

The Midwife.

THE GENERAL MEDICAL COUNCIL AND THE MIDWIVES' ACT.

THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

Sir Donald MacAlister, who presided at the Summer Session of the General Medical Council held at the new offices, 44, Hallam Street, W., said in the course of his inaugural address:—

"The representations made to the Government on your behalf respecting the Scottish Midwives Bill were effective. The Bill, which was properly regarded as an emergency measure, became law on December 23rd, 1915. The Scottish Board has since been duly constituted, and the first set of rules for the enrolment of midwives has, after submission to the Executive Committee, been approved by His Majesty in Council.

"Revised rules, framed by the Central Midwives Board under the English Act with a view to the better training and supervision of certified midwives, will be submitted to the English Branch Council during the present session. They indicate that the policy of the Central Board is progressive, and that its aim is to increase the efficiency of midwives. In the present emergency the responsibilities of these women must necessarily become greater and it is the more imperative that the State and the profession should take steps to ensure their entire fitness. That some practitioners have not yet realised their duty with respect to the operations of women, who are *not* certified as fit to attend mothers in childbirth, is strongly suggested by cases brought before you at the last and at the present session. The Council will doubtless be prepared to consider whether the time has not come to issue a special warning notice on this subject.

DISCIPLINARY CASES.

Amongst the disciplinary cases considered by the Council three were concerned with the covering of uncertified midwives. The Central Midwives Board were the complainants, and during the hearing of the cases Sir Francis Champneys, President of the Central Midwives Board, withdrew.

In the first case the Council had found the charges proved in November, but adjourned the case for six months. The medical practitioner concerned expressed regret at what had occurred and assured the Council that it should not occur again. The President, in announcing the judgment of the Council, said that it had already informed the practitioner concerned of the grave view it took of the nature of the offence specified in the charge proved against him, but having regard to his assurances as to his conduct in the future it had not seen fit to direct the Registrar to erase his name from the *Medical Register*.

The second case was that preferred against Frederick Robinson, L.R.C.P., of 96, Clough Road, Masborough, Rotherham, against whom it was alleged "that, being a registered medical practitioner you by your assistance knowingly enabled a Mrs. Fisher, a woman not certified under the Midwives Act, 1902, to attend women in childbirth under cover or pretence that such women were attended or to be attended by you or by her under your direction, thereby enabling the said Mrs. Fisher in contravention of the said Act to practise as if she were certified thereunder. And that in relation thereto you have been guilty of infamous conduct in a professional respect."

Dr. Robinson sent a telegram declining to attend and answer the charge.

In the course of the evidence the Town Clerk of Rotherham said that his Council had had difficulty with Mrs. Fisher, as was shown by the list of her convictions. She was an undesirable person to attend a maternity case under any circumstances. The judgment announced by the President in this case was as follows:—

"I have to announce that the Council have judged Frederick Robinson to have been guilty of infamous conduct in a professional respect, and have directed the Acting Registrar to erase from the *Medical Register* the name of Frederick Robinson."

In the third case the President informed the practitioner concerned that the Council took a very grave view, in the public interest, of the danger which arises from "covering" the practice of unqualified and uncertified women. The Council had postponed judgment until the November Session, when he would be required to attend and provide testimony from his professional brethren as to his character and conduct in the interval.

A WARNING NOTICE.

At the last Session of the Council on May 27th Sir Francis Champneys, Chairman of the Central Midwives' Board, as reported by the *Glasgow Herald*, moved that a warning notice should be issued with regard to the "covering" by medical practitioners of the practice of women who were not certified as midwives. He said that in certain directions the passing of the Midwives Act in England had been followed by a sudden and considerable fall in mortality, and this was attributed to the elimination of unqualified and uncertified midwives. There was, therefore, good ground for the efficient administration of the Act being maintained, and the Council had good reason to insist that medical practitioners should do their part.

Dr. Macdonald thought that there was a great deal of ignorance on the part of general practitioners throughout the country as to their duties

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)