

unite all qualified British Nurses in membership of a recognized profession; (2) To provide for them registration on terms satisfactory to physicians and surgeons, as evidence of their having received systematic training; (3) To associate them for their mutual help and protection, and for the advancement in every way of their professional work.

Trained nurses were then well aware, from personal experience, that, in order to protect the public from ignorant and unscrupulous persons posing as nurses, and also to effect many necessary reforms in our nursing schools, that reform would be best effected from within the profession, and upon the initiative of trained and experienced nurses. It was for this reason, therefore, that we formed ourselves into a society called the British Nurses' Association.

During the period in which I had a seat on the General Council, and Executive Committee of the Royal British Nurses' Association, from 1894 to 1895, I can testify that the conduct of business was both irregular and unjust. The views of the matrons were neither invited nor considered, and any expression of opinion advanced in the Executive Committee was ignored by the medical members, and unjustifiable personal attacks were made systematically by the medical members upon those ladies who had the courage of their opinions. This policy of insult culminated in 1895, when the then Hon. Secretary, Dr. Bezly Thorne, proposed to take advantage of an omission in the bye-laws, and deprive all the *ex-officio* Matrons of their seats on the General Council, the governing body of their own Association.

I was one of those matrons who signed a requisition, legally, and in order, according to the bye-laws of the Royal British Nurses' Association, demanding that a special general meeting should be called to alter the bye-law. The meeting so requisitioned, has never been summoned by the honorary officers and medical members of the Executive Committee.

I was also one of the twelve matrons selected to attend a conference, "without prejudice," convened by Mr. Pickering Pick, and consisting of twelve matrons who disapproved of the policy of the honorary officers, and medical members of the Executive Committee. At the conference, we dissentient matrons were absolutely promised, that if we would withdraw certain resolutions, which we proposed to bring before the Annual Meeting in July, 1895, all our grievances—and they were numerous—should be rectified immediately we re-assembled in October. The matrons withdrew their opposition, and the *ex-officio* matrons were removed from the Council, but, not one thing promised to us has been performed. I have no hesitation in saying that we were tricked and duped, and the policy from

that day to this of the honorary officers, has been, if possible, more autocratic and illegal than before. Since this disgraceful breach of faith with the matrons, I have refused to sit either upon the Executive Committee or the General Council, with the present honorary officers, and I am of opinion, that the tyranny now exercised over the nurse-members, by the honorary officers and present Executive Committee is a disgrace, both to the medical and nursing professions.

Owing to the economic dependence of matrons and nurses, I would earnestly appeal to the public to inquire into this matter, and to prevent the revision of the bye-laws, altering the constitution of our own Corporation, which the present honorary officers have suggested, and intend to bring before the Privy Council, and which deprive us of many important rights and privileges, which we enjoy under the present constitution.

The Royal British Nurses' Association, which was founded by nurses for the protection of the public, and for the improvement of the education and efficiency of nurses, is now being used to prevent nurses obtaining any professional control or independence by which they can help themselves. I would, therefore, lay stress upon the fact that I can testify from personal experience that matrons who dared to protest have been insulted, and that the principles for which we founded our Association have been repudiated by the honorary officers and their dependents now in power. I ask, therefore, that the press will give publicity to these complaints, and that the public will help matrons and nurses to throw off the official tyranny by which our once honoured Association is being disgraced.

Faithfully yours,

MIRIAM RIDLEY, Matron.

The Infirmary, Blackburn,

October 11th, 1897.

To the Chairman.

SIR,—I regret that I am unable to be present at the Meeting, in St. Martin's Hall, on Wednesday. I trust that if meetings are held in the North of England, I may be able to take part in a future one. I wish, however, to express my sympathy with the object for which you are meeting.

I am one of the older members of the Royal British Nurses' Association, and was on the Executive Council when real work was being done for the nursing profession, without so much of the officialism, and certainly without the rudeness, to which we have of late been obliged to submit.

Then we had, as we believed, permanently on the executive, ladies who from their long practical experience knew what were the pressing needs and hopes of nurses. Now, all our affairs are being managed for us by persons who are not members of the nursing profession, and who are, therefore, not qualified to represent us on the executive, and

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)