

they not specifically disproved? All that the Members' Rights Defence Committee is demanding is that the Privy Council shall insist upon the Honorary Officers disproving these accusations—if they can!

THE truth is, the members of the present Executive Committee *dare not face a public inquiry*, and we have told them so. So they are hurrying on the passing of the new Bye-laws, which, if sanctioned by the Privy Council, will, they hope, effectually "gag" the nurse members for ever and a day. Once again, we find ourselves at variance with these gentlemen. We have absolute faith in the natural law of evolution, and we are content to abide by its results.

### Legal Matters.

#### CHARGE OF MURDER AGAINST A NURSE.

THE body of a boy named Rees Brandish, aged two and a half years, has been discovered by the police in a garden attached to Drybank Farm, Ettington, near Stratford-on-Avon. The supposed mother, who is stated to be a nurse (a single woman), was arrested at Clent, near Stourbridge, on a charge of wilful murder and remanded in custody, pending inquiries by the police.

On Monday last, an inquest was held upon the body of the boy by Mr. Christopher, Coroner for South Warwickshire, when a large number of witnesses were examined. It was proved by one witness that the prisoner took the child to some people named Post, at Wye, near Ashford, when nine weeks' old, and it was maintained there for about two years and a half, during which time the prisoner, under various aliases, contributed five shillings per week for its support. This witness also proved that the prisoner fetched the child away on September 11th, leaving all its spare clothing behind.

Before starting, the prisoner purchased a tin trunk, which was put into the carriage with her. At Towcester she took an excess ticket for a second-class compartment, and entered an empty one; the boy was then with her. At Ettington Station the prisoner left the carriage with a large bundle under her arm, in addition to the box. The body of the boy, as has been stated, was found buried in her brother's garden, at Drybank Farm. From a letter found in the prisoner's pocket after her arrest, referring to her probable death, and asking for forgiveness, saying that whatever she had done wrong during her life had not been of her own seeking, it would appear that she contemplated suicide.

The inquiry was adjourned for a week, for an analysis to be made of the contents of the child's stomach.

### A Question of Discipline.

THE Camberwell Board of Guardians have unanimously decided to ignore the demand upon the part of the accused members of the nursing staff for fair play. This is deeply to be regretted because it means the beginning, not the end, of troubles in the nursing department of this institution. As one member of the staff wisely remarked, "I intend to clear out of this; I may be the next accused—and refused a hearing. Working women can't afford to have their characters tampered with in this hole and corner manner. Who reported our colleagues? that's what we want to know, and if we can't get an answer from the Board we must look out for work elsewhere before it is too late." The following letter was sent by the accused nurses to the Camberwell Board of Guardians:—

"November 10th, 1897.

"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—We, the undersigned nurses, were at the committee meeting of October 20th, 1897, called upon to resign on the grounds that we had been guilty of "unseemly conduct." As we understood that this merely referred to "cigarette smoking" in our bedrooms (a habit indulged in by the majority of the nursing staff) when off duty, and a fact which we do not deny, we complied with the committee's request. We have, however, since discovered from the Press reports of the Board meeting of October 27th that other and more serious charges were made against us, namely, "playing musical instruments at night to the detriment of the patients," also of holding supper parties in the ward kitchens while on duty. Had we been informed of this at the time we certainly should not have resigned as requested, as we emphatically deny that there is any truth in them. At the committee meeting of November 3rd we formally protested in writing, first, that the inquiry was unfair in that we were not informed (1) of the actual charges made against us; (2) by whom the charges were made; (3) and that we were allowed no opportunity of saying anything in self-defence; (4) that by the adoption by the Board of the committee's report we were effectually branded to the public as being guilty of these unproved charges. No notice being taken up to the present of our contradiction, we therefore appeal to the Board as a last resource, (a) that our letter of protest may be read at their full meeting; (b) that we be granted the right of clearing our reputations of these serious and unfounded calumnies.

"THE ACCUSED NURSES."

The Nurses have received the following reply from the Guardians:—

"Parish of St. Giles, Camberwell,

"Board of Guardians,

"Offices—Peckham Road, Camberwell, S.E.,

"C. S. STEVENS, Clerk. 12th November, 1897.

"Mr. Stevens is directed by the guardians to acknowledge receipt of Superintendent Night Nurse Carey and Nurses Adams and Smith's letter of the 10th instant, which was read at their meeting, held on that day, and no action taken thereon.

"Superintendent Night Nurse Carey,

"The Infirmary, Havit Street."

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)