

mittee had done, in attempting to suppress it, it ought to be questioned. She thought the subscribers should be memorialized, and the facts placed before them.

Other speakers warmly supported the Resolution, one pointing out the incongruity of the situation in a country where even Nihilists and Anarchists were permitted freedom of speech, so dearly was the privilege prized.

One speaker caused some amusement by suggesting that the Committee should make a schedule of "controversial" questions—revising it from time to time as occasion for suppression might require!

Before putting the Resolution to the meeting, the President said they must realise that, in opposing the reactionary policy now adopted by the Committee of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, they were opposing the inglorious anti-registration policy of the Central Hospital Council for London, which sat in secret and spun its webs for the subjugation of nurses. This affront offered to its Nursing Staff could not be limited to them alone. It was the result of a line of action long determined and which crystallised in the appointment of a Matron whose professional opinions were ascertained to be in direct opposition to the conscientious convictions held and expressed by the Nursing Staff which she was appointed to control. Never had there been evidence of a more cruel use of power by any hospital committee of men, over a body of professional women under their jurisdiction. Such arbitrary use of power brought its own revenges, and in prosecuting this policy the Committee of St. Bartholomew's Hospital had aroused a burning sense of indignation in those nurses certificated in their school, and now free from their jurisdiction, and amongst their friends, which she had no doubt would provide the motive power to drive forward with irresistible energy the demand of trained nurses for registration and State protection.

So shocked was one Member of Parliament on learning of the denial of free speech at Bart's, that, unsolicited, he interviewed several members of the Cabinet on the question, and was astounded to find that no Government Department had any authority over, or power to deal with, the authorities of the voluntary charities.

The governors of these charities were above and beyond the law in relation to their employees. The futility of any protest from voteless women bound by a one-sided contract in the service of a male autocracy might be imagined. The voluntary hospitals were no longer merely

charities for the relief of suffering, but huge business concerns employing in many instances very cheap labour for profit—and this latest ukase at Bart's was proof of how they might be treated without power of appeal. She claimed that if such intolerance were possible in the premier royal hospital in the Empire, it was high time public opinion was roused to make it impossible. It was imperative that an Act of Parliament organizing the profession of nursing, and protecting the worker and the patient, should be placed upon the Statute Book at the earliest possible date.

Mrs. Fenwick concluded: "We are here today to claim the right of every nurse who is a British subject to such freedom of conscience and speech inside every public institution in our land, as men have claimed and possess, in their relation to the body politic, and which it is their duty to possess and to exercise.

"We specially claim that that resolution which now disgraces the records of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, forbidding discussion to the Nursing Staff within the gates on all "controversial" questions, be expunged by the Governors as tyrannical in intent and immoral in effect. It places the Nursing Staff in an undignified and intolerable position, and is moreover an insult not only to the profession of nursing, but to womanhood at large."

Mrs. Fenwick's speech was acclaimed with loud applause, and upon putting the resolution to the meeting, the request was made that the record be taken by an uprising vote, whereupon all present arose and carried the resolution unanimously and with enthusiasm.

#### ELECTION OF NEW MEMBERS.

Forty-five new members were then elected, and it was agreed, for their protection, that their names and certificates be not published in the BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING, the official organ of the Society.

MARGARET BREAY, *Hon. Secretary.*

#### THE POOR LAW INFIRMARY MATRONS' ASSOCIATION.

The quarterly meeting of the Poor Law Infirmary Matrons' Association was held, by kind permission of Miss Cockrell, at the St. Marylebone Infirmary on January 25th.

The principal business of this meeting was the drafting of the new rules of the Association. Questions had been sent in by some of the members which led to interesting discussion.

We wonder if any of those questions were "controversial"!

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