

sition to, and all criticism of, the officials was stifled and suppressed; that the best class of nurses were not joining the Association, and large numbers of members were refusing to pay their subscriptions and so support the present management; and that, in fact, both the Association and its work were being rapidly ruined by the half-dozen officials who had usurped absolute control over its affairs. A public inquiry was demanded into the truth of these charges, and this has been reiterated by more than one Public Meeting since, but the officials have conspicuously refrained from seeking for any kind of inquest into the serious charges brought against them—a remarkable reluctance, which is capable of only one explanation—that they cannot disprove their alleged mismanagement.

On the other hand, they have actually taken steps to prove the truth of these charges. Last June, they brought before the Executive Committee of the Association an entirely new set of Bye-Laws, which completely alter the constitution, which has worked satisfactorily since the Association was founded; ten years ago. They refused to allow the Executive Committee to discuss these Bye-Laws in June or early in July, when all the members of that body would have been able to attend, but held meetings for the purpose at the end of July and in August, when it was impossible for some to be present. They did not bring the Bye-Laws before the Annual Meeting of Members in July, when many members could have been there, but have called a Special Meeting a week before Christmas, knowing, of course, that it is absolutely impossible for large numbers of provincial members, and especially Hospital Matrons, to come to London at such a time. The deliberate duplicity of such tactics is almost incredible.

We now draw the attention of our readers to the new Bye-Laws proposed by the officials. Some of these go distinctly beyond the provisions of the Charter, and will, doubtless, therefore, be refused the sanction of the Privy Council, even though they be accepted by the General Meeting. But it only needs a slight comparison of the new Bye-Laws with the old to see how serious their effects would be, and that, in fact, the direct object of the former is to give absolute authority and control over the members into the hands of the half-dozen officials—already accused of the gravest mismanagement. For example, in the old Bye-Laws the members were given the

power of *selecting* the General Council, or governing body of the Association, by means of voting papers sent to every member. By the new Bye-Laws, that important right is taken from the members, and the method of selection is left entirely vague and doubtful. But as, under the Charter, the election of the Council must take place at the Annual Meeting, the nomination of the Council must obviously rest in the hands of the officials, as they would be the only persons who would be aware of the names of those whose turn it would be to retire, and of those who would be eligible for election in their places. The General Council then would be the nominees of the officials; and the numbers of the Council are greatly reduced by another Bye-Law, with the evident intention of rendering that body more amenable to control than at present.

One hundred doctors, for instance, might contain a number who would dispute the officials' authority. So, in future, there are only to be thirty medical men. This is clearly wise and prudent.

To take another example: the Executive Committee has hitherto consisted of a number of *ex-officio* matrons who were beyond the dictation of the officials, and were, therefore, a permanent safeguard of the rights of the nurses. That was most inconvenient to the officials, and they therefore propose that the Association should now break the promises it gave to these matrons ten years ago, and remove them all from the Executive Committee, leaving only ten medical men, ten matrons, and ten nurses, all of whom would, of course, be the nominees of the officials. In the old Bye-Laws, and in the Charter, it is provided that the elected members of the Executive Committee should retire each year in rotation. The officials actually propose that their nominees should be eligible for perpetual re-election—in other words, that the Executive Committee shall become a small permanent clique chosen by, and practically under the complete control of, the half-dozen officials, and, therefore, existing solely for the purpose of confirming any proceedings which may be taken by the officials. Such a proposition is unprecedented in any public Institution of which we have ever heard.

The officials finally propose that any infractions of the Charter, Bye-Laws, or Regulations, which they may choose to commit shall be considered valid unless they

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