

The Midwife.

The Midwives' Act Committee.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

We have commented at some length on the Report of the Departmental Committee on the working of the Midwives' Act, issued in the form of a Blue Book, Vol. 1. The Minutes of Evidence are published in similar form as Vol. II., and should be studied with care by all midwives interested in the organisation of their profession.

Of the 37 witnesses examined, eight were certified midwives: Miss Alice Gregory, Vice-Chairman of the Midwives' Act Committee of the London County Council; Miss Amy Hughes, General Superintendent of Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses; Mrs. S. A. Messenger, practising midwife; Mrs. E. Miles, District Midwife to the Hertford and Bengoe Nursing Association; Miss Rosalind Paget, Member of Central Midwives' Board; Mrs. F. Swinton, Matron of the St. George's Union Branch Workhouse; Miss L. K. Tindall, late Inspector of Midwives; Miss E. A. Wesley, Matron of St. George's-in-the-East Infirmary.

MR. G. W. DUNCAN.

The first witness called was Mr. G. W. Duncan, Barrister-at-law, Secretary to the Central Midwives' Board, whose evidence was interesting from the general standpoint. He described the general operation of the Central Midwives' Board and its sub-committees and other details of organisation, and discussed the probable shortage of midwives in 1910, and the burning question of the payment of medical practitioners.

MISS BERTHA M. BROADWOOD.

The next witness was Miss B. M. Broadwood, Director and Hon. Secretary of the Cottage Benefit Nursing Association, better known as the Holt-Ockley system.

Miss Broadwood's views of the system of general and midwifery nursing most suitable for the poor were detailed at length to the Committee, but her connection with midwives is evidently not great, for she informed it that her experience extended over 27 years, and when asked by Mrs. Hobhouse how many midwives her Association had trained she replied that she could not say. She thought through its central office "only something like thirty," but that some of the branches gave midwifery training independently of the office. She added, "I prefer that our nurses should not be midwives, but certificated, carefully trained monthly nurses."

Briefly, Miss Broadwood's views on the midwife question are as follows:—

"I do not advocate more midwives at all. I am rather the other way."

That doctors "are very jealous of the midwives—extremely so. They do not want them. There are very few parts of the country where that is not the case, except in the hilly places, where they are glad to be saved the long drives up hill." (We are glad that Miss Broadwood gives the medical pro-

fession credit for mercifulness to their beasts, though we regret it should be at the expense of the midwives to whom the long walk up hill must be at least as trying.)

NO STATE AID FOR MIDWIVES.

She opposed strongly the suggestion of any State maintenance of midwives "That would so very much injure the doctors," but wished for grants for training cottage nurses for rural districts.

SALARIES.

She gave the cost of maintenance for a woman supporting herself entirely by the practice of midwifery as £50 per annum, and said that it was part of the system of her Association that the doctor should be associated with the midwife. "Many of our associations," said the witness, "train their nurses as midwives without ever employing them as midwives, because they find that the doctors do not approve of it. They do not want the practice taken out of their hands. I myself think the doctors are responsible for the general health of the community." In brief, if medical men desire (quite naturally) to protect their own financial interests, and object to the competition of midwives, Miss Broadwood considers it legitimate to prohibit women from adopting a means of self-support, for which they possess a legal qualification.

THE WORKING CLASS MIDWIFE.

The witness asserted, in reply to a question from Dr. Downes, in regard to the respective qualifications of the L.O.S. and the C.M.B., that the women possessing the former qualification "were very good, and I know as a fact that if they could explain in plain English what they were to do in certain circumstances they were allowed to pass, whereas now the tendency is that they must be up in all technical non-English terms." She asserted that the working class woman "cannot afford the time and the expense" to train as a midwife. As a usual term of training is three months, it would be interesting to know what shorter period of training Miss Broadwood considers sufficient for pupils profoundly ignorant of the elements of anatomy, physiology, hygiene, and surgical cleanliness.

SUPERINTENDENCE BY MIDWIVES DANGEROUS AND EXPENSIVE.

As might be perhaps expected from the general tenor of her remarks the witness objects to the supervision and inspection of the work of midwives, by midwives. Her evidence was as follows: "If you will allow me here to say so, I am myself very much impressed by the dangerous and confusing sub-division of responsibility between the midwife and the doctor, whom under certain circumstances she is bound to call in, and the lady or midwife employed at considerable expense to superintend the acting midwife. I think that the superintendence is of importance, and that it should be made constant, but I think it would be better for mothers, practitioners, and working class

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