

The Status of the Metropolitan Asylums Board's Matrons.

Miss Isla Stewart, President of the Matrons' Council, will make a brief statement before the opening of the Conference to be held at 11, Chandos Street, W., on Friday, 22nd inst., on the question at issue between the Council and the Metropolitan Asylums Board, in reference to the status of Matrons of the Hospitals and Asylums of the Metropolitan Asylums Board District.

The following reply has been received by the Matrons' Council to its request that the President of the Local Government Board would receive a Deputation from the Council:—

MADAM,—I am directed by the Local Government Board to advert to your letter of the 19th ultimo, transmitting a copy of resolutions passed by the Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland, with reference to certain proposals affecting the status of Matrons of the Hospitals and Asylums of the Metropolitan Asylum District. The Board direct me to state that the draft regulations, which have been submitted to them by the Managers, will only have effect if, and so far as, they may be embodied in an Order to be issued by the Board, and that before any such Order is issued the Board will give full consideration to the representations which have been submitted.

The Board do not think it necessary to trouble a Deputation to attend at this office, as suggested in your letter.

I am, Madam,
Your obedient servant,
J. S. DAVY,
Assistant Secretary.

Miss M. Breay, Hon. Secretary,
The Matrons' Council of Great Britain
and Ireland.

A similar letter has been received by Miss E. C. Barton to a request from the Poor Law Infirmary Matrons' Association.

We consider this reply most hopeful because it is inconceivable that so important a class of civil servants as the Matrons of the great infectious hospitals and asylums of the Metropolis should be deprived of their present status without being given a hearing on the subject, more especially in view of the enormous amount of support which the Matrons' Council has received on the question. We know of an immense number of petitions which have been sent to the Local Government Board against the proposed deprivation of status. We have not heard of *one* in support of it.

In this connection we learn that the Hon. Secretary of the Matrons' Council, when calling recently at the Local Government Board Office, was smilingly asked, "Are you the lady who is responsible for our being deluged with advertisements of Wincarnis?" This, of course, referred to the Petition Form which appeared in our issue of the 26th ult., on the back of which were printed advertisements of Coleman's Wincarnis, and of the Gas Fires of the Gas Light and Coke Company. We are glad to learn our readers rose to the occasion in overwhelming numbers.

The following letter, received from a correspondent by the Hon. Secretary of the Matrons' Council, puts the case for the Matrons so clearly that we print it in full:—

There is a flaw in Mr. T. Duncombe Mann's letter to the Matrons' Council, to which I venture to call your notice, although I expect it was obvious to the Matrons' Council. This is the statement that the proposed change in the status of the M.A.B. Matrons merely places them in the same position as the Matrons of general hospitals. It will not bear examination. The whole circumstances of general hospitals, their organisation to the root, is on different lines. When it becomes as official as the organisation of a centralised body like the M.A.B., when a Medical Superintendent with supreme powers is appointed, when the resident medical staff does not come and go continually, then the matron of the general hospital, brought into comparison with a body of permanent officials with whom she has to work, will naturally ask for a definition of her position, and see that the position is one compatible with her responsibility as head of the nursing staff and the first factor in the hospital as a training school for nurses.

The right of appeal against dismissal is one that I would like to see firmly established, with the hope that it might some day extend to the hospitals where unsatisfactory conditions render the position of the Matron insecure.

It is true that in some large provincial fever hospitals, the Matron's position is not classified; but the conditions under which these hospitals are administered approach more nearly the general hospitals than do those of the M.A.B. institutions. The organisation is more elastic. The M.A.B. is splendidly, centrally, *rigidly* organised—and this implies a rigid definition, whether they call it classification or not, of the officials' positions. Such definition is most necessary in the case of the Matron—and here is the crux of the matter, so difficult to handle!—because she is one responsible woman working among men.

The point has been dealt with in the reply sent to the Metropolitan Asylums Board by the Matrons' Council, which is to be brought before the Board at its meeting on Saturday next.

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