

Royal British Nurses' Association.

(Incorporated by Royal Charter.)

PROCEEDINGS AT THE SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING OF MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL BRITISH NURSES' ASSOCIATION,

Held on Tuesday, January 28th, 1896, at 20, Hanover Square, W.

SIR JAMES CRICHTON BROWNE in the Chair.

The CHAIRMAN: Ladies and gentlemen,—I am desired by Her Royal Highness, the President, to occupy the chair this afternoon, and to express to you her regret at her inability to be present at this meeting. Her Royal Highness is really detained at Osborne by tender ministrations akin to those of a Nurse, for she is engaged therein comforting her widowed sister, and in sustaining her Royal Mother in the heavy bereavement that has fallen on her, and has cast a shadow over the Royal Family. I am sure this Royal British Nurses' Association will feel deep sympathy with the Royal Family in their sorrow, and especially with the President of this Association, our kind, generous and beloved President, who must have had many anxious hours of late about her own brave soldier son who has been exposed to exactly the same dangers under which Prince Henry of Battenburg has succumbed. Let us hope that Prince Victor will return speedily and safely. I next call upon the Honorary Secretary to begin the proceedings by reading the notice summoning this meeting, but before I do so I have to request all who may be present, and who are not members of the Association, to withdraw, as this is purely a domestic matter of the Association, and strangers cannot be admitted; and I have further to ask even registered Nurses who are present, who are not at the same time members of the Association, to withdraw, as the mere fact of registration does not confer the right of being present at a meeting of this kind. If those who are not members of the Association who have found their way here inadvertently will kindly withdraw?

Dr. HUGH WOODS: Mr. Chairman, I should like to know if I am in order in asking in reference to that, that a representative of Messrs. Mear and Fowler, should be present to represent Miss Barlow. If I am in order I should propose that.

The CHAIRMAN: Miss Barlow is, I take it, perfectly safe in the hands of her fellow members in this Association. As I have said, it is a domestic matter; we do not contemplate further legal proceedings. I shall have to request that gentleman who comes here representing Miss Barlow to withdraw.

Dr. BEDFORD FENWICK: I have much pleasure in seconding the proposal made by Dr. Hugh Woods, as a mere matter of justice to a Nurse concerning whom a resolution has been sent all over the world condemning her without the facts of her case being stated to those who have received that notice. (Applause.) I ask, Sir, as a mere matter of justice, that the lawyer representing Miss Barlow, and who, I understand, is to take no part in these proceedings, may be present to watch the proceedings on her behalf. (Loud applause.)

THE CHAIRMAN: Miss Barlow is, I have no doubt,

represented here by many friends. I hope Miss Barlow is here herself to take part in the proceedings, but anyhow I have ruled, on good advice, that those who are not members of this Association must withdraw, and I must insist on their doing so.

Mrs. BEDFORD FENWICK: I see here Mr. Pitt, who conducted the case against Nurse Barlow in the High Court of Justice, and I presume if Mr. Fowler retires, he also will be called upon to retire. (Cries of "Hear, hear.")

The CHAIRMAN: There is no resolution before this meeting. Mr. Pitt is here as the legal adviser of the Executive Committee, and on many previous occasions, as Mrs. Bedford Fenwick is aware, at meetings of this kind the legal adviser of the Association has been here without objection. I will ask the Honorary Secretary to read the notice calling this meeting.

Mr. EDWARD A. FARDON (having read the notice calling the meeting): The Agenda is: "To call attention to the action brought by Miss Barlow against the Association, and to move the following resolution.* There is a note appended to this, which is taken from the Charter: "At every General or Special Meeting of the Corporation every member of the Corporation shall have a vote, but no member shall be entitled to be present or to vote at such meeting who is in arrear of any subscription of other sum payable by him or her under the Bye-laws for the time being in force." It now devolves upon me, as the medical Honorary Secretary, to fulfil the first part of the purpose for which this meeting has been convened, that is, to call attention to the case of Barlow *v.* Thorne—the business which, in fact, has brought us all here together to-day. And I should like at the very outset of these proceedings to state that the object in convening this important meeting is not to make a personal attack upon Miss Barlow. ("Hear, hear," "Oh," and laughter.) I think myself—and I believe that there will be no dissentients to that opinion—I think myself that it would be altogether unworthy of a Corporation—an important Corporation like this—that they should have put into force the whole machinery necessary for the purpose of having a general meeting of its members, simply to make a personal attack upon a Nurse in Nurse Barlow's position, no matter whatever she had done. (Cries of "Hear, hear.") That I should like to make perfectly clear before we begin. To what extent Miss Barlow may be the real and *bond-fide* Plaintiff in the action which has culminated in this meeting, or whether or not she may have been rather the instrument of others, is a point upon which more light may be thrown in the course of this afternoon's discussion. But however that may be, Miss Barlow's name was used in all the proceedings that have taken place. It was in her name that everything was done, and it was her name that was appended to all the letters and communications upon the matter which have reached us directly, and also through some portions of the press, and therefore the Committee had no option at all, but when they were speaking of the Plaintiff in this action, to consider which, and to consider the consequences of which you have been called here to-day—they had no option at all, when they spoke of the Plaintiff, but to speak of her in the name of Miss G. E. Barlow. Then, very briefly, I should like to call attention to

* We are legally advised that this Resolution must not be published in this Journal, as it is defamatory.

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