

## The Status of Metropolitan Asylums Board Matrons.

We have had many enquiries concerning the reply of the President of the Local Government Board to the request of the Matrons' Council that he would permit a deputation from the Council to lay before him their views as to the proposed change in the position of Matrons of the Metropolitan Asylums Board Hospitals and Asylums. In reply, we have good authority for stating that the Local Government Board is aware of the strong feeling there is on the question, which is engaging the personal attention of the President, and that it is not likely a decisive step will be taken before bodies which have lodged protests with the L.G.B. have been notified.

As the matter is engaging the personal attention of the President, we feel sure that no injustice will be done to so important a body of public servants as the Matrons of the great infectious hospitals and asylums of London, and we await events with confidence.

The following letter has been received by the Hon. Secretary of the Matrons' Council from the Clerk of the Metropolitan Asylums Board:

MADAM,—I am directed by the Managers to state they have had under their consideration the resolutions passed by the Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland, at a meeting on the 19th ultimo, with reference to what is described as "the proposed change in the position of Matrons of the Metropolitan Asylums Board Hospitals and Asylums from that of first class to second class officials," and, in reply, I am to say that the Matrons' Council appear to be under a misapprehension. What the Board have done is to approve a draft which has been prepared for submission to the Local Government Board of a proposed new Order to consolidate and amend the Orders (some 73 in number) now subsisting, which have been issued from time to time by the Poor Law Board, and the Local Government Board during the past 40 years for regulating the proceedings of the Managers.

In the section of this draft Order which deals with officers all division of officers into classes has been omitted, and the expressions "first class" and "second class" do not occur at all. One main feature of the draft is the omission of the classification of officers, which at present obtains into "Principal" and "Subordinate." The Managers assume that it is the disappearance of this classification, and the fact that the Matrons (along with several others) would in future be employed, promoted, and dismissed by the Managers without the intervention of the Local Government Board, which have raised alarm in the minds of the Matrons' Council.

But the Managers would remind the Matrons' Council that nowhere, so far as they know, except in the Board's own service, does this arbitrary division of officers into "Principal" and "Subordinate" obtain; and that in no other service, except the Poor Law Service, is the engagement of a Matron dependent on the concurrence of the Local Government Board. It would appear, then, that the proposals of the Managers, if adopted, would be in the direction of assimilating the position of Matrons and other officers in their service to that of similar offices in other services, e.g., general hospitals, provincial infectious hospitals, and county asylums.

It is believed by the Managers that the title of Matron will quite sufficiently indicate the importance and authority of that office, without its being included in a group bearing an arbitrary label of classification. They have no intention whatever of detracting from the responsibilities and dignity of the office of Matron, but they cannot believe it to be necessary to retain for their service an appeal to a Government Department which applies to no Matrons except those in Poor Law Institutions.

To obtain for the Board's hospitals the best trained nurses is, and has been the Manager's earnest desire and they cannot but express their surprise and regret that, however much the Matrons' Council may disagree with them on the merits of the retention or otherwise of certain peculiar conditions attaching to the office of Matron, the Matrons' Council have thought fit to formulate the threat contained in the last paragraph of their first resolution.

I am, Madam,  
Your obedient servant,  
T. DUNCOMBE MANN,  
Clerk to the Board.

The Council received the letter too late for a reply to be sent in time to be included in the Agenda for last Saturday's meeting, but it will be brought up at the next meeting of the Board. Meanwhile we may state that the Matrons' Council is under no misapprehension whatever. The Matrons of hospitals and asylums under the M.A.B. at present rank as principal officers. If the sanction of the Local Government Board were given to the Draft Order, to which exception has been taken by the Council, the Matrons would be deprived of this position, and relegated to a subordinate one.

It is an especially unfortunate moment to attempt to weaken the authority of the Matrons as London is at present suffering from the most serious outbreak of scarlet fever which has occurred since 1893, and the Board cannot afford to lessen the prestige of these officials upon whom so much depends.

The Metropolitan Asylums Board on Saturday decided by 28 votes to 26 to increase the salary of the clerk to the board, Mr. T. Dun-

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