

## The Midwife.

### The Central Midwives' Board.

A meeting of the Central Midwives' Board was held at the Board Room, Caxton House, Westminster, on Thursday, November 25th.

#### CORRESPONDENCE.

Amongst the correspondence considered was a letter from the Clerk of the Kent County Council with reference to the enrolment of trained women who failed to claim the Board's certificate before April 1st, 1905. It was agreed to reply that the question was receiving the careful consideration of the Board.

A letter was read from the National Association of Midwives, Manchester, claiming to appoint a representative on the Board, and stating that the Central Midwives' Board, as at present constituted, does not represent the point of view of the working midwives. The Association considered that it was desirable that a midwife should have a seat on the Board as the representative of an association, rather than as an individual. The Board approved of the answer sent by the Secretary, which referred the Association to the Privy Council.

#### REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE.

A letter was read from the Medical Officer of Health for Bolton as to the dismissal of a midwife from further attendance on a case by a registered medical practitioner, who had been summoned on her advice.

It appears that the midwife in question delivered a woman of a living child, and, observing that the child's eyelids were swollen and discoloured, advised the husband that medical assistance should be summoned for the child. The medical man, on arrival, dismissed the midwife.

The Standing Committee had framed an answer to the above letter, but this was not approved by the Board.

Miss Paget dissented from the resolution for the following amongst other reasons:—That the Central Midwives' Board would be giving its sanction to the suspension of a midwife by any medical practitioner, which power belongs at present to the Local Supervising Authority, and is safeguarded by the necessity of report to the Board. If the result of summoning medical assistance was that midwives lost cases on which they were in attendance, it would lead to their being chary of summoning medical aid. Not only would the midwife lose the case, but be greatly discredited in the neighbourhood. She considered that no one could cancel the engagement of a midwife but the patient or the local Supervising Authority. It was the duty of the midwife to continue attendance on the case till it was dismissed. If the midwife was incompetent, which was not alleged, it was the doctor's duty to have reported her at once. The position was somewhat analogous to that of a consultant

called in to the assistance of a general medical practitioner. She thought the medical members of the Board would agree that it would not be for the ultimate general good of patients that the consultant should have the power to say to the general practitioner, "Your services will be no longer required."

She proposed as an amendment (a) That it would have been right for the midwife to attend the mother until she had received notice from the L.S.A. (b) That if the medical man called in considered that the midwife was a danger to the lying-in woman he should at once have reported her to the L.S.A. with a view to suspension and report. This was not seconded, and so fell through.

The Chairman said the cases of medical practitioner and midwife cited by Miss Paget were not parallel. Under the rules the midwife was to faithfully follow out the instructions of the practitioner summoned to attend the case. If she was told to leave the case by the doctor, she had no choice but to obey.

Sir George Fordham inquired what authority the Board had to lay down rules of conduct.

Dr. Stanley Atkinson asked whether a medical man in this country has the right to forbid a midwife to practice. He considered that a new meaning had been read into the rule that the midwife was to faithfully carry out the instructions of the medical attendant. It meant that she was to carry out the treatment ordered for the patient, not that she was to clear out.

Ultimately the Board decided to acknowledge the letter of the Medical Officer of Health for Bolton, and to give no answer.

Letters were considered from the Secretary of the British Medical Association and of the Medical Guild, Manchester, complaining of the action of a certified midwife in giving a testimonial to be used for advertising a patent medicine.

The Board decided that the midwife be asked for an assurance that she will forthwith discontinue the use of the letters C.M.B., as appended to her name, and that she be informed that, in the opinion of the Board, it is unprofessional for a midwife to sign an advertisement as such.

A letter was considered from the Clerk to the Willesden Guardians with reference to a case in which medical aid was summoned on the advice of a midwife. The Secretary stated that a midwife on the staff of Mrs. Pass's Home at Harlesden advised that medical assistance should be called in to a case, and, as the husband was unable to pay the fee, and no doctor would come without, she advised that the urgent note should be sent to the Relieving Officer for the parish doctor. The complaint of the Guardians seemed to be that the parish doctor was summoned rather than the nearest doctor. The case was one of adherent placenta, in which it was necessary to administer an anaesthetic.

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