

# The Midwife.

## CENTRAL MIDWIVES' BOARD.

### A NEW MEMBER.

The Lord President of the Council, in pursuance of the power conferred upon him by the Midwives Act, 1902, has been pleased to appoint Professor Henry Briggs, M.B., C.M.Ed., F.R.C.S., Professor of Midwifery and Gynaecology in the University of Liverpool, to be a member of the Central Midwives' Board, for a period of three years from April 1, upon the expiration of the term of service of Sir William Sinclair, M.D.

### PENAL BOARDS.

Special meetings of the Central Midwives' Board were held at the Board Room, Caxton House, Westminster, on Wednesday, March 27th and Thursday, March 28th, for the purpose of hearing charges alleged against 28 certified midwives, with the following results:—

#### STRUCK OFF THE ROLL AND CERTIFICATES CANCELLED.

Ada Clews (No. 20132), Frances Cooper (No. 19715), Mary Elizabeth Cornwall (No. 12500), Sarah Coulson (No. 5928), Helen Dickinson (No. 17468), Rachel Hancock (No. 16167), Eliza Harrison (No. 11269), Emily Langley (No. 1480), Mary Rolles (No. 5436), Mary Ann Shields (No. 8043), Alice Turner (No. 19439), Alice Vaughan (No. 1333), Mary Ann Howell (No. 2517), Sarah Jackson (No. 4374), Sarah Kilbourne (No. 3285), Hannah Perry (No. 14541), Jane Rigby (No. 11992), Eliza Smith (No. 21032).

#### SEVERELY CENSURED.

Elizabeth Calcroft (No. 2845), Hannah Tilstone (No. 2021.)

#### CENSURED.

Catherine Hodgkiss (No. 4399).

#### CAUTIONED.

Anne Pogoste (No. 27541).

#### JUDGMENT SUSPENDED.

Mary Ann Allen (No. 14224), Annie Emmanuel (No. 4582), Elizabeth Clasper (No. 18586), Harriet Maria Davis (No. 3006).

#### ADJOURNED TILL NEXT SESSION.

Mary Jane Barnes (No. 18574).

#### EXONERATED.

Sarah Lakin (No. 1580).

#### AN UNFAIR FIGHT.

In the majority of cases the charges were much the same, namely, offences against the rules in

respect of neglecting to take pulses and temperatures, uncleanness, neglecting to send for medical help, and to notify the Local Supervision Authority when help has been sent for, drunkenness, theft, &c. It was noticeable, as is frequently the case, that when the midwife appeared and defended herself, or was defended, that points were elicited which would not have appeared in the statutory declarations sent in or in the midwife's written defence. Indeed, the written defence of an uneducated midwife not infrequently incriminates her when otherwise there is no evidence against her, and more than once Mr. Bertram, the Board's solicitor, stating the case for the prosecution, had to admit that he had no proof of charges on the indictment, and unless they could be proved by the midwife's reply to them they must be struck out. The ordinary criminal is warned against making any statements which may be used against him, but in the semi-judicial proceedings of the Central Midwives' Board this rule does not hold good. We consider that unless the prosecution can prove the charges in the indictment which it frames they should be struck out, without waiting to see if the midwife makes statements prejudicial to her own interests in her defence.

Indeed, watching the proceedings, the fight seems to us a most unfair one. On the one side is the solicitor to the Board not primarily intent on justice to the midwife, but, human nature being what it is, on proving his case. On the other side the incriminated midwife, possessed of no legal knowledge enabling her to avoid the pitfalls surrounding her, and often so illiterate that she has to depend upon a relative to write her defence, which is frequently no defence at all.

We do not under-rate the fact that the chairman holds the scales of justice with even hand, and that the Board are wishful to do justice as far as in them lies. Our point is that if the prosecution has the advantage of legal aid the defence should have the same, and if the Board, being a judicial body, pays a solicitor to present the case for the prosecution it should, if justice is to be done, pay a solicitor to present the defence, and no doubt when midwives have seats on their own governing body they will insist on this procedure. The greatest criminal has the right to have his case stated to the best advantage, and the certified midwives on the Roll will certainly desire that the revenue derived by the Board from the payment of their fees should be used for the defence as well as the prosecution of accused midwives whose means of gaining a livelihood depends upon the decision of the Board, and who must be assumed to be innocent until they are proved guilty.

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