

The Board, of course, might adopt the procedure of leaving the Local Supervising Authorities to conduct the prosecution, but, so long as it finances the prosecution, it should also, if it is to maintain a position of judicial impartiality, finance the defence also, and then leave the lawyers to fight out the case before it.

In the case of Elizabeth Calcroft, who appeared last week before the Board, her inability to defend herself was very apparent. She was charged with negligence and misconduct in respect of bleeding from the navel in the case of an infant which subsequently died. Her defence was that though the child had lost "a nice drop" of blood, it was not in a condition to necessitate sending for a doctor, that she washed it, put on a clean binder, and no more hæmorrhage occurred, and that the child was found dead in bed with its mother. Until questioned by the chairman she never thought of mentioning that she had applied a fresh ligature to the cord, which she assumed the Board would take for granted, and seemed surprised at being asked if she had done a thing so obviously necessary. If she had not appeared before the Board this strong point in her favour would never have been known.

#### INEXCUSABLE NEGLIGENCE.

One of the most inexcusable cases was that in which a midwife was informed by the doctor called in to a patient that the case was one of puerperal fever, and, according to his statutory declaration, she clearly understood this, and promised not to attend another case. Nevertheless, later on the same day she delivered another woman without having disinfected herself, and when the patient was subsequently suffering from rigor, abdominal pain and sickness, she neglected to explain that the case was one in which the attendance of a registered medical practitioner was required. Both patients died. Such conduct merits, as it received, the extreme punishment which the Board can inflict. But in the case of another midwife who appeared before the Board, and was defended by her solicitor, Mr. Morse-Hewitt, also accused of attending a case as a midwife after having been informed by the medical man in attendance that the case was one of puerperal fever, the Board did not consider the charge proved, as no definite diagnosis was made until after she had delivered the case referred to. In reference to visiting the patient on the day when the doctor definitely warned her to attend no other case, the midwife informed the Board that she did so because the doctor, in writing to her told her to keep a very sharp look-out on the cases she had already delivered.

One midwife, cross-examined by Mr. Parker Young as to her ability to take pulse and temperature, was asked by him in reference to the normal temperature: "What should you say my pulse is now?" She replied: "I should think it is about normal, sir." She admitted she had not a watch, but thought she could take a pulse by a clock hanging in the Board Room which had no

minute hand. How midwives are to provide themselves with watches having minute hands on the fees which they are usually paid, which a charwoman would scorn to accept, is a problem not easy to determine. Probably the best solution would be for the Board to require them to carry a pulse glass.

Sarah Jackson wrote in connection with her defence that she could not come to London to appear before the Board as her son had gone on strike. She was "not being tried for murder." If the Lady Inspector could get her removed from the Roll she would. She could not understand "why a single young person should be our Inspector. I understand, having had children. She only knows what she reads in books about it."

The only midwife holding the certificate of the Central Midwives' Board against whom charges were alleged, appeared in person and was ably defended by her solicitor. She was Mrs. Pogoste, a Russian, who qualified first in Russia, and being driven out of Russia by the persecutions, came to this country and trained again at the Liverpool Maternity Hospital, passed the examination of the Central Midwives' Board, and worked in connection with it for two years. Being deserted by her husband she maintained herself and her four children, the youngest of whom was eighteen months old, by doing midwifery, teaching Hebrew, and doing odd things.

Dr. Cunningham, the Inspector for Manchester, who was present, stated that when she inspected Mrs. Pogoste's midwifery bag it was not clean, nor were her house or hands. Mrs. Pogoste's reply was that the lining of her bag, which she always boiled, was stained. She brought up the bag, of which the lining had been boiled on the previous day for the Board's inspection, to prove that the stains were indelible. In regard to her hands on the occasion of the inspector's visit, she said she was cleaning her house. The house was untidy because four of her own children and three of a friend's were playing about. The friend was packing up to go to America, and there was some straw littered about.

Dr. Cunningham also stated that the antiseptics carried by the midwife were not sufficient, viz., boracic, iodoform, and tabloids of perchloride of mercury. The latter was considered dangerous at a strength of 1 in 5,000 by the Local Supervising Authority and midwives, in their printed regulations were advised to carry one less dangerous. Asked by Mr. Parker Young whether she had had any experience of danger from a solution of 1 in 5,000 perchloride of mercury she replied in the negative.

Mrs. Pogoste was dismissed with a caution, the Chairman telling her to work with the Local Supervising Authority from whom a report would be asked in three months' time.

#### THE NEXT EXAMINATION.

The next examination of the Central Midwives' Board will be held in London on April 29th. The Oral Examination follows a few days after.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)