

At the present time, women are entirely unrepresented on the large majority of public bodies responsible for administering the Midwives Act. The inspection of midwives is largely carried on by men, and, as has already been pointed out, women are not allowed to compete on fair terms for most of the posts in maternity hospitals. The latest available report states that only seventeen English counties, one Welsh county, and seven county boroughs have appointed women on their Midwives' Executive Committee. There is no excuse for this failure to consult feminine opinion, as ladies who are not members of the Council may be co-opted to serve on the Committee, and it is impossible to believe that in any district there should be no suitable woman available to serve.

The Midwives Act, 1902, which forbade the practice of midwifery by uncertificated persons after a certain date, laid upon County and County Borough Councils the duty of exercising general supervision over all the midwives practising in their area. A considerable number of councils have now appointed special Inspectors of Midwives, these being usually women doctors or trained midwives, while some boroughs have placed the duty of inspection upon their sanitary inspectors or health visitors. But, in many places, the medical officer of health is responsible for the work of inspection, while in some the council attempts to administer the Act without expert assistance. Could anything be more absurd than a body of male amateurs supervising the practice of midwifery?

The salary of an inspector of midwives varies from £60 per annum to £300, the usual remuneration being between £100 and £150. The status and remuneration of midwives needs to be raised. Considerable anxiety is felt in the profession as to how their position will be affected by the Insurance Bill, and efforts are being made to secure their representation on the local health committees.

CENTRAL MIDWIVES BOARD.

The second special meeting of the Central Midwives Board was held at the Caxton House, Westminster, on Tuesday, January 30th. The Board, presided over by Sir Francis Champneys, heard charges alleged against fifteen cases, two of which had been adjourned from the previous meeting, held on January 26th.

STRUCK OFF THE ROLL AND CERTIFICATES CANCELLED.

Hannah Cooper (No. 20515). She had been previously cautioned. She was charged with negligence in respect of mother and child, both of whom died.

Elizabeth Cox (No. 17163), charged with negligence in two cases, one of whom died.

Ann Freestone (No. 20168). Charged (a) with being under the influence of drink while visiting a

patient (this was borne out by the doctor's evidence), and (b) with negligence in failing to procure medical assistance for inflammation of the child's eyes.

Bridget Mary Marriott (No. 18879). Charged with being drunk and disorderly. No defence.

Rebecca Riding (No. 5830). Negligence. She allowed the patient to stand during the delivery of after-birth. The Medical Officer of Health, in giving evidence, said the midwife's hands were moderately clean; not so dirty as midwives' hands sometimes are.

Ann Wright (No. 1216). Negligence in neglecting to procure medical assistance for infant's eyes. The sight of one eye destroyed, and the other not likely to be saved.

Mary Ann Wright (No. 20939). Negligence in three cases. In two cases she neglected to procure medical assistance for the mothers, one of whom died, and also in the case of premature feeble twins.

SEVERELY CENSURED.

Emma Smith (No. 21201). Failure to visit her patients according to rules. Her defence was that the chloroform used at a case where she was present overcame her and made her ill for some time.

Mary Elizabeth Beald (No. 16382), Staffordshire. Negligence in failing to procure medical assistance. Patient died.

Jane Elizabeth Hollinshead (No. 1555) Negligence in failing to procure medical assistance. Child blind. Previously a good character.

Sarah Rogers (No. 950). Negligence in failing to procure medical assistance for inflammation child's eyes, for ruptured perinæum, torn up to rectum, which midwife did not observe, and for rigor, with raised temperature and offensive lochia.

The chairman pointed out that it was only her previous good record that saved her from having her name struck off.

CENSURED.

Susan Barratt (No. 19780). Negligence in respect of inflamed eyes.

Maria Salt (No. 18338). Failed to procure medical assistance for prolapse of cord. Defence: The doctor on a similar occasion had said she could do it as well as he.

CAUTIONED.

Eliza Hipkiss (No. 11424). This midwife was tried for manslaughter and acquitted. She had failed to procure medical assistance for inflammation round the navel.

NO JUDGMENT.

Marion Agnes Holmes (No. 3106), London. District Midwife to the Lying-in Hospital, City Road. By the rules of the Hospital, she is not required to wash the child after the first time, nor to visit in accordance with Central Midwives' Board.

The chairman pointed out that the rules of the charity must be brought into line with the Board, and that he was not sure it was legal for the midwife to charge an extra 3s. 6d. for washing the baby.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)