

The Midwife.

CENTRAL MIDWIVES BOARD.

PENAL CASES.

A meeting of the Central Midwives Board was held at Queen Anne's Gate Buildings, Westminster, on Wednesday, October 10th, to consider charges against 7 Midwives, with the following results:—

Struck Off the Roll, Certificate Cancelled.—Emily Strevens (No. 18563), Louisa Sweetman (No. 13254), Ellen Wallace (No. 2830), and Dinah Wishart (No. 18519).

Censured.—Annie Richardson (No. 18974).

Judgment Suspended for Report in Three and Six Months.—Mary Glarvy (No. 30975), and Kate Sharpe (No. 10105).

Interim Reports.—After interim reports had been received concerning Margaret Dearlove (No. 23949) and Mary Kelly (15806), it was decided that their names should be Struck Off the Roll and their Certificates Cancelled.

Final Reports.—No action was taken in the case of four Midwives concerning whom final reports had been asked for at the end of six months.

One charge against Midwife Glarvy was that she did not explain that the case was one in which the attendance of a registered medical practitioner was required, and also that she did not fill in the requisite form, nor did she notify the Local Supervising Authority. The mother died. She had previous to her confinement been suffering from persistent vomiting. A doctor testified that she was suffering from pneumonia, and when he first saw her her heart was in an enfeebled condition. He gave the Midwife a very good character for practical work. It was on this account, the Chairman said, that she was to be given another chance.

In the case of Midwife Richardson, the charge proved against her was that "whereas in truth and fact the child had been born alive," she gave a certificate that it was still-born.

The Midwife had sent the usual notification of birth to the M.O.H., and it was difficult to see that she had any motive for so acting, the fees for burial being the same in both cases. Her explanation that she had been suffering from a stress of work and had made a mistake was accepted by the Board.

The charge that she had employed an unqualified woman to assist her in her work fell through, the Board holding that the washing of the mother and child by an untrained person was legitimate.

The charges against Midwife Sharpe were supported by a declaration from the patient, who said that the Midwife washed her in the same water as she had bathed the baby in, and also that the infant suffered from abscess of the breast, and that the Midwife had previously squeezed the milk out of it.

The doctor's evidence was that he found no evidence of this having been done; also that he considered the patient, when he saw her, to be in such an excitable condition as to give him the idea that she might have incipient puerperal insanity.

Midwife Sweetman's position was not improved by a letter to her from a friend, which was read to the Board. In it appeared these passages: "I don't know what all these fools are thinking about; they had better stay at home and mind their own business. What a fuss over a kid! You wouldn't want half-a-dozen if this is going on every time."

Midwife Wallace, whose age was given as over seventy, said that she could tell the temperature by "feeling if the body was too hot."

In a letter to the Board, she said: "You can cross me off if you like. I am too upset to go on. I have been practising as a midwife ever since I was fifteen."

The Chairman remarked that she had been at it for fifty-five years, and it was about time she came off.

THE PAIN AND PERIL OF CHILDBIRTH.

Never has the prayer for "all women labouring of child" been more needed than it is at the present time. The condition of "great pain and peril" has been enhanced a hundred times by the stress of the war. The shock of the communication, "missing and believed to be killed," in the time immediately preceding the birth of her child, must needs cause a mother to bring forth her little one with heavy increase of the sorrow that Mother Eve drew down upon her descendants.

The air-raids add yet another peril. We have heard of a mother whose infant was but forty-eight hours old, fleeing with her new-born child to a shelter some distance off. We hear of mothers near their time giving birth to their children in underground Tube stations, of children killed before birth from nerve shock to their mothers. "You can't expect poor women to bear children under these conditions," was a remark heard from one of that long-suffering community.

A well-known nursing home in London, during the last raid, received a communication at the eleventh hour that an expected maternity case from the country had preferred to stay in her own home rather than face the "mental strain in London at the present time."

The women in poor homes have no alternative of this kind, but are forced to face their hour of peril "in the terror of bombs by night, and of the shrapnel that flies by day."

All honour to these "poor brave things." All honour to our splendid midwives who stand by them in their double peril.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)