

record its strong disapproval of any member of the Association resorting to litigation with the Corporation, or inciting or encouraging a member to do so until every possible means of settling the matter in dispute within the Corporation itself has been tried." I want to speak to that. I had the misfortune to be on the General Council of the Royal British Nurses' Association for three years. Now on more than one occasion I tried to do my duty, but on one special occasion—the last time at which I ever attended a General Council meeting—I brought forward, in the interests of the Nurses and the Association, one or two points which it appeared to me we ought to have some light thrown upon. Now, ladies and gentlemen, what kind of treatment was I accorded? I have no hesitation in saying that it has not only been my own experience, but it has been the experience of many other members of the General Council, that when any matter was brought before the Executive by members of the General Council—at least any matter which was distasteful to them—every means was tried by the chairman for the time being to stifle discussion and to refuse redress. (Hear, hear, and applause.) This will appear to some to be a rather strong statement of the case, but I appeal for confirmation to my fellow Councillors, and to the members of the medical profession, too, because I think it is a very great mistake for us to imagine that the doctors are going to side against the Nurses because they are Nurses and because they are women. (Hear, hear.) We are not two professions opposed. I have considered the matter very carefully, and I have not thought of bringing it before this meeting without due consideration. I wish plainly to say that, as a member of the General Council for three years, whenever I attempted to do my duty in the best interests of the Association I have been snubbed from the chair. (Laughter and applause.) I have been declared out of order when I was absolutely in order. (Cries of "Hear, hear.") I have been requested to sit down—I have not always done it, (laughter)—but I have been requested to do so, and when other means failed I have been requested to withdraw my speech, the Chairman protecting himself behind our Royal President. Now, ladies and gentlemen, I think we ought to settle this matter once and for all to-day. I think we ought to settle once for all the liberty of the subject to free speech and criticism. If this resolution be passed to-day—it will not be unanimously passed, but if it should be passed—we are condemning ourselves to a very great extent. (Hear, hear.) We are condemning ourselves to have the *clôture* put on us. They have tried that in the House of Commons, as you know, and for a little while it was a success, but it did not stand long, and I can certainly speak for the Irish members of the British Nurses' Association—their conduct with regard to that will be exactly the same as the conduct of the Irish members of the House of Commons. (Laughter.) I am not going to detain you any longer, because it is getting very late. There is just one point more. We heard one of the speakers saying that this had been called "one of the stages"—"the next stage of the proceedings,"—and this gentleman, whose speech I very much admired, and whose action I am sure we all very much approve, made one suggestion about the machinery. "Let us remove the machinery," he said, or something to that effect, and "let us sit down and be good friends." Now that

is a very good idea, but how are we going to answer for the behaviour of the "machinery" in future? (Laughter.) You see, unfortunately, the "machinery" is not inanimate in this case, it being represented by the living Executive Committee. If they are content to be put behind the stage, or to be put behind the scenes, and to act as our machines, as they really are—because that is, after all, what the Executive Committee is—if they are content to act as inanimate machines, to carry out the instructions of the governing body of the Association, the General Council, we will put them behind the scenes with very great pleasure, but if they are going to develop a will of their own, like Mrs. Jarley's Waxwork Figures, we shall have to see that they are kept in order. (Laughter and loud applause.)

Dr. BEZLY THORNE: Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, the addresses and speeches to which we have listened this evening have, many of them, been masterpieces. If we for a moment sweep aside the cobwebs which have been woven round this question, on this and other occasions, what are we confronted with? With a letter which is untrue —

Dr. BEDFORD FENWICK: No, no.

Dr. BEZLY THORNE: And which is injurious appears in a public paper. There is only one course open to the writer of such a letter when the untruth, the misrepresentation, and the injurious character of it is pointed out, and that is to withdraw it as publicly as it was made. (Cries of "Hear, hear.") Now, sir, I say it was a quibble of the very worst order to stand up in this room and to say that that letter has ever been withdrawn.

Dr. BEDFORD FENWICK: Nobody said so.

Dr. BEZLY THORNE: There was an absolutely incomprehensible footnote in the Journal, and not one in a thousand who read that footnote on taking up the journal would have had the slightest idea to what it referred. Therefore that letter has never been withdrawn. (Cries of "Nonsense.")

A MEMBER: Nobody ever said it had. (Laughter.)

Dr. BEZLY THORNE: Now it is represented that that letter was a complaint of the conduct of the Executive Committee, and in that letter the Executive Committee were arraigned before the bar of that journal and before the public. It was nothing of the kind. It was an attack on an individual, and that makes it all the more despicable that the attack was not withdrawn as openly and as fully as it was made. Now, it has been further represented that the answer which was sent by the honorary officers was a threat to erase the name of the writer of that letter from the record.

Dr. BEDFORD FENWICK: From the Register, you mean.

Dr. BEZLY THORNE: It is absolutely untrue that it was so, and it is inconceivable to me that anybody should have the hardihood to make such an assertion.

Dr. HUGH WOODS: It looks like it.

Dr. BEZLY THORNE: It looks very unlike it, and that was why I asked that the passage of the Bye-law relating to that should be read out. What the Charter and the Bye-laws ordain is that when the Executive Committee proceed, the first part of their proceedings shall be to inquire and give the person against whom, or in connection with whom, the proceedings are taken, the opportunity of full reply. (Hear, hear.) The only threat that was levelled against the writer of that letter was the threat, if you may so call it, that she should

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