

The Midwife.

The Central Midwives' Board.

The first meeting of the Central Midwives' Board after the vacation was held at the Board Room, Caxton House, Westminster, S.W., on Thursday, October 7th. Dr. F. H. Champneys presided, and every member of the Board was present.

CORRESPONDENCE.

A letter was received from the Clerk of the Council, transmitting an Order in Council continuing the present rules in force for a further period of one year from September 30th, 1909.

Mr. Parker Young said that this meant they would go on for another twelve months with no provision for the payment of medical practitioners when called in by midwives. He considered this urgent, and under the circumstances that the best step to take would be the introduction of a short non-contentious Bill into Parliament, which he believed would have the support of both sides of the House, and easily go through.

Sir George Fordham thought that the subject was not pertinent to the matter before the Board, and was one of which notice should have been given, and the Chairman having suggested that the subject would be better discussed on the report of the Standing Committee, the matter then dropped, the Secretary being directed to place the letter from the Clerk of the Council upon the minutes.

REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE.

In accordance with the recommendation of the Standing Committee, it was agreed that Leeds be constituted one of the provincial examination centres.

Amongst other matters, the Standing Committee also reported a letter from the Secretary of the Miller General Hospital for South-East London, inquiring what course should be adopted on an occurrence of an outbreak of infectious disease in the house of a parturient woman. It appeared that a midwife attached to that hospital, having learnt on the seventh day of her attendance on a patient, that one of the woman's children was suffering from measles, ceased attending the case, the patient being convalescent, and reported the matter to her Committee. This Committee being, no doubt, aware that according to Rule E 11 of the C. M. B. a midwife is responsible for the care of mother and child during the lying-in period, defined by the rule, "in a normal case, to mean the time occupied by the labour and ten days afterwards," and finding nothing in the rules to help them in such a case, applied to the Central Midwives Board for guidance. The rule of the Board in regard to the course to be pursued by a midwife who has been exposed to infection refers only to a midwife "in attendance upon a patient suffering from puerperal fevers, or from any other illness supposed to be infectious," and makes no reference with regard to contact with infectious disease occurring in the house. The point is, therefore, one on which it is

important that definite guidance should be given, and which it was evident from the discussion which took place at the Board's meeting is not easy of solution.

The Standing Committee recommended "That the reply be that the midwife should continue in attendance until the end of the case, and should disinfect herself in accordance with rule E 5."

This recommendation did not meet with the approval of the Board. Miss Paget pointed out that it might be convenient in such a case for the midwife to cease attendance and hand it over to a district nurse, in order that she might disinfect herself and so be ready to carry on her work as a midwife.

It was also pointed out that the answer recommended by the Standing Committee was not a reply to the question, which referred to the duty of a midwife when a case of infection occurred in the house of a patient; whereas Rule E 5, to which it was proposed to draw the attention of the Committee of the Miller General Hospital, dealt only with the duty of the midwife when her patient was suffering from an infectious disease.

The Chairman then drafted an alternative resolution, stating that "Circumstances vary so much in different cases that no general rule can be laid down to cover all, but the Local Supervising Authority should be consulted in all cases in which such circumstances arise."

Sir George Fordham considered the midwife should be referred to the local sanitary authority, and Miss Paget pointed out that midwives were under the direction of the former authority.

The resolution, on being put to the meeting, was lost.

Sir George Fordham then drafted a resolution stating that "The Board does not see its way to advise in such cases as are not dealt with by the rules and regulations," and this was seconded by Mr. Golding Bird.

The Hon. Mrs. Egerton proposed as a rider the addition of the words, "but advise that the Local Supervising Authority should be consulted whenever such cases arise." This was seconded by Mr. Parker Young, and the resolution was carried with this addition.

It is regrettable that the Board does not see its way to advise on matters not dealt with by the rules, because the rules, when framed, were surely experimental and not perfect, or the final word on all points of importance which arise in regard to the working of the Act. As the expert body dealing with midwifery matters, it seems a pity that when a case arises in which a Committee seeks the advice of the Board on a difficult point, that the Board should refuse its advice because it has not itself foreseen the difficulty and formulated a rule in regard to it. Many questions must arise in the practice of midwives which cannot well be dealt with by a definite rule, but concerning which the advice of their governing body would be most

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