

Royal British Nurses' Association.

THE NEW BYE-LAWS.

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EXISTING BYE-LAWS.

SECTION F.

The Executive Committee.

1.—The Executive Committee shall be chosen from Members of the General Council, and shall consist of the following *ex-officio* members, subject to their consent to act: the President, the Vice-Chairmen, the Treasurer and the Hon. Secretaries; the Presidents for the time being of the British Medical Association, and of the Medical Practitioners' Association, the Matrons of such General Hospitals of the Metropolis to which recognized Medical Schools are attached, and of such Hospitals in the rest of the United Kingdom which contain more than 200 beds, as maintain the three years' standard of nurses' training; the heads of the Navy and Army Nursing Departments, and the senior Lady Superintendent of the Indian Army Nursing Service; and Mrs. Bedford Fenwick; and of the following thirty *elected* members, viz., four Physicians; four Surgeons; six General Medical Practitioners and six Lecturers to Nurses at the previously specified General Hospitals of the Metropolis and United Kingdom; four Matrons of Special or General Hospitals to which Medical Schools are not attached; four Matrons of the Poor Law Infirmaries of the United Kingdom which maintain the three years' standard of nurses' training; one Sister in charge of a Ward at a Metropolitan Hospital; and one Lady Superintendent of District Nurses.

2.—The elected Members of the Executive Committee shall be appointed by the General Council at the October meeting in every year. At least one-third of the Nursing, and one-third of the Medical, members shall retire annually by rotation, and shall not be eligible for re-election until the following year.

A complete change is proposed in the constitution of the actual governing Body of the Association. All the leaders of the Nursing profession—the Matrons of the great Hospitals of the United Kingdom—who were promised *ex-officio* seats when the Association was founded, and whose influence it is essential that the Association should secure if it is to be really representative of the profession and attract the best class of Nurses to its membership, are deprived of their seats on the Executive Committee. Putting aside the breach of faith with the leading Nurses, the loss of their interest and influence means the inevitable decadence and ruin of the Association. Already, its numbers are rapidly decreasing. If this breach of faith be sanctioned, hundreds of the best Nurses will almost certainly resign, and others will not take their places. Furthermore, the officials propose to take away the *ex-officio* seats on the Committee provided for the Presidents of the two largest Medical Associations in this country. Such a seat was formally promised to the Medical Practitioners' Association and accepted by that body. Such a breach of faith with the medical profession is most repugnant to all the Nurse Members who have been made aware of the proposal. When the Association was founded in 1887, by Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, it was determined by the first General Meeting of Members that, in gratitude, her name should be placed in the Bye-Laws as a permanent Member of the Executive Committee, and it was unanimously replaced in the existing Bye-Laws sanctioned by the Privy Council in 1893. It is beyond dispute that the Association was built up and gained its Charter largely through her work and efforts on its behalf. And the suggestion to remove her name also from the Bye-Laws is a further breach of faith, which, even for its ingratitude, will, when it becomes known, undoubtedly cast the greatest disrepute upon the Association.

Finally, it is noteworthy that the Executive Committee is made a small body, entirely unrepresentative of any interest, class, or body of nurses or medical men—practically the mere nominees of the officials—and above all, eligible for perpetual re-election, and therefore a permanent small clique, existing solely to carry out the directions of the Honorary Officers. It is submitted that this latter provision is also contrary to the Charter which provides that the members of the Executive Committee "shall retire therefrom in such rotation" as the Bye-Laws shall prescribe.

PROPOSED NEW BYE-LAWS.

XX.—The Executive Committee shall consist of Ex-officio Members and Elected Members.

The Ex-officio Members shall be:—

The President.

The Honorary Officers.

The Elected Members shall be Thirty in number, and shall be elected annually by the General Council at the first Meeting of the General Council after the Annual General Meeting of the Corporation.

Retiring Members shall be eligible for re-election. Of the Elected Members—

Ten shall be duly qualified Medical Practitioners as defined by the Medical Acts.

Ten shall be present or past Matrons or Superintendents of Nurses.

Ten shall be Sisters or Nurses.

A person shall not be eligible to be an Elected Member who is not an Ex-officio or Elected Member of the General Council.

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