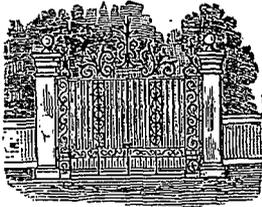


— Outside the Gates. —

WOMEN.



A new era has dawned for England. This week marks a dividing line; it is an historic landmark. By this year's Local Government Act the future holds in store grand possibilities, if only the newly emancipated electorate will be true to themselves, to one another, and to their great responsibilities.

Tuesday was the day for holding throughout the country districts, having a population of more than 300 persons, the first Parish Meeting for the purpose of electing the Parish Council. It was also the day for receiving the nomination of Guardians, and District Councillors. The old effete Vestries of London have been relegated, unhonoured and unsung, to the limbo of the past. In their place will soon spring up Vestries (District Councils in all but name) which, being elected by ballot, will give, as they gave not before, the crystallised opinion of the community. Thus London, which for ages has been a law to itself, will be more nearly brought into a line with the rest of England. The elections of these Vestries in London take place on Saturday, December 15th.

But we are more immediately concerned with the elections of Board of Guardians, for their work in many departments closely touches those engaged in nursing the sick in Poor Law Infirmaries. These Guardians will in rural districts be elected as District Councillors; in urban and metropolitan districts there will be a separate election for Guardians; the District Council corresponding, as mentioned above, to the Vestry. In London, Guardians will be elected on December 17th.

The time is instinct with opportunities for women; for not merely their *rights*, but their *duties* have been recognised in making these sweeping reforms. Hitherto, women have been permitted to act as Guardians, but the new Act has abolished the property qualification. Therefore, more women have now the opportunity to do service. By the time this number appears it will be known in what numbers they have taken advantage of their enfranchisement.

But why are we so anxious to get a large proportion of women to act as Guardians? Because the few who have undertaken this work have more than justified their position; and in more than one instance have deserved the eulogium, "Guardian Angel." Women of culture and education have, admittedly, more leisure than men for such work. What is wanted is not merely huge establishments, the haunts of officialdom, where the inmates are fed by red tape, clothed by red tape, buried in red tape. Instead, we want the Poor Law to be, as it might be and ought to be, the great humanising and reformative agency of the country; and not, as it too often is, the brand of degradation. To this end it is useless for Guardians to regard their duty as ended with an attendance at an occasional meeting. This is merely the giving of dry bones. Let our women devote themselves wholeheartedly to the

work; and regard it as their bounden duty as Christians, as mothers, daughters, sisters, to introduce some of the amenities of life into Workhouse and Infirmary. They need not be afraid that by so doing they will encourage more people to seek admittance, for it is one of the most promising signs of the time that the able-bodied are being eliminated from our Workhouses. Those who are to be found there are mostly children, the aged, and women; all of whom need more mothering, and proportionately less fathering.

It is, indeed, a good thing to be a woman, and to live in these days; when a healthy, life-giving breeze is sweeping through the length and breadth of the land, clearing away before it time-worn, inadequate Institutions, and bringing in its train all that makes for true Manhood and true Womanhood.

Science Notes.

RECENT EXPERIMENTS ON DIPHTHERIA.

A FEW weeks ago, in this column, some account was given of the discussion which took place at Buda-Pesth, at the Health Congress, on the subject of immunity from infectious disease. The rival theories were that of Phagocytosis, which teaches that it is the white blood-corpuscles which wage war with the disease-producing microbes, and either digest them completely, or at all events prevent them from multiplying, and that of serum-therapy, which attributes to the blood-plasma, or serum, the power of destroying bacteria.

It will be supposed that these theories are not mutually exclusive. Both may be true to a certain extent.

The actual poison which affects the patient suffering from an infectious disease, such as diphtheria, is not contained in the bacteria themselves, but is rather the product of their vitality. This distinction may at first appear a trivial one, since the multiplication of bacteria in the body must necessarily be accompanied by such a product. Yet it is clear that in order to find an antidote for this poison, a knowledge of its exact nature may be desirable. In the case of diphtheria, as well as of other diseases, experimenters have, by means of filtration, obtained the poison quite free from the bacteria and their spores, and have then produced the disease by injecting the poison.

The general name given to these poisons is *toxines*; in some cases, at least, they have been shown to resemble chemically the poisonous alkaloids, such as strychnine, morphine, nicotine, etc.

Another class of substances has also been discovered and attributed to the activity of bacteria, which substances act as antidotes to the *toxines* above mentioned. These are termed *anti-toxines*, or defensive proteids.

An animal which has suffered from diphtheria, and recovered, has developed in its blood the anti-toxine which confers immunity from that disease. In order to obtain the necessary quantities of such curative serum, a very large number of experiments were made in inoculating various animals with diphtheria poison. The poison was used perfectly free from the bacteria themselves, and reduced in virulence by the addition of

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