

The Midwife.

THE CENTRAL MIDWIVES BOARD.

PENAL CASES.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 26TH.

A special meeting of the Central Midwives' Board was held at the Board Room, Caxton House, Westminster, on Wednesday, May 26th, at 11.30 a.m., for the purpose of considering the charges alleged against twelve certified midwives, with the following results:—

Struck off the Roll and Certificates cancelled.—Mary Ann Avery (No. 20495), Lily Rosina Cooper (No. 3271) L.O.S. Cert., Susan Hayman (No. 17180), Susanna Heineman (No. 17096), Betsy Matthews (No. 13385), Susan Pickard (No. 17105), Willmot Pope (No. 17357), Charity Reddcliffe (No. 16901), Olive Stidworthy (No. 13271), and Mary White (No. 16941). The last eight women were all from Devonshire. Miss Booker, the Inspector, was present, and gave adverse evidence in each case.

The severest Censure the Board could give was passed on Charlotte Elizabeth Dowswell (No. 23002), C.M.B. certificate.

Judgment suspended, with report to be given in three and six months on Clara Abnett (No. 31032).

Interim reports of adjourned cases:

Betty Smeatham (No. 11921).—Further report in three months to be awaited.

Elizabeth Rigby (No. 15944).—Adjourned for terms to be communicated to the midwife, and her answer to be awaited.

In the case of Lily Rosina Cooper, who was defended, it was alleged that, "You were drunk at your visit to the patient." This charge the Board considered was not proved. In answer to a further charge of not paying any subsequent visit to her patient, the defence was that the patient had refused to have her again in the house. Questioned as to the charge, "You did not take and record the temperature of the patient," the midwife admitted that she did not use a thermometer, but relied on "her experienced hand" on the pulse. A chart being produced, on which the temperature alternated between 98.2 and 98.4, the Chairman asked her how she arrived at such distinctions. The midwife replied that if the patient were a little low or needing nourishment, it would lead her to record the lower temperature. The Chairman: "Do you really mean to say that you can tell the difference in a temperature between 98.2 and 98.4 without a thermometer?" Midwife said she had worked for twenty years at her profession. The Chairman replied that some of them had worked for forty years, and would be unable so to decide. It was stated that this midwife had held the post of Night Sister at a Lying-in Hospital; and had also been a recognised teacher of midwifery by the C.M.B., but that the Board had refused to renew her licence. The Chairman,

announcing the decision, said that a more dishonest account had seldom come before him, and that she was quite unfit to remain on the Roll. With regard to the training of pupils, she was training them to tell falsehoods. Nothing could be more dishonest in a medical sense than to record temperatures which had not been taken. The case occupied the Board for two hours, and it was decided that it would serve no useful purpose to hear the second charge against her.

Another defended case was that of Charlotte Elizabeth Dowswell, the charge against her being that "you made and issued a false certificate that the child of Mrs. Howard, whom you attended as a midwife, was still born—the said child being born alive." The midwife did not attempt to deny the charge brought against her, but said that the mother being at the time in very poor circumstances, she suggested that she should give a certificate of still birth, in order to effect a cheaper burial. The Registrar of Births for the district had borne testimony to the fact that the midwife told him it was born alive. The child, having lived some hours, the midwife was further charged with having neglected to advise the parents that medical attendance was required. This was denied by the midwife. The child's mother appeared in support of the charge. The Chairman said that the midwife ought to have known that a six months' child was almost certain to die. It was a piece of ignorance on her part if she did not know it. It was thoroughly dishonest of her to behave in the manner she had done. If she could not be depended upon to give true certificates, she was not fit to practice. However, the Board had taken a merciful view, and decided to give her another chance. They had voted the most severe censure it was possible to give. He hoped she would try and regain her character as an honest woman, and that she resolve to tell no more falsehoods for the rest of her life.

THURSDAY, MAY 27TH.

On Thursday, May 27th, the charges against seven midwives were considered, with the following results:—

Struck off the Roll and Certificate cancelled.—Nancy Smith (No. 8853), Martha Wheeler (No. 7263), Jane Young (No. 18370).

The charge against the last mentioned midwife was "That on March 11th, 1915, you were convicted at the Leeds Assizes of having feloniously and unlawfully used a certain instrument with intent to procure the miscarriage of one ———, and were thereupon ordered to be imprisoned for nine calendar months in the Second Division."

Sentence postponed for a Report in three and six months' time.—Elizabeth Evans (No. 4827), and Caroline Meredith (No. 12239).

No action taken.—In this case the midwife, who had passed the C.M.B. examination, was defended. The seventh case was adjourned.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)