



## Letters to the Editor.

Notes, Queries, &c.

*Whilst cordially inviting communications upon all subjects for these columns, we wish it to be distinctly understood that we do not IN ANY WAY hold ourselves responsible for the opinions expressed by our correspondents.*

### THE CONDUCT OF BUSINESS AT THE ROYAL BRITISH NURSES' ASSOCIATION.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

MADAM,—I am glad to find that members of the Royal British Nurses' Association will be able to see through the columns of the RECORD something of the method in which the Council meetings are conducted. During the time I have myself attended these meetings I have seen the conduct of them grow from bad to worse gradually, so that it is possible those who have allied themselves to the active clique who cause all this internal disunion and trouble, are not themselves alive to the outrageous disregard of order and procedure that prevails at these meetings. They have become accustomed to it.

To a casual observer there is something farcical in these meetings, but it must not be forgotten that during all the burlesque that goes on, innovations are started and precedents are admitted that strike at the very foundation of the Corporation, and unless resisted may tend to place the power of the Royal British Nurses' Association in the hands of a faction that will work against the best interests of the Nursing profession.

It happens, unfortunately, that medical men as a class and Nurses are not well versed in the conduct of public organisations, and hence do not appear to see the full danger of allowing a small active clique in the Executive to become the *Governing Body* of the Association, while the General Council is to simply meet and vote a stereotyped approval of what this clique has done.

Such a position for the General Council is manifestly absurd, yet because some of the Matrons and Nurses belonging to the Executive and the General Council have taken a stand against such a condition of things, a faction has been made to resist and oppose every step taken by those few who endeavour to uphold the Constitution of the Royal British Nurses' Association.

And the stakes at issue are lost sight of in the general confusion that prevails at these meetings and the farcical aspect they assume.

For the edification of those Nurses deeply interested but not able to be present at these meetings I should like to give a sketch of what I have always seen take place.

After the usual formalities, and the secretaries have read their Reports, some member makes a comment or asks a question relative to one or other of the Reports. The Chairman then rises and protests against any enquiry or comment relating to a paper read by a responsible official. A second member ventures to discuss the point; the Chairman stands up and shouts. A third person rises to a point of order and maintains

that the first speakers have a right to be heard. The Chairman again stands up and shouts—this time waving his arms—and rules the last speaker out of order, and in proof quotes an extract from the printed Bye-laws of the Charter (which appears nevertheless to have no reference whatever to the point at issue). Another member disputes the ruling of the Chair and shows the error.

Again the Chairman rises and shouts, and to clinch the matter, the legal adviser to the Corporation, who is in the background, is pushed forward, and looking very much as though he would like to get under the table, in a faltering voice and ambiguous terms supports the ruling of the Chair.

And with that curious superstition that English people have for anything called "law" the meeting gives in. The proceedings go on. A Nurse, perhaps, rises and moves a Resolution on the agenda. It is seconded and supported. The Chairman then rises, and in forcible language points out what he regards as the utter folly of the whole proceeding, which he declares is injurious or unnecessary, and has already been provided for and is, he is bound emphatically to say, against the Bye-laws and the Charter.

This last statement is too much for a medical man present who happens to have a copy of the Bye-laws in his hand, and he rises and with some indignation shows that the Chairman's interpretation of the Bye-law is entirely wrong.

The Chairman protests that his rendering of the explanation is right and all others wrong. One or two more members join in the debate, taking opposite sides, and the discussion waxes long and strong, not one of those debating having had the forethought to come accompanied by their solicitors.

Our legal adviser is again pushed forward, and in halting, hesitating sentences is understood to hold that so far as he can see the Chairman's rendering might be right.

The resolution is ruled out of order. The proceedings go on. One of the members moves an amendment to a resolution and speaks to it. The Chairman starts up and would shout him down, but this time the speaker also has good lungs and will not allow himself to be silenced. He finishes. His amendment is seconded and discussion ensues. Some are in favour, some not. The question as to whether it is in order is not yet decided. The Chairman asserts it is out of order. A medical man—a charming old gentleman whose multifarious duties in the country do not allow him time to get behind the scenes of the Royal British Nurses' Association, but who on general principles is on the side of law and order, gets up and amiably suggests that the dignity of the Chair must be upheld and the ruling allowed. Another old gentleman seeing that his colleague is a right-minded, well-meaning man, though he has a weak case, gets up and supports him. A young man, not unwilling to distinguish himself before his seniors in the profession, gets up and eloquently supports the last speakers. A fourth doctor, a man of middle age this time, not to be outdone by a fellow who was his junior in Hospital, gets up and brings to bear in favour of the Chair, all the arguments and subtle reasoning the last speaker had lost sight of.

The amendment is put to the meeting and is lost, and those four gentlemen, thoroughly conscientious and honourable so far as they can see, have unwittingly hammered another nail into the coffin of the Royal British Nurses' Association.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)