

The Midwife.

CENTRAL MIDWIVES BOARD.

PENAL CASES.

Special meetings of the Central Midwives Board for the hearing of charges alleged against certified midwives were held at the Board Room, Caxton House, Westminster, on Thursday, February 17th, and Friday, February 18th, at 11 a.m. Sir Francis Champneys presided.

The results were as follows:—

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17TH.

Struck off the Roll and Certificate Cancelled.—Ann Kitch (No. 16590), Mary Ann Woods (No. 8281).

Censured.—Lucy Clark (No. 36006).

Sentence Postponed.—Elizabeth Plummer (No. 590).

In the fifth case the charge against the midwife was that, upon divers occasions between the 1st day of June and the 31st day of August, 1915, she attempted to procure the abortion of a woman. The midwife attended before the Board with her solicitor.

In opening the case Mr. Bertram said that the only evidence to offer in this case was hearsay evidence, and he must ask the Board whether they would admit it before he proceeded further. It was the statement of a trustworthy person to a third party—the inspector of police—and was evidence which would not be accepted in a Court of Law. He reminded the Board that it had been intimated by the Lord Chief Justice in the case of *Feldman v. the Central Midwives Board* in the High Courts that he was not prepared to say that the Board must act on the strict rules of ordinary legal procedure.

The solicitor for the midwife said that Mr. Bertram had very properly advised the Board that there was no evidence to place before it which could be called evidence. The police had been told to investigate the case, but when it came before the local magistrates the witnesses did not come up to proof, and refused to make statements. One witness said in court "It is a lie. I never said it," and the statement of the woman concerned, on oath, was "the midwife done me no harm." He did not know how the case originated, but when the witnesses were subpoenaed, brought to court, and sworn they did not substantiate their statements. When witnesses are available, and are brought to a court of justice, and do not substantiate their statements there is no case.

Mr. Bertram said that the solicitor of one of the possible witnesses stated that he could not allow his client to involve herself in proceedings which might have such grave consequences.

The Board then deliberated, and the Chairman subsequently stated that the Board had very carefully considered the case, and had come to the conclusion that there was no evidence available such as the Board could admit, therefore they could not proceed further with the case.

Of the two midwives who were struck off the Roll one was seventy-one and the other seventy-three years of age. We think that when midwives arrive at the age when they are entitled to an Old Age Pension they should be required to cease practice, as it is obviously not in the interests of the patients that they should continue to do so.

In the case of Midwife Clark, who did not advise that the attendance of a medical practitioner was required in a case of serious rupture of the perinæum, the midwife accounted for not noticing it by saying she was upset by the difficult circumstances of the patient's family. Mr. Bertram explained that the patient was an unmarried girl, another unmarried sister was shortly to be confined, and the mother had just come out of prison.

The Chairman said the midwife admitted she had done wrong and that was the best thing she could have done. The Inspector (Miss S. J. Wood, Inspector of Midwives for Somerset) thought that it was a single lapse in a good career. A neglected ruptured perinæum was a serious matter, both on account of the discomfort to the patient and the risk of septic trouble. The Board therefore decided to censure the midwife.

The Chairman thanked the Inspector for presenting this and another case so well.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 18TH.

Struck off the Roll.—Linda Laura Ball (No. 26739), Amelia O'Sullivan (No. 8861).

Censured.—Emily Diana Curtis (No. 23321), Mary Caroline Harper (No. 11300).

Sentence postponed for Report from Local Supervising Authority in Three and Six Months.—Francis Louisa Bracey (No. 31514).

Resignation Accepted.—Susannah Dory (No. 20325).

One case was adjourned.

The case of Bertha Flemming was not heard, owing to the lateness of the hour. Six out of the eight cases belonged to London.

In the case of Midwife Bracey, against whom there were two charges of negligence, she said in reference to the second case that it was one sent to her by the Royal Maternity Charity which did not guarantee the washing of the mother or of the infant, except at birth, unless an extra fee of 2s. 6d. was paid. In this case the mother of the patient had washed her, and the Inspector had directed the midwife to leave antiseptic for this

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