

cerning the case, and great indignation was aroused when it was afterwards discovered that he was not a member of the Association, and that he had no legal right to have been present at the meeting; that, in fact, he had only been brought there in order to influence the Nurses to condemn one of their fellow workers. Sir James Crichton-Browne was in the Chair on that occasion and his partisan conduct elicited a well-deserved reproof from a perfectly unbiassed and unprejudiced member. The Resolution sent out all over the world, in Her Royal Highness' name, condemning a Nurse whose action had been justified by one of Her Majesty's Judges, was declared by Sir James Crichton-Browne to be carried by the Meeting, although he refused to take the customary step of counting the votes for, and against, the resolution.

There was, therefore, an excellent precedent for the proceedings which took place at the General Council Meeting on the 16th inst. Sir James Crichton-Browne, now, had a verdict against himself from a British jury, supported by the carefully considered decision of a Judge. But, once more, Her Royal Highness' name and position were invoked in defence of officials who had been unable to justify themselves in a Court of Law; and a vote of confidence was passed in Sir James Crichton-Browne, not only upon statements which were unsupported by proof, but, as our report shows, without permitting one word to be said on the opposite side.

These proceedings raise questions of national importance. Our revered Queen has, throughout her long and glorious reign, always shown the most scrupulous regard for her constitutional duties; and History will never be able to record an instance in which, by any act of hers, Englishmen were denied the most elementary justice, and were debarred from exercising their indisputable rights as British citizens. But members of the Royal Family are, from the very multiplicity of their public duties, compelled to trust to, and to be guided by, their advisers; and happily those advisers have always, hitherto, scrupulously respected the Royal dignity and position, and have never, for example, suggested that English Princes should descend into the mud of the public arena to shield any discomfited gladiator.

Such advice would be wrong enough if given with no ulterior motive. But if it were given with the object of shielding the adviser

himself, it would certainly deserve the severest reprobation as not only disloyal, but also cowardly; as an abuse of the trust reposed in him, and as exhibiting a selfish and total disregard of Royal prestige and dignity. In such a case the broad constitutional doctrine would undoubtedly be upheld by the public that "the king can do no wrong . . . if wrong be done, public opinion will justly impeach his ministers"; those who had betrayed their trust would receive the public condemnation which their conduct would undoubtedly deserve.

Those who advised that the meeting, last January, should be summoned to blacken the character of a Nurse who had defended herself successfully against official threats in a Court of Law, took upon themselves the grave responsibility of utilising the Association to traverse and over-ride the effect of the protection which one of Her Majesty's Judges had given to the Nurse. Those who advised the attempt made last week to whitewash a gentleman from a judicial decision and the verdict of a British jury, took upon themselves a similar responsibility. The former Resolution might have caused—as it was clearly intended to cause—irreparable injury to the Nurse. Fortunately, it did not do her the slightest harm. We imagine that the latter Resolution will prove equally futile.

The action taken in re-electing Sir James Crichton-Browne as a Vice-Chairman, in defiance of a provision of the Charter, was, moreover, distinctly out of order; and that, as soon as the meeting was over, it was recognised that an irregularity had been committed, is perfectly evident from the fact that summonses were immediately issued, calling a special meeting of the General Council, for the 23rd inst., "to confirm the election and if necessary to elect the" Vice-chairmen and Hon. Officers for the ensuing year. More conclusive proof of the irregularity of the proceedings on the 16th inst., and more ample justification for the solitary protest that was then made against them, could hardly have been expected, nor given. It will be generally felt that measures must be taken to prevent any recurrence of such deplorable proceedings in future.



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