

member of the Royal British Nurses' Association who has its true interests at heart can differ from the opinions expressed concerning the present crisis, or approve of the policy which we are recommended to adopt. As a member of the Council, and having made it a matter of duty, when possible, to attend the meetings of that body during the last twelve months, I cannot say that the revelations concerning the present management which leaked out on the 19th of April, came upon me as a shock. For twelve months the thunder clouds of discontent and indignation have been slowly but surely gathering up for the inevitable storm, and now that it has burst upon us, I have no doubt the result will be normal, and that we shall breathe more freely when the atmosphere is cleared.

I am glad to find that Mrs. Andrews plainly states that the responsibility concerning the momentous questions which are at issue "have gone beyond the Executive Committee and the General Council," and now rests with the *members*; therefore it is satisfactory to read that evidently many members are strongly imbued with a sense of duty, and that they intend to see justice and honour upheld. This is the *crux* of the whole question—*grave injustice* has been done by the issue of the Council voting list to the members, without one word of explanation as to its *vital* significance. We, as members of the Royal British Nurses' Association, entered into an honourable contract with the large Nurse Training Schools, that due representation would be given to their views and wishes if they would sanction the Matron of each school accepting an *ex-officio* seat upon the Governing Body and Executive Committee of the Association, thus providing that the opinions of these schools would always have a voice in its government. We also unanimously invited our founder, Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, to do us the honour of accepting a permanent seat on the Council and Executive Committee of the Association, an arrangement which cannot be altered and annulled excepting by the vote of the *majority of the members* of the Association in General Meeting.

Here, then, the duty of the members is absolutely plain (and I know I speak for every upright woman in the Association), we resent the suggestion made to us that we shall break our contract with the *ex-officio* Matrons and the Founder, and thus bring dishonour and contempt upon our Association and our *womanhood*. The day is past when the miserable policy of inciting the jealousy of one woman against another can be relied upon to split up our ranks, and leave us, helpless units "in the body politic." What we women have got to do between this date and the 24th of July—the day of our Annual Meeting—is to co-operate with the determined purpose that we will attend that meeting, and vote solid to maintain the Constitution on its original foundation, being determined first and foremost that the women who for the past eight years have worked for us, and who we know have sacrificed much for our cause, shall not be "ousted" from the Association they have made, to satisfy the unworthy personal antagonism of our Association's most bitter enemies. And in forming this determination we must neither turn to the right nor to the left, we must refuse to be intimidated, cajoled, or over-awed by vain quibbles of the law.

The Charter gives us full power to retain the services of our Founders. It is only to be hoped that through

the present deplorable policy, their invaluable services will not be denied to us.

I am, dear Madam,

Yours steadfast and true,  
CHARLOTTE OKELL,  
Member of the General Council.  
Matron of the Infirmary, Bridgwater.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

MADAM,—To those Nurses who read intelligently from week to week your valuable paper, it must be very evident that a crisis has been arrived at in the affairs of the Royal British Nurses' Association, and those who are members of the General Council, as I am myself, perceive there is a serious question at stake. Are we to submit to being ruled against our will, hustled into silence, or to be dictated to by a few members merely because they are of the stronger sex? I think not. Each member under our Royal Charter has equal rights—the great constitutional rights of liberty of speech and conscience are ours, moreover, by inheritance.

At the General Council Meeting on the 19th of April, there were some disclosures made which certainly were anything but creditable to the management of the Association. To me, to whom all this was new, there seemed to have been a series of struggles on the part of the Matrons to maintain the conduct of business according to the Bye-laws and Charter, and a determination on the part of some other members to override both the wishes of the Matrons and the Regulations. In your able leader of June 1st, you refer to the working of the affairs of the Association during its first struggle for existence, and before it gained the Royal Charter, which gave it such undoubted status that Nurses and medical men were anxious to have their names associated with the list headed by our honoured Royal President and others who had had the courage to bear the heat and stress of battle. But now it is suggested that, in constituting the General Council, this year, there shall be omitted just those women who were first and foremost in the fray when there was fighting to be done, and whom their colleagues know and trust. True, according to the Bye-Law the members of the General Council retire by rotation, but the *original* draft signified that *all* members of the Executive Committee were also members of the General Council without re-election, and I am *quite certain* that all the members of the Royal British Nurses' Association worthy of consideration will think it a disgrace to belong to a Corporation which can permit the women who have suffered and worked for us to be forced off by an opposing faction whose interest will probably flag when the glory of numbers ceases to support them, and who have proved by this very suggestion that they know nothing of our needs and care less for our wishes. At the forthcoming Annual Meeting there should surely be someone bold enough to express for herself (and she will be upheld by hundreds) the conviction that the members of the Royal British Nurses' Association do not intend their Corporation to be managed by anyone but those chosen by *themselves* to represent them. They are in a free country, have liberty of speech, and must show that they are not like dumb, driven cattle, without mind or will of their own—the time has passed when they must permit

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