

some points in this case that may perhaps show the reason partly why you have been asked to meet us. Miss Barlow is a Nurse in the employment, I believe, of Mrs. Bedford Fenwick. She has not been very long a member of this Association. Some time ago she was registered as a Nurse, that is, she was put upon the Register, but it was not until June 7th of last year that her name came up for membership. She was duly elected, and you all know—those of you who have taken any pains at all to acquaint yourselves with the details of the case—that within a very short time indeed of her election a letter appeared in a public newspaper, signed by Miss Barlow, in which she made very serious reflections upon the management of this Association. ("No! No!") When that letter came to the notice of the Executive Committee—a Committee which is in fact the executive body of the whole Association, and the primary governing body of the whole Association, and which is bound to watch over and protect the interests of all the Association (hear, hear)—when that letter came to the notice of the Executive Committee, the Executive Committee considered it was an unjustifiable attack upon the management of their affairs.

Dr. BEDFORD FENWICK: I ask that that letter be read.

Mr. FARDON: It can be read. It will be read subsequently. If I may be allowed to proceed now with my part, perhaps Dr. Fenwick can make any observations on that afterwards. I am not going now into the question as to whether the complaint that was made was a reasonable complaint, or whether it was an unreasonable complaint—that is not the point. (VOICES: "Yes, yes; that is the very point.")

A MEMBER: Why did she write the letter? (Hear, hear.)

Mr. FARDON: What we say is this, that if any member of the Association, who is bound by the declaration she signs to obey its rules and regulations, and generally to promote its interests—if any member of the Association has a complaint, whether it is real or whether it is unreasonable, she is in honour to that Association bound first of all to bring that complaint before the Association, and not to publish it in a public newspaper, and so to bring discredit on the whole Association before the world. Very well, that is the first point which is contained in this resolution. It is her action in writing a letter to a public newspaper that we say is disloyal to the Association to which she belongs, and we also say that it was unjustifiable, because she had made no attempt to bring her grievance before the proper authorities, and to get her remedy within the Association. ("No, no," and applause.) You know what happened. The Committee, after due deliberation—they were specially summoned to consider this case—and they determined to deal with it under the disciplinary powers which are conferred upon them. Now there is a Bye-Law which has been the subject of a good deal of comment in these proceedings, which states that it shall be in the power of the Executive to summon before it any registered Nurse, whose conduct in their opinion it may be considered necessary to take some sort of notice of, or some sort of proceedings against; and also it gives them further powers that in the event of their considering it necessary, they may direct the name to be erased from the Register, subject—and that is the important point—always to the right of appeal of that registered Nurse to the whole

General Council of the Association. It was decided to summon this Nurse, under the powers conferred on the Executive Committee by that special clause.

Dr. BEDFORD FENWICK: I ask that that resolution be read.

Mr. FARDON: Afterwards. When this decision was arrived at, the honorary officers were instructed to inform Miss Barlow as to the decision they had come to. The honorary officers wrote to Miss Barlow a letter, and that letter has also been, it is unnecessary for me to say, the subject of very considerable comment. I am not going to comment upon it now, because plenty of opportunity will be given later on to comment on that. All that I want to say about that particular letter is this, that it was not that letter that caused the costs to be given against this Association. I hope that no one will be led away by the idea. ("Oh!") Whether that letter was written in accordance with the instructions of the Committee or whether it was not (A VOICE: "It was not,") is a matter between the Committee and its officers, but it is not the reason why the costs were given against this Association. The letter was perfectly legal; the lines it indicated were quite open to the Committee to proceed upon, and it would have been a quite right course for them to take. Further proceedings took place, and correspondence went on. There was a good deal of correspondence as to whether we intended to erase Miss Barlow's name from the Register, or whether we did not. At last we got a letter from the solicitors who were advising Miss Barlow. They said, "You must tell us yes or no whether or not you intend at the meeting you have called, to strike our client's name off the Register." (Cries of "Hear, hear.") No exception whatever could be taken to such a request. It was an absolutely reasonable one. There is no doubt the Nurse was entitled to know (hear, hear) when she attended the meeting. There is no doubt the Nurse was entitled to know whether or not we were going to proceed against her in view of striking her name off the Register, and if it was thought necessary or not. But just look at the way in which that notice was served upon us. It was served upon us at half-past eleven o'clock in the morning on the very day on which the meeting was being held at the Langham Hall—the Annual General Meeting, when all the officials were busy. The President was momentarily expected, and the business of the Committee had to be got through, and Miss Ravenhill, our Secretary, was suddenly served with this notice, saying that unless a reply was received by two o'clock—within two and a-half hours after serving the notice—an Injunction would be applied for. It was utterly impossible to summon a meeting at such short notice. (Why? and No!) Miss Ravenhill had no authority to give any reply, and nobody had any authority to give such a reply. We did the best we could; we went down at once, and without any delay at all consulted an eminent Counsel, Mr. Muir Mackenzie, who has acted as the honorary Counsel of this Association for a long time. He said: "I will do what I can; the time is very short," and he wrote a letter, and in that letter he stated that although he himself had no authority to give any definite answer to the question, he would undertake to attend the meeting, and would advise the Council to take no course which would be likely to prejudice Miss Barlow. He also said that he had very little doubt, and there is no

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)