Dr. Sidney Barwise, County Medical Officer of Health, Derbyshire, on behalf of the Public Health Committee of the Derbyshire County Council, and on behalf of the Midland Medical Union; Mr. Walter Schröder, Deputy Coroner, County of London, Central District.

An Interesting Case.

It will be remembered that the Central Midwives' Board on March 23rd struck off the Roll of Certified Midwives the name of Sarah Ann Marsh, who was registered in April, 1905, on the strength of a certificate of good moral character, given by Mr. George Sidley, L.R.C.P. In February of the present year she was convicted at the Eccles Police Court of being drunk and incapable, and when the fact was reported to the Central Midwives' Board it was found that the midwife had been repeatedly convicted of similar offences in the same court, eight of these convictions having occurred before Mr. Sidley certified that he was personally acquainted with the midwife, and gave her a certificate of good moral character, and four subsequently. The Central Midwives' Board reported the facts of the case to the Director of Public Prosecutions, who decided to proceed against Mr. Sidley for culpably reckless conduct in signing the certificate. The case was heard at the Eccles police court on May 10th, Mr. Lewis representing the Public Prosecutor. The charge against Mr. Sidley was that he aided and abetted Sarah Ann Marsh fraudulently to procure admission to the Midwives' Roll, the midwife being charged with the major offence.

Mr. Sidley was defended by Mr. F. W. Ogden, instructed by Mr. Hempson, solicitor to the Medical Defence Union. Mr. Ogden, as reported in the *Lancet*, submitted that there was no evidence to prove that Mr. Sidley was aware of Marsh's convictions or drunkenness when he gave the certificate and that his

action in doing so had in no way been proved false or fraudulent. He had not even issued the certificate recklessly. Several near neighbours of Mrs. Marsh were unaware of her drinking habits, which could not therefore be rightly called notorious. Mr. Sidley had only certified that he had known Marsh for years and knew nothing wrong against her, which was quite true. Counsel asked the magistrates to dismiss the summons. The chief evidence for the prosecution was given by Mr. George William Duncan, secretary to the Central Midwives' Board, and Inspector Howarth, who proved the convictions against Marsh. After a short deliberation the Chairman announced that they were unanimous in dismissing the summons, but that Mrs. Marsh would be committed for trial at the next quarter sessions. We hope midwives will note the value of membership of a Defence Union.

The Notification of Births Act.

The Brighton Town Council have decided to adopt the Notification of Births Act and to appoint a woman as health visitor and superintendent of midwives at a salary of £80 per annum.

A Conviction under the Children's Act.

At Liverpool City Police Court last week, the first conviction was recorded under the Section of the new Children Act which provides especially for the protection of infants.

Mary Neville, wife of a labouring man, was charged with neglecting her infant, Winifred, aged six weeks, in a manner likely to cause injury to its health.

The prisoner pleaded guilty to the charge of being drunk in bed with the baby.

Mr. Duder, who prosecuted for the police, said the particular section under which the prisoner was charged provided that where it was proved that the death of an infant under three years of age was caused by suffocation while the infant was in bed with some person over sixteen years of age who was under the influence of drink, that person should be deemed guilty of neglect. The prisoner had had drunken habits for some time. She went to bed on Saturday night a great deal under the influence of drink, with the baby six weeks old and two other children, all four sleeping in the one bed. In the morning the little girl Winifred was found to be suffocated.

The Chairman said the prisoner had had a very narrow escape of being in a more serious position. She must go to gaol for three months.

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