

THE ROYAL BRITISH NURSES ASSOCIATION.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

MADAM,—We, the undersigned Hospital Matrons, deeply regret to be compelled, in justice to the Nursing Profession, to protest publicly against the very serious mismanagement of the Royal British Nurses' Association. We only take this step, because every effort, during the last two years, to obtain justice and fair play within the Association has failed, and because we have reason to believe that an effort is now about to be made to completely alter the constitution of the Association by means of new Bye-laws, which the officials have drawn up, without consulting the members, and which they have even prevented the Executive Committee from discussing.

We protest against the fact that the Association is practically controlled by five medical men, with the assistance of a number of their subordinates and the Nurses who are dependent upon them at the Middlesex Hospital. We disapprove of a National and Chartered Corporation of Nurses, being thus governed by the officials of one small General Hospital.

In the last two years, the Executive Committee have spent £1,300 more than the assured income of the Association, while nothing is being done for the Nurses, for whose benefit the Association was founded. The Association is a professional body, composed for the most part of self-respecting women, and we maintain that it should not be dependent upon charitable assistance—as it is now being made—to defray its working expenses. It was, for the first five years, more than self-supporting, and we consider that its present financial position reflects the gravest discredit upon the officials.

We protest against the fact that the founders of the Association, who were originally promised permanent seats on the General Council, have been deprived of those seats by methods which we cannot characterise. We consider that the honour of the Association is involved in this breach of faith, and that the officials have brought great discredit upon the Association by breaking its pledges.

We earnestly protest against the persistent efforts which have been, and are being, made to take all power and even all voice, in the management of the Nurses' Association, out of the hands of the Matrons.

We protest against the manner in which the members have frequently been denied liberty of speech and criticism at the Meetings of the General Council; and in which, at the Annual Meeting last year, a Resolution condemning the officials was suppressed by the Chairman on the plea—which proved to be unfounded—that the Resolution had not been sent to the Secretary in a registered envelope.

We protest against the manner in which the officials have violated the Charter and Bye-laws—especially in refusing to call the special General Meeting requisitioned in March, 1895—and thus prevented the members from exercising the rights conferred upon them under the Charter.

We protest against the Journal of the Association, which is maintained by the members' subscriptions, being used by the officials to publish personal attacks upon the members who disagree with their methods of management. We cannot consider it honourable that, when members, thus attacked, write letters to the Journal in their own defence, the officials should suppress those letters, and should thus mislead the Association into believing that the attacks are true and unanswerable.

With the deepest regret, we have been forced to the conclusion that the only means of obtaining, for the Nurses, fair play and freedom in their own Association, and of saving the Association from the ruin which is undoubtedly being brought upon it, is that a public inquiry should be held into the above and other matters, which vitally affect the interests of the Nursing Profession, and of the public at large.

(Signed)

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(Late Matron of St. Bartholomew's Hospital).
MIRIAM RIDLEY.
SOPHIA GEORGINA WINGFIELD
(Late Matron, County Hospital, Ayr, and of the
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EUPHEMIA ROSS.
ELLEN WARRENER.
ELIZA J. CARTWRIGHT.
MARGARET BREAY
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