

please, that one of the functions of this Association is to keep a Register of such persons as in the opinion of the Corporation are fit to be considered as nurses and fit to be entered upon this list as qualified nurses, and it is by no means an essential part of that qualification that they should be Members of the Royal British Nurses' Association. I think that there has been a little confusion on that point, and Dr. Biernacki, I notice, in one of the paragraphs of his amendment states that the Executive Committee shall keep a Register of such nurses as are Members of the Corporation. Well, of course, that is always done. There is a list of Members of the Corporation, there is a Register of Members of the Corporation, and always has been, ever since the Corporation was started. Well, then, with regard to the other qualifications that he wishes. He puts down "any duly qualified medical practitioner." In that we are in agreement. And then, "any person who is or has been a matron, or superintendent, or sister at any hospital, if the evidence of her training is satisfactory to the Executive Committee." Now, I just wish to point out this, that the Corporation always has, and it always will, continue to lay down very definitely indeed, the Rules and Regulations which shall qualify a nurse to be a Member of this Corporation, and the consideration of those Regulations is not a point we are likely to surrender. We shall continue to hold that we are entitled to renew from time to time the qualifications that we consider necessary to impose upon those nurses who may be candidates for membership of this Association. I really fail to see the necessity for adopting Dr. Biernacki's amendment to these Bye-Laws or deleting those which have been already proposed. I cannot see that he has proposed anything which is really in principle contrary to that which already has been placed before you in these draft Bye-Laws, and, therefore, I do not see why we should alter them. (Applause and expressions of dissent.)

Dr. WOODS said he did not wish to waste the time of the Meeting, but after Mr. Fardon's statement that there was no essential difference between Dr. Biernacki's amendment and the proposed new Bye-Law he must point out that a vital difference existed—the difference was, whether the nurses should have the power of defining who their associates should be or that the Executive Committee should do so.

Mrs. BEDFORD FENWICK said: The question has been discussed in the Executive Committee, although not in a sufficient manner. Mr. Fardon has stated that there was no difference, but Dr. Hugh Woods has pointed out to us the vital difference between the two, viz., whether trained nurses should have the right to define who is a trained nurse, or whether that should be done for them by a small elected body. (Applause.) I would draw the attention of the Corporation to the fact that there still stands on the minutes of the Council a Resolution, suggested by Dr. Outterson Wood, and embodied in a Report brought forward by a Sub-Committee, proposing to place upon our Register of Trained Nurses, persons who had received training only in Lunatic Asylums or Hospitals for the Insane, containing not less than forty beds. It said with regard to these persons—excellent workers in their own sphere, no doubt—"They shall be subject to the same rules and regulations as other nurses, and have the same status in the Association." What did that word "status" mean? It meant that any person who had had a little experience as an attendant in a Lunatic

Asylum was to be empowered by this great Corporation of trained nurses to pretend to the public that as a Member of the Royal British Nurses' Association, she was entitled to call herself, and to work as, a thoroughly trained nurse. (Shame.)

The CHAIRMAN ruled that the discussion was irrelevant. The question before the Meeting was as to the power of the Executive Committee to recognize the qualifications of nurses, or whether that was to be done by the whole body of the Association.

Mrs. BEDFORD FENWICK, continuing, said the question before the Meeting was whether the power of defining who was a trained nurse should be relegated to the Executive Committee, in whom, she regretted to say, as one of them, she had very little confidence (hear, hear, and laughter), or whether the Corporation of trained nurses should be permitted to define that most important principle for themselves. It was a question whether their legal interests, their status, and their course of education as professional women, should be in the hands of a small and quite unrepresentative clique, or whether they should retain the right to express their own opinions on such vitally important matters. (Applause.)

The CHAIRMAN then put the amendment to the Meeting, and declared it to be lost. The numbers were evidently nearly equal, and Dr. Bedford Fenwick demanding that the numbers of those who voted should be taken down, the Meeting became uproarious, hissing being freely indulged in, and the Chairman declined to count the numbers. Dr. Biernacki expressed himself as satisfied with the Chairman's ruling. (Loud applause.)

Dr. BEZLY THORNE moved that Clause 9 of Bye-Law 15, and also Clause 11 of the same Bye-Law, be omitted. (Dr. Hugh Woods here rose to order and protested that only one amendment could be taken at a time, but was over-ruled.) Continuing, Dr. Bezly Thorne said he grouped both amendments together, because if taken separately they would scarcely convey any meaning, as they both referred to the same point. That Clause 11 of the same Bye-Law which commenced with the words "thirty shall be past matrons or superintendents of nurses"—

[Here Dr. Thorne became quite inaudible, and it was impossible to follow his words.] That the last sentence of Bye-Law 18, which commenced with the words "a retiring Member," should run, "the matrons and superintendents of nurses of hospitals and other institutions, which for the time being shall be on the list to be kept pursuant to Bye-Law 25 as amended, shall resume their seats in the General Council after the following Annual Meeting; other retiring Members will be eligible for re-election at the following Annual Ballot," That Bye-Law 25 should be as follows: "The General Council shall keep, and annually revise a list of the hospitals, infirmaries, and other institutions, which in the opinion of the General Council are for the time being of sufficient importance to entitle the matrons or superintendents of nurses thereof for the time being, to occupy and to resume after retirement in rotation, pursuant to Bye-Law 18, seats in the General Council in virtue of their office and without election.

Dr. HUGH WOODS: What is the meaning of all this mass of stuff? I cannot follow it at all.

The CHAIRMAN ruled that the various points were closely connected.

Dr. BEZLY THORNE said he would explain exactly what these alterations would involve. The Bye-Laws

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)