

justice should limit itself to these duties, and should not undertake the office of prosecutor as well as judge.

The procedure of the Central Midwives Board is that if a case of misconduct is reported, or comes within the cognizance of the Board, the Local Supervising Authority is first referred to and asked whether it finds a *prima facie* case against the midwife. If this is done, she is cited to appear before the Board. She can do so either personally or by her solicitor, or she may make a Statutory Declaration. The Board's solicitor then gets up the case and presents it. Thus the whole machinery at the disposal of the Board is utilised to bring out every point against the midwife through its solicitor, expert by long practice in this particular branch of work.

The midwife, on the contrary, if she is not too poor to appear before the Board at all, is at a great disadvantage. With no knowledge of legal procedure, and with her means of livelihood at stake if she cannot justify the action which is called in question, she travels up to London at great inconvenience and expense, is confronted by a strange Board, sees the officials of her Local Supervising Authority ranged against her, is cross-examined by the solicitor to the Board, who adopts the manner and tactics beloved of solicitors, and who, having got the case well in hand, would not be human if he were not more anxious to secure a conviction than to do justice to the midwife.

I do not wish to be understood that the Board does not desire to do justice. I am sure it does, and takes immense pains to arrive at the truth, but I do say that the procedure is in my judgment wrong. If the Board is the judge its function at penal cases should be limited to the duties of that important office, and another authority should undertake the prosecution, as, for instance, the Local Supervising Authority, which has already investigated the case locally. Some of these authorities, I know, feel that having done so they are in the best position to present the facts to the Board.

I may say further that if a midwife employs a solicitor the chances are that he knows nothing of the Midwives Act, and, if it were possible, less about the midwife, as, for instance, one solicitor who took the line of defence for his client that she considered it unnecessary to send for medical assistance because the case was only one of puerperal fever.

Innocent or guilty, most of these poor midwives should have better defence than is at their disposal at present. Further, there should be provision in the Midwives Act, which there is not at present, that they may be tried, to some extent at least, by their peers.

These are some of the principal points which it seems to me should be noted in initiating legislation for the registration of midwives in Ireland, and I do not doubt that the legal talent of this justice-loving country will be able to draft a Bill which shall be fair to all concerned.

## THE LEGAL STATUS OF MIDWIVES.

At the Dublin Nursing Conference, organised by the Irish Nurses Association in affiliation with the National Council of Trained Nurses of Great Britain and Ireland, the afternoon session in the large Hall of the Royal College of Physicians on June 5th was devoted to the consideration of the legal status of midwives.

The chair was taken by the Lady Hermione Blackwood, President of the Ulster Branch of the Irish Nurses Association, who said that the subject was of great importance not only to midwives but to the community at large. She thought that the chairman should have been thoroughly conversant with the law as it affected midwives in Ireland, and with the "dispensary midwife" system in Ireland. She had not this intimate knowledge, but she had an intense interest in the welfare of the midwife, a certain amount of practical experience of her life and duties, and a deep conviction that the well-trained midwife was an asset to the nation and deserved the gratitude of the public, and the recognition of the State.

Ireland did not yet enjoy the benefits of a Midwives' Act, but those who were distressed at the miserable salaries offered to Irish midwives, and had followed in the tracks of the handy-woman, and come across the hapless victims of her ignorance, were longing for the day when Ireland, too, would have a Midwives' Act, and it was with the hope that our legislators would before long take some steps in the matter, and listen to the representation of Irish midwives that they warmly welcomed those experts who had kindly come to give them information and advice.

### THE TRAINING OF MIDWIVES.

In our issue last week we published in full the paper by Miss Ramsden on the Training of Midwives. We therefore only remind our readers that Miss Ramsden considered there should be no distinction between the training of the monthly nurse and the midwife, an opinion with which this journal is in cordial agreement, as in order to be a safe monthly nurse a knowledge of midwifery is essential; that the period of training for trained nurses in midwifery should be not less than six months, and for untrained women twelve months, that the ethical side of training should not be forgotten, and that post graduates' classes for trained midwives were most useful and should be encouraged.

### A JUST MIDWIVES ACT FOR IRELAND.

We publish in full in this issue Miss M. Breay's paper on "A Just Midwives Act for Ireland," and there is therefore no need to refer to it further.

### MIDWIFERY UNDER THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD.

Miss E. A. Johnston, Member of the Ulster Branch of the I.N.A., spoke of midwifery under the Local Government Board and referred to some districts in which midwives were supplied in which

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