

come before the Executive Committee and explain and interpret what she meant. (Cries of "Hear, hear" and "No, no," and applause.) Mr. President, I am driven to one conclusion alone in the face of what has happened, and that is, that neither the Nurse nor those who stood behind her were prepared to face the inquiry.

Dr. BEDFORD FENWICK: They did face it.

Dr. BEZLY THORNE: It appears to me they raised these legal proceedings in order that, like the proverbial cuttlefish, they might retire from a false position in a cloud of sepia darkness. ("Nonsense.") I must refer to another matter, and that is, that it has been asserted that it has been the custom at the meetings of the General Council to stifle discussion. (Cries of "Hear, hear.") Now, let us look into the matter for one moment.

Dr. HUGH WOODS: Take the last meeting!

Dr. BEZLY THORNE: At the meeting last April a number of very grave charges were brought against the Executive Committee, and the Chairman then sitting in the chair. And the Council was summoned in order that all these matters having been taken into consideration a full reply might be given to those charges. Now, Sir, honour to whom honour is due; there was only one member of the party who brought these charges, who had the courage to appear, and that was Dr. Bedford Fenwick; the ladies to a woman stopped away. (Applause.)

A MEMBER: What a red herring. (Laughter.)

Dr. BEZLY THORNE: That is the way in which discussion is "stified," if you please. When an answer is brought to the accusations, which are received with frantic applause, the ladies who bring the accusations stay away on some flimsy pretext. Now, Sir, it has been said that all this is a "storm in a tea-cup," and it has been said that it is not a "storm in a tea-cup." If it is anything at all it is a clap of thunder in a storm which, as Mrs. Bedford Fenwick has informed us, has been going on for years. That is the real significance, and if any of the members of this Corporation now present who do not understand what has been the course of business in this Corporation, ask what it is, it is this, that there has been an endeavour—there has been a plot—to capture the government of the Association and when we are told that there is an autocracy in possession of the power of the Association, it appears to me that certain members of the Association have set themselves to defeat this attempt to capture the Association. (Cries of "Hear, hear.") That is what the Executive Committee are guilty of; that is the gravamen of the charge against them—and, Sir, that they stand up for the constitution of the Association. ("Oh!" and "No, no.") And now, Sir, there is one thing I regret to have to allude to. After having said that these proceedings to inquire into this matter and to give the Nurse in question an opportunity of answering, were initiated by the Executive Committee, Dr. Bedford Fenwick has permitted himself to taunt Dr. Calvert and myself with having retired, and he used the words—"The persons who brought about all the trouble."

Dr. BEDFORD FENWICK: Who signed the letter?

Dr. BEZLY THORNE: I say they are unworthy and unwarrantable insinuations. The honorary officers acted absolutely at the bidding of the Executive in the matter.

Dr. BEDFORD FENWICK: No.

Dr. BEZLY THORNE: How can anyone say "No" to that?

Dr. BEDFORD FENWICK: Read the Resolution and the letter sent to the Nurse.

Dr. BEZLY THORNE: The letter sent to the Nurse was taken down by dictation before the whole of the members of the Executive Committee, and those members who are here present will bear me out that that is the case; and I say for a person who was not present to dare to say that those officers in their official capacity as the voice of the Executive Committee are the persons who individually caused all the trouble, is a most unwarrantable and daring impertinence. (Laughter.)

Miss DE PLEDGE: Mr. Chairman, after hearing the remarks, very little remains for me to say, but as a Nurse member I should like to record how entirely I approve of the Resolution, and I desire to support it because it is a matter of discipline. It seems to me a matter of intense surprise and disappointment to find that certain ladies here, who were known as good disciplinarians in their time, should now take this matter in hand and go against all their early traditions. I deplore the attack which has been made on the Executive Committee. When it was said that it was during the past two years, that is false. I have known it during four or five years ("No"), and during all that time there has been an undercurrent of trouble going on ("No"), and therefore I must deplore that statement as disingenuous, misleading, and ungrateful to the present Executive Committee. I have nothing more to say now except to ask all Nurses who have the well-being of themselves at heart to vote in support of the Resolution of Her Royal Highness. And in support of everything a Nurse should be. (Loud cries of "Vote.")

The CHAIRMAN: No one can say that the discussion to-day has been stifled. We are quite prepared to go on as long as the meeting may desire. (Loud cries of "Vote.") But I do notice that a number of Nurses are leaving the meeting, and I am told that a great many are due at six o'clock, so that we might perhaps bring matters to a conclusion. Before the vote is taken, I have the commands of Her Royal Highness the President, who is unable to be present, to read a message from Her Royal Highness.

Miss POOLE: Mr. Chairman, I am the Matron of a Provincial Hospital. I am a Nurse member. I am one whose name stands in the Incorporation Clause of the Charter, and I regret to say that at the last Council Meeting I was forbidden from the Chair to speak; discussion was stifled in every way. I am a plain woman. I have no power of weaving wordy webs, but I do ask for our Nurses and myself the right on all occasions, if we find it necessary, to write to the NURSING RECORD (hear, hear), just as the doctors go to the *British Medical Journal*. Why should we be deprived of the right that everybody else claims? Why should it be said that we are wanting to spread the cuttlefish's darkness round because we object to injustice? Why should that be said? I claim justice, and I write in the NURSING RECORD, and I will at all times, when I think it is right to do so. (Loud applause.)

The CHAIRMAN: I have to read to you before the vote is taken, this message from Her Royal Highness the President, who is unable to be present to-day, and who, had she been present, would have delivered it in person. It is dated from Osborne, January 26th, and she says: "You are all aware of the grave matters which have for some months seriously threatened the best interests of our Association. As President, I

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)