

1887, it was decided unanimously that, as a matter both of justice and of expediency, the influence of the Nurse Training Schools in the Metropolis should be recognised by giving their Matrons *ex-officio* seats upon the General Council and Executive Committee. The Association determined to have no lay members, but the Training Schools at that time were all-powerful in the Nursing world. Indeed, it is not too much to say that if the founders had not shown their evident desire to duly recognise the Training Schools—if, in short, they had not made a place upon the governing body of the Association to which these Schools could practically send a representative—by right of her office as their Matron—the Association would have speedily died of mere inanition. But the Bye-laws were so constructed, and the Schools were frankly approached, and offered this representation. Several of their lay Committees declared that they would not sanction any outside body which might interfere with their Schools, and their Matrons, therefore, held aloof—in some cases, only by compulsion—from the Association. About half of the Schools accepted the invitation, their authorities were satisfied, their Nurses joined by hundreds, and the Association grew by leaps and bounds. The Bye-law constituting the Executive Committee specified the *ex-officio* members separately; the Bye-law constituting the General Council added these ladies to that body by the words “*including the members of the Executive Committee.*”

This offer to the Schools was deliberately made, accepted by some, and honourably carried out, until after five years' struggle the Royal Charter was gained. Then the Bye-laws had to be re-cast, for confirmation by the Privy Council. It did not occur to anyone then to attempt to break through the old agreement, and the new Bye-law, in re-constituting the Executive Committee, even extended the principle, and offered *ex-officio* seats to a number of Provincial Hospitals, as well as to those Training Schools in London which had previously accepted such representation. But in re-drafting the Bye-law relating to the General Council, the seven words we have italicised above were omitted, by some oversight. It therefore became “ambiguous” whether the *ex-officio* members of the Executive Committee could remain perpetual members of the General Council as they had always previously been, or whether, like the other members, they must retire in rotation from that body, and so vacate the seats which they had been asked to take in virtue of their official positions in the Nursing world.

This “ambiguity” was discovered last October. At any time between October and April it could have been removed merely by a

Resolution of the Executive Committee, and then of the General Council, upon the matter. Instead of this simple procedure the opinions of three learned Counsel were taken, and it appears that they considered the bye-law relating to the retirement of the *ex-officio* members from the General Council “ambiguous,” and advised that it should therefore be altered. The Executive Committee did not act on this suggestion, but on February 28th a formal requisition was signed by sixty-nine members of the Association, and sent in due form to the Secretary, asking, in accordance with the bye-laws, that a Special General Meeting of the Corporation should be convened on March 22nd in order to alter the ambiguity in the bye-laws, and so prevent any possibility of the leading Nurse members and founders of the Association being removed from their seats on the General Council. The necessary alteration in the words of the Bye-law could have been made in five minutes by the members in General Meeting assembled.

We feel confident that the public will be surprised to learn what followed. The meeting thus requisitioned, as a matter of simple justice and right, WAS NOT CONVENED BY THE OFFICIALS. The opinion of an eminent Counsel was taken, and he stated that this neglect to give the members the meeting they had asked for, was a “DISTINCT VIOLATION OF THEIR RIGHTS.” No explanation of this infraction of the privileges conferred on the Corporation by Her Majesty's Privy Council has from that day to this been vouchsafed to the sixty-nine requisitionists. The Executive Committee, at its next meeting on April 5th, took no steps to repair the wrong which had been done, and consequently that evening a notice was sent in, to the Secretary, that the attention of the General Council would be called to the matter on the 19th inst. That notice was not placed upon the agenda of the Council meeting, and thus the matter could not be brought forward on that day; the excuse which was made being that, by a regulation, “fourteen days' notice” of a resolution must be given, and this particular notice was received “after office hours” on the 5th inst.

The result, however, of preventing the members from holding a meeting and altering the Bye-law to make it conform in words to the principle which had hitherto always prevailed, was that, at the adjourned meeting of the General Council held on May 10th, the Medical Hon. Secretary read out a list of 300 names, without one word of explanation, as those of members-nominated to serve upon the General Council for 1895-96. That list has now been issued to the members, and it is found that the names of those ladies who were practically the founders of the Association, who took their seats

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