

further instructed to state that the Executive Committee will be prepared to receive at their next meeting, which will be held on Friday, July 5th, at the above address, at 4.30 p.m., any oral or written statement which you may desire to offer. We are, madam, yours faithfully, Florence S. Craven, Nurse Hon. Secretary; W. Bezly Thorne, Medical Hon. Secretary; James Calvert, Hon. Treasurer. Miss Georgina E. Barlow." An official letter signed by the officials of the Association. Now, if that letter meant anything at all, it meant that the Executive Committee had decided to proceed against Miss Barlow in relation to her letter, in accordance with the powers conferred upon them for the erasure of names from the Register. There is no use quibbling about it; there cannot be two distinct meanings as to that. Now what happened? The Nurse was threatened with professional ruin. All the medical men who are present, know what erasure from the Medical Register means, and to Nurses who attach any value to their professional career erasure from their professional Register means the same thing. She was threatened with the erasure of her name, and she immediately felt, and her friends said, "You must protect yourself. You cannot defend yourself alone; you must place it in the hands of a solicitor. Her solicitors at once took it up, and at once wrote to the Executive Committee, saying the first step to be taken was to hold a special meeting, and asking them to be good enough to fix when that special meeting was to take place. I have seen the reply myself. The reply was that the special meeting would be held on July 26th—the special meeting under the bye-laws to decide on the erasure of her name. A considerable correspondence followed that; naturally enough the solicitors said Miss Barlow must be properly represented at that meeting, and the Executive Committee—or, at least, their official—wrote back to say, although proxies were allowed—although the Nurse might appear by proxy—there was no mention in the bye-law of "counsel," there was no mention of barristers in the bye-law; but Miss Barlow could attend the meeting—Miss Barlow could attend the meeting at which she was going to be judged—and then ask to appear by proxy! The solicitors merely replied that Counsel would represent Miss Barlow, and, imagining that the matter was settled, they prepared the defence, and drew up a number of facts showing that Miss Barlow was by no means the only Nurse deprived of a voting paper, and that her complaint was perfectly justified. In the correspondence, the solicitors were led to believe that the special meeting to consider the erasure of the Nurse's name was to be held on July 26th, but, finally, they received from Miss Barlow early in the week in which we are told the meeting was taking place—I believe it was on a Monday—a letter saying that the Executive Committee had been summoned to consider her letter in the NURSING RECORD, and at the same time they heard from others the exact terms in which this Committee had been summoned—that it was not a special meeting summoned to consider the erasure of her name, but to consider the letter in the NURSING RECORD—and saying not one single word about the erasure of her name. Upon that, the letter demanding an answer "yes" or "no" was written. Sir, I do not see how the solicitors could be expected to know that the Annual Meeting was about to take place. They required an answer, and they sent their letter asking yes or no

—were the steps threatened against the Nurse to be proceeded with or not? That is the simple question they asked, and, as the Judge said, it was a very right and proper question to ask. We have been told a piteous tale that the letter came just before the Annual Meeting. Why, so much the better. There the Executive Committee were all ready. They could have been brought together in five minutes; the question could have been put to them, "You all know about this, you know what we are going to do with the Nurse. Here is the lawyer's letter saying that the Nurse will appeal for protection to the Courts unless we give a definite answer to this simple question." It seems to me the answer could have been given at once, "We do not intend to proceed," or "We do," but no answer was sent. The Executive Committee sent to Mr. Muir Mackenzie. They found time to take that trouble; and they asked him to write a letter. Mr. Muir Mackenzie is an eminent Counsel, whose time is fully occupied, and he wrote a letter, which everybody recognises was written under great difficulties. Nobody disputes that; but the point is this, that that letter did not give the information which was asked for—that the solicitors were still left in doubt as to whether the Committee were going to proceed against the Nurse or not—in other words, she did not have fair play. (Loud applause.) Now, Sir, the solicitors had no option after that but to say to the Courts, "We ask you to protect this Nurse. This Executive Committee are not proceeding under the bye-laws. We ask for her protection"; and, on that ground, they applied to the Courts, and an injunction was granted. The Executive Committee then said nothing at all. They did not say, "We do not intend to proceed against the Nurse." They said nothing. The case went on and on over the Long Vacation. All the time Counsel had to be consulted, and the Nurse's expenses were mounting up. Finally, at the end of October, the affidavits were filed; and then it was found that Dr. James Calvert, who had signed this letter, and Dr. W. Bezly Thorne, who had signed this letter, stated in an affidavit that they had retired from their offices, and that they could not naturally be responsible any further for the doings of the Executive Committee. The persons who had signed this letter, who had brought about all the trouble, said that they could not be responsible any further. (Laughter.) The trial of the motion came before the Court; and, before it came on, an affidavit was filed by the Secretary, showing the original resolution—that they demanded an explanation and an apology—facts which had been kept entirely from the knowledge of the Nurse. So it was not till the end of October that she discovered the original resolution passed at the end of June. That was not English justice. (Loud applause.) The case came before the Judge; and the Committee pleaded through their Counsel, Mr. Buckley, that they "never intended to erase her name, or to hold any meeting to erase her name." They had threatened the Nurse to hold a meeting to erase her name—they had told the solicitors that July the 26th was the date upon which the meeting was to be held. They had led them all to believe that they were going to hold a meeting on the 26th of July; and this is their defence before the Judge. This is the Executive Committee of the Royal British Nurses' Association—empowered to take proceedings against any Nurse in this room—empowered to punish any Nurse in

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)