

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 23rd, Sir Francis Champneys presiding.

REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE.

The Committee reported that they had further considered a letter from Dr. Comyns Berkeley, Obstetric Physician to the Middlesex Hospital, with regard to a complaint made by a certified midwife of the inadequacy of the training given at the hospital, and that the Chairman also reported on his visit to the hospital.

Mr. Parker Young and Dr. Herman, who were deputed by the Board to visit the hospital in regard to the complaint of the midwife that she had not personally delivered the requisite twenty cases, did not arrive at the same conclusion in this matter. Mr. Parker Young, who interviewed both the midwife and the Sister of the Maternity Wards, was of opinion that the midwife had not delivered the full number of cases. The Sister had told him that in some cases the midwife did not personally deliver; "in fact, I could not trust her," and that in primipara cases she did not deliver the patient.

The Chairman stated that he had an interview with the Lady Superintendent of the hospital, and subjected her to cross-examination. He enquired as to whether the pupil did or did not deliver the cases, and he came to the conclusion that she did deliver the cases, but her grievance was that she did not do so without help. Thus when a laceration of the perineum was likely to occur, help was given, but it amounted to no more than the Sister putting her hand over the hand of the pupil in supporting the parts. The Chairman expressed his opinion that Mr. Parker Young had not elicited the whole of the facts. The midwife evidently thought that unless she did the whole work she had not personally delivered the patient.

As to the policy of the Board, the Chairman stated that in 1907 it had had a very important hospital up before it, and found that a candidate had only delivered fifteen cases. The Board removed the hospital from its list of training schools. He had arrived at the conclusion in the present instance that, without any sort of doubt, the midwife did deliver the requisite number of cases, otherwise he should advocate the adoption of precisely the same course to demonstrate that false certificates could not be sent up to the Board with impunity.

There was, however, another side to the case. He sat on the Board in order to protect lying-in women. He did not think that the action of any hospital could be justified which allowed a patient

to suffer an unnecessary laceration in order that a pupil might deliver her unassisted.

Dr. Herman agreed with the views of the Chairman.

Mr. Parker Young said he hoped the next time the Board desired a case investigated they would select another member to carry out this duty.

CORRESPONDENCE.

It was reported that in connection with a letter from the Town Clerk of St. Helen's, which had been forwarded to the Privy Council Office, the following letter had been received by the Secretary from Sir Almeric FitzRoy, Clerk to the Council.

"Sir, Referring to your letter of the 13th inst., enclosing a copy of a letter from the Town Clerk of St. Helen's, as to the power of the Local Supervising Authority to make a rule prohibiting a midwife from laying out a dead body, I have to point out, for the information of the Central Midwives Board, that it is not suggested that the Local Supervising Authority has any authority under the Midwives Act, 1902, to make such a rule, but that Rule E. 17 (b) of the Board's Rules, as finally drawn, was intended to save any right possessed by the Councils of Counties or County Boroughs under their General Statutory Powers to make a rule on the subject, it being clearly better that there should be a general rule in the matter rather than that it should be left to the discretion of the Authority in particular cases.

"I am, Sir,

"Your obedient Servant,

"(Signed) ALMERIC FITZROY."

It was agreed that a copy of the letter should be forwarded to the Town Clerk of St. Helen's.

A letter was considered from the Superintendent of the Gloucester District Nurses' Home, inquiring (1) as to whether a midwife should undertake a case when she believes it would be better for the patient to engage a doctor, and (2) as to her duty to notify a still birth when engaged as a maternity nurse under a doctor. On the recommendation of the Standing Committee, it was decided to reply (a) That the question of whether a midwife should undertake a case or not is outside the Rules and must be decided by the exercise of the ordinary judgment of a prudent midwife. (b) That a midwife acting as a maternity nurse under the direction of a qualified medical practitioner is not bound to notify a still-birth under Rule E. 21.

Letters were read from Dr. W. E. Fothergill, of Manchester (one of the Board's examiners), and from Dr. E. Sergeant, County Medical Officer for Lancashire, as to lengthening and raising the standard of training. The letters were noted for consideration at the next revision of the Rules.

In connection with a letter from Dr. J. McCowie, Medical Officer of Health for Burton-on-Trent, enquiring the course to be adopted with regard

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