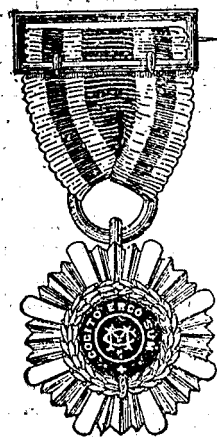


## The Matrons' Council.



The first Conference of the present Session of the Matrons' Council was held on Thursday, November 2nd, at the charming rooms at 431, Oxford Street, of which the Council has obtained the use. It was a record meeting.

Miss Isla Stewart's paper on the "Twentieth Century Matron" attracted a large number of members, in spite of the inclement weather, and every seat in the closely-packed room was full right into the doorway.

The chair was taken by Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, who, after calling on the Hon. Secretary to read telegrams, and report a large number of letters from members who regretted being unable to attend the Conference, said that it was quite unnecessary for her to perform the usual duty of a chairman and introduce the speaker to the meeting. Miss Isla Stewart was practically the founder of the Council, from its inception she had been its most loyal President, and had taken a leading part in its work. She was sure that everyone present would be delighted to hear a paper on the Twentieth Century Matron from one who had held a Matron's position for twenty years, and who had lived through a most interesting period of nursing history.

Miss Mollett, who was the Matron of an important County Hospital, would open the discussion, and she hoped that a free and open debate would follow.

Before calling on Miss Stewart, the Chairman said that those assembled there that night as guests were aware that the custom of the Matrons' Council was not to invite the press to these informal Conferences, as, naturally, such publicity would curb the expression of professional opinion, which it was desired to elicit, if it were felt that every word spoken might be misinterpreted by irresponsible persons. The Hon. Officers were empowered by the regulations to edit any report which it was thought desirable to send to our official organ. Miss Isla Stewart then rose to read her paper amid warm applause.

At its close Miss Mollett, who opened the discussion, which it is hoped will appear next week, said that she felt proud and honoured to be the first to thank Miss Stewart for the fine paper she had read that night.

MARGARET BREAY,  
Hon. Secretary, Matrons' Council.

## THE TWENTIETH CENTURY MATRON.

By Miss ISLA STEWART, President.

"And He said unto me, Son of Man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee."

Ladies,—It is with some misgiving that I stand here to-night to speak of the twentieth century Matron to so many Matrons who have so much more right to the title than I can ever have. All the actual practical nursing I ever did was in the early eighties, and more than half the time that I have been Matron was in the nineteenth century. The twentieth century will still be young when my work is over. It would, therefore, have become me better, I think, had I merely told you of the Matrons of the last century, and endeavoured to amuse you with playful reminiscences. Moreover, it is an age dedicated to youth—to youth which knows itself to be wiser than its elders, and knows also the uselessness of experience. Truth to tell, I am almost as great a believer in youth as youth itself—that is, when it is full of enthusiasms and ideals. I can forgive it so much, and am so willing to help it, but with youth without delusions, enthusiasms or ideals, I have nothing to do; for it I have neither pardon nor help, and, alas! this disillusioned, unenthusiastic youth, with no ideals and only a hard, practical, not very extensive knowledge of the world, is only too common.

Looking back over nearly twenty-one years of Matron's duties, what I see most plainly are the brick walls I so often and so vainly knocked my head against. I often wonder if the Matrons of to-day are knocking their heads against the same old brick walls, or if they have built modern ones for themselves. Of this, however, I am sure, the walls are there, whether the same or of more modern construction, and the Matrons' heads are still knocking against them, for however clever and youthful the new Matron may be, it is only old experience who will kindly and severely take her by the hand and lead her round those awful obstacles.

When I first knew Matrons they stood, or seemed to stand, on quite a different platform to what they do to-day. This, of course, may be my different point of view, for then I gazed from a distance, now I look from inside. I remember seeing my father talking to Mrs. Wardroper at St. Thomas's. To me my father was a great man, who was loved and obeyed with great respect, and not to be approached rashly, and yet I wondered at his composure, and I doubt if I would have been prouder if he had conversed with the Queen herself. We believed that Mrs. Wardroper was all powerful, and as far as we were concerned, I believe she was, but we never dreamed of a limit of power, and a restraining Committee would have appeared an impossibility.

The Matrons of those days were hard, stern women who had few weaknesses, though they were open to the flattery of fear. They ruled well with an iron hand, and there was no pretence of a

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