

Charter, and had saved from its income sufficient to defray the great expenses thus incurred. Three years ago, the then treasurer, Dr. Bedford Fenwick, felt compelled to resign his office, on the ground that expenses were being incurred which the funds of the Association could not afford. His warning was disregarded, and a policy was inaugurated, for which the then honorary secretary, Dr. Bezly Thorne, must always be held responsible, and which comprised the removal of the founders of the Association from its governing body, ignoring the opinions of the nurses, and extravagantly using the funds intended for their benefit. The expenses of the Association were recklessly increased, and the protests of the matron members of the Executive Committee were persistently ignored. Then, Dr. Bezly Thorne discovered that, by an oversight which had been made in the Bye-laws of the Association, sanctioned by the Privy Council after the grant of the Royal Charter, the Matrons of the great Nurse Training Schools and others, who had founded the Association, and who had then been promised permanent seats upon the governing body of the Association, would be compelled to retire every third year, like other members of the Council. Dr. Bezly Thorne discussed this privately with his friends in October, 1894, but the Association was then absolutely destitute of funds. In the hope of remedying this, a Bazaar was impending, and without the help of the leading nurse members of the Association its success was impossible. It can, therefore, be easily understood why Dr. Bezly Thorne refrained from publicly disclosing his discovery until after the Bazaar was safely over, and the Association had been lifted for the time from its financial extremities. He then stated that, in the opinion of a certain Counsel whom he had consulted, the founders of the Association must not only retire from the General Council, but also from the Executive Committee.

A large number of members immediately demanded that the pledges of the Association given to these ladies should be honourably kept, and that the leaders of the nursing profession should remain permanently upon the General Council. They therefore requisitioned, in accordance with the Bye-laws, that a Special General Meeting of members should be held in order to remove any ambiguity from the Bye-laws, and thus enable the matrons to retain their seats. This requisition duly came

before the Executive Committee, in March, 1895; and our readers will remember that that meeting, guided by the Chairman, decided that the consideration of the requisition should be "postponed"—until it was too late to do anything. Counsel, who were consulted, held that the rights of the members, as defined by the Bye-laws, had been distinctly violated, and they advised that legal proceedings should at once be taken to compel the meeting in question to be duly called. But the members then believed that they were dealing with honourable men, and that any mistake which had been made would be corrected; and legal proceedings were not, therefore, taken.

The Meeting of members was not called, the Bye-Laws were not corrected; and in May, Dr. Bezly Thorne succeeded in having a Council List sent out, from which the names of the founders of, and the leading nurses of, the Association were excluded. There were some, who supported Dr. Thorne, who so little realised the plan of campaign that they asserted publicly that the matrons were only removed in accordance with the Bye-laws, and that their names would undoubtedly be replaced the following year. But the greatest indignation was felt amongst many nurse members at the grave breach of faith which had been committed; and it was determined that public attention should be called to the matter at the Annual Meeting of the Association to be held in July, 1895. It was certain that the public would disapprove of the nurses being thus tricked and jockeyed in their own Association, and that the members would condemn those who had acted in such a manner. But the next move was that twelve of the leading matrons were asked to meet certain medical men "in friendly conference;" and at this meeting, it was definitely promised to the ladies present that if they would only allow the proceedings at the Annual Meeting to pass off quietly, all their complaints should be remedied. These ladies—still believing that they were dealing with honourable men—consented to this, and so used their influence that the Annual Meeting of 1895 passed off without one word of comment. *But the promises made to them were then absolutely repudiated, and not one has been fulfilled from that day to this.*

Having thus removed the leaders from the governing body, the officials attempted to intimidate the rank and file. A letter appeared in this journal from a nurse who complained

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)