

which had been laid before the Meeting with a view to their adoption, instituted an order of *ex-officio* matrons, who, in virtue of their office, would occupy permanent seats on the General Council. That matter had been taken into very serious consideration. At a meeting of the General Council, which was held on the 2nd November, 1891, Dr. Bedford Fenwick gave notice of a motion for the next meeting of the Council, that the suggestion with regard to the election of the Council, as approved by the Executive Committee, should be added to the regulations. The above proposed that one-third of the matrons and one-third of the sisters and nurses should retire annually by rotation and not be eligible for re-election until the following year. Then, at the General Council Meeting, held on 8th January, 1892, Dr. Bedford Fenwick proposed, and Mr. Barker seconded, that at least one-third of the matrons and at least one-third of the sisters and nurses on the General Council should retire annually by rotation, and should not be eligible for re-election until the following year, and it was carried.

Dr. BEDFORD FENWICK: That was only a Regulation.

Dr. BEZLY THORNE said it was in the sense of this vote of the General Council that the Bye-Laws submitted for the approval of the Privy Council were framed—(Loud cries of "No")—and it was in virtue of that, when the Bye-Law came into force with regard to certain matrons, that a discussion was raised as to the bearing of that Bye-Law. It was submitted to Mr. Muir MacKenzie, the Association's Standing Counsel, and he said that unquestionably that was the sense of the Bye-Law, the intention of the Bye-Law, and the effect of the Bye-Law. Those who were malcontent on the subject then wished the matter to be referred further, and Sir Richard Webster was consulted, and he expressed the same opinion. Not content with these two opinions a third was required, and Mr. Swinfen Eady, Q.C., was consulted, and he expressed the same opinion. I hold that the provision of triennial retirement was a good one. If it was to apply to any one section of the governing body, it should apply to all alike. Either there should be no triennial retirement on the General Council, or it should apply to everybody alike. He had watched the meetings of the Association for nearly ten years, and for more than three and a half years had been one of the Hon. Executive Officers of the Association, and had had exceptional opportunities of watching the workings of the Association. His opinion was that a permanent seat on the Executive Committee which was not subject to annual or triennial or any other revision placed individuals occupying that privileged position in a position of advantage as against those who did not occupy such positions. The Bye-Law now proposed, which constituted an order of *ex-officio* matrons, he ventured to say would place those ladies in a very invidious position, which would be in some respects a disadvantage to themselves (laughter), and certainly would involve the disparagement of matrons who did not enjoy the same privileges (Oh!) and would constitute on the General Council a body who, holding all the threads of business, would become a moral oligarchy who would be able to rule and control the proceedings of the General Council in virtue of their permanent office. But there was another reason why the constitution of an order of permanent *ex-officio* members of the Council was to be deprecated. Wherever they went in this country or in Scotland, or wherever they

went where this Corporation had members (cries of "very few now!") the complaint was that it was a London concern: (Hear, hear.) They said, "We have very little to do with it (hear, hear); we have no voice in its management (hear, hear); we gain no advantage from it." (Loud applause.)

Mrs. BEDFORD FENWICK: I should like those words taken down. (Applause.)

Dr. THORNE: Although the complaint was unreasonable, there was a colour about it which commended it to certain people, and that colour would be very much strengthened if they were to create an order of permanent *ex-officio* matrons on the Council (they were on for seven years) who could not attend if they lived in the country (laughter), and would attend if they lived in London, because the exceptional power to which he had alluded would eventually fall into the hands of those distinguished ladies who presided over a few London Hospitals. ("Has it done so?" and laughter.) In proposing these alterations, he had recognized the exceptional positions which these very distinguished ladies occupied in presiding over the nursing institutions of these very distinguished London Hospitals (oh!); he thought the position of these ladies should be recognized to the extent that they should occupy their position on the General Council in virtue of their office ("Why did you turn them off then?"), and that they should resume their positions without the ordeal of election. (Laughter.) In that way the distinguished position that they occupied would be recognized. (How?) It was inconceivable to him that any of these ladies, however exalted their position in the nursing profession might be, would feel it a grievance to be placed on a par with other matrons on the Council, in the matter of triennial retirement.

The Chairman asked if any one seconded the amendment.

Dr. HUGH WOODS said he would like to know definitely what the amendment was. He gathered that Dr. Thorne had proposed half-a-dozen, and more unbusinesslike proceedings he had never witnessed before. (Applause.)

Miss BREAY: It does not appear to me that there is any question of expediency or in expediency. It is simply a matter as to whether we are people of our word or not. (Applause.) The Association promised certain matrons seats on the General Council of the Royal British Nurses' Association; these ladies were turned out of those seats, and we are now asked to hand ourselves down to posterity as people who are willing to break our word if it seems expedient. If that is done I can only say I shall be ashamed to belong to the nurses of to-day. (Loud applause.)

Dr. BEDFORD FENWICK: Dr. Bezly Thorne has hardly treated this meeting with fairness, for he has withheld very important facts. He has talked to us about a Regulation passed by the General Council and pretended it was a Bye-Law. Dr. Bezly Thorne must be perfectly well aware—I take it for granted that he knows something of the affairs of the Association—that the Bye-Laws passed by the Association when it was founded, said that the *ex-officio* matrons—the matrons of the leading hospitals in the Kingdom—should have permanent seats upon the General Council. It stands in black and white and cannot be disputed, and Dr. Bezly Thorne knows perfectly well that the Regulation of the General Council to which he refers could not and did not over-ride the Bye-Law, and could not turn the ladies out of the

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