

STATEMENT READ BY THE MEDICAL HON. SECRETARY, AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ROYAL BRITISH NURSES' ASSOCIATION, THURSDAY, JULY 22ND, 1897.

Certain statements having recently appeared in the Press reflecting on the management of the Association, it is thought desirable in the interests of the Association to reply to the general body of the members to the allegations and charges contained chiefly in a Protest emanating from the Central Council of the I.M.P.A., signed by the president and secretary of that body, and two other documents signed by matrons and nurses.

The charges are many of them couched in vague and intemperate language, which renders it difficult to deal with them, but, so far as they are definite and distinct, they may be stated as follows:—

1. That, in 1895, the officials, by a quibble, removed certain matrons from the General Council.
2. That effect has not been given by the Executive Committee to promises alleged to have been made by certain members in their private capacity.
3. The action of the Executive Committee with regard to Miss Barlow.
4. That the Association has for the last three years been mismanaged, its expenditure being allowed to largely exceed its reliable income.
5. That the Association is practically controlled by five medical men. That opposition and criticism are stifled, and free discussion is not allowed.
6. That the General Council is packed with nurses from the Middlesex Hospital and the Chelsea Workhouse Infirmary, and that the officials have thus prepared for themselves a majority which is practically compelled to adopt any proposals they may choose to make, and that the paid servants of a public institution are employed by their superior officers for the fulfilment of private ends.
7. That new Bye-laws had been drawn up by the officials without consulting the members, and which they had even prevented the Executive Committee from discussing.
8. That the journal of the Association is used by the officials to publish personal attacks against their opponents, and that letters written to the journal in defence are suppressed.

It is proposed to deal with these allegations *seriatim*.

1. That in 1895 the officials by a quibble removed certain matrons from the General Council.

1. Until 1895 it was thought that the Bye-law conferring *ex officio* seats upon certain nurse members applied to the General Council as well as the Executive Committee, but doubts having arisen upon the subject, the opinion of counsel was obtained, and the following epitomises the opinion of Sir Richard Webster, Q.C., M.P., Her Majesty's present Attorney-General, and of Mr. Swinfen Eady, Q.C.:—"The members of the General Council, with the exception of the president, patron, and vice-president, are elected only for one year. The Bye-laws make it compulsory that one-third of the matrons, sisters, and nurses shall retire annually, and shall not be eligible for re-election for one year."

It was thus seen to be legally impossible that these matrons should retain permanent seats upon the Council under the present Bye-laws, and it was determined that the Bye-laws should be reconsidered. This has been a work of very considerable difficulty, and involving much time, but the sub-committee have now presented their report, and, should it eventually be accepted by the Corporation, it will be found that provision is made for conferring a very large number of *ex officio* seats on the Council upon the matrons of important institutions.

2. That effect has not been given by the Executive Committee to promises alleged to have been made by certain members in their private capacity.

2. With regard to an informal meeting that took place between certain members of the Association in their private capacity, it was not a meeting that was authorised or called by the executive, and, in fact, it took place without the cognisance of many members of the Executive Committee; its decision, therefore, could not be binding upon that body. So far as can be gathered from the recollection of those who were present at the meeting, the only understanding arrived at was that the Bye-laws should be altered so as to admit of a number of *ex officio* seats being given on the General Council to matrons of important institutions, and this provision is contained in the report now before the Executive Committee.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)