

regret that, though we have been told we have been summoned to hear everything in regard to this case, the most essential parts of the case have been kept from our knowledge. First of all, the letter which Miss Barlow wrote, which has been described in such powerful terms, has been kept back from us; and then the resolution which the Executive Committee passed has been slurred over; and finally, the letter written to Miss Barlow, on which the whole of this case has arisen. I venture to say that there are very few honourable persons in this room who will not be surprised when the whole of this case is laid before them, and I think those who summoned this meeting were in honour bound to have laid all the facts before us. (Applause.) The letter from Miss Barlow to the NURSING RECORD was as follows:—"Dear Madam, —I think under the present circumstances that it is right to make public the fact that although I am a member of the Royal British Nurses' Association, I have not yet received my Journal and Voting List from the office for the General Council, and as my fellow members received theirs five weeks ago, and the lists have soon to be returned, I make the fact public because other new members of the Association may suffer from the same mismanagement; and as I am anxious to replace the names of the *ex-officio* matrons on the list, I made a personal application at the office for my voting paper. If other members have not yet received either their Journal or their voting paper, they should apply for them at once to Miss Alice Ravenhill, Secretary, 17, Old Cavendish Street." That is the letter, Sir, which has been described in such powerful terms, and I venture to think that a more simple letter could hardly have been written. (Applause and "Oh!") I have, Sir, to call attention now to the facts of the case. That letter appeared. Why did it appear? It appeared, Sir, because there was a suggestion made that faith should be broken with the ladies who founded the Association. (Hear, hear.) When they founded the Association said to them: "We are proud and glad of your help, we cannot do without you; we ask you to take a permanent seat on the governing body of the Association." And those ladies consented. There was a definite honourable agreement made with them. When the Charter was granted, the bye-laws were altered and the words in the original bye-laws which give those ladies their permanent seats were somehow or other omitted, so that it read as if they had to retire like other members. That bye-law existed for two years without being noticed. Attention was finally called to it, and it was seen at once that a grave mistake had been made. Honourable people at once said: "Let us have a meeting of members, let us alter our bye-laws; let us keep faith with the persons who founded the Association; we do not want to break our pledge which we made to them when we wanted their help." And it was determined to have that meeting, and in due course, in accordance with the Charter and bye-laws and the power given to the members of this Association by Her Majesty, a requisition went in asking for that meeting. That requisition was not complied with. The Executive Committee took upon themselves the responsibility of—I will use your word, Sir, "postponing"—postponing that meeting until it was too late to hold it. The bye-laws could not be altered; the pledged promise of the Association was broken, the bye-laws in their then state had to be obeyed; those ladies had to leave the Council. Then a number of

members said: "We will do what we can, at any rate, to show that we desire to keep faith. We will place upon the voting list the names of those ladies who are to retire, so as to show what we think." And, as you know, when the voting papers came to be examined, there was a very small difference between those who sent their papers back unaltered and those who sent their papers back changed—altered so as to retain these ladies on the Council. It became of importance to every member of the Association to have her voting paper. Every member who desired to keep faith with the founders of the Association wished to have her voting paper, and that was a reason why Miss Barlow when she became a member of the Association, and why others desired to have their voting papers. She says so in her letter. Surely that was perfectly legitimate. She was elected a member on the 7th June, and on the 12th, not having received her voting paper from the Secretary—a clear neglect of duty on the part of that official—

The CHAIRMAN: The 8th June, I think.

Dr. BEDFORD FENWICK: The 7th. I think, Sir, I am correct—I generally am correct about my facts. (Laughter and applause.) With all due submission to you, Sir, I am quite willing to stand corrected if I have made a mistake, but with all due submission to you, I say Miss Barlow was elected a member of the Association upon the 7th June.

The CHAIRMAN: I find you are right.

Dr. BEDFORD FENWICK: Thank you, Sir. On the 8th June she received the notice that she had been elected a member, and she considered then, and rightly, that she was entitled to all the rights and privileges of membership. I think nobody will dispute that fact. One right and privilege of membership, according to the Charter, is to receive her voting paper, to be entitled to vote for the governing body of the Association. That is an essential privilege and right. Did she receive it? No. She waited five days and then applied for her voting paper. (Cries of "No.") I am willing to stand corrected. Will you kindly correct me?

Mr. PEARCE GOULD: Yes; she went on the 8th.

Dr. BEDFORD FENWICK: Pardon me, she did not. I should like that gentleman to prove his statement. I am prepared to prove she called at the offices on the 12th, and, what is more, I am prepared to tell that gentleman that the Secretary of the Association has sworn that, in an affidavit. I ask the Secretary whether or not Miss Barlow called on the 12th?

Mr. PEARCE GOULD: She wrote the letter on the 8th.

Dr. BEDFORD FENWICK: I am talking about calling at the office; I am not talking about the letter.

Mr. PEARCE GOULD: Yes you are.

Dr. BEDFORD FENWICK: When these disorderly interruptions have ceased— (Laughter).

The CHAIRMAN: Order, order.

Dr. BEDFORD FENWICK: I shall persist in stating that according to the sworn affidavit of Miss Alice Ravenhill, the Secretary of the Association, Miss Barlow called at the offices on the 12th June, five days

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