ber election there were only 169 women throughout the whole of England serving on Boards of Guardians, this number had now been increased to about 875, and out of 648 unions in the country more than half now have women on their Boards. Newton Abbott had returned eleven, Cardiff, Exeter, Huddersfield and Kingston, eight each. There is still, however, much to be done, for the proportion of women to men is yet very small. But so far women may well indulge in self-congratulation, and Miss Twining, after her heroic efforts for years, and for a long time standing almost alone, must regard this, the crowning of her labours, with extreme pleasure. Nevertheless, it is useless to suppose that the mere presence of petticoats on the Board is going to effect reforms in the working of the Poor Law. And this truth, we are glad to say, was thrust home by several speakers. Mrs. McCallum gave such excellent practical advice, the outcome of an intelligent experience, that it would be an advantage if her remarks could be distributed amongst all women guardians. She urged particularly the necessity of studying the Poor Law from its inception in Queen Elizabeth's reign, and also the experiments of this century. The condition of the pauper must obviously never be made better than that of the independent labourer.

Miss Twining in her speech laid great stress upon the necessity of trained Nurses being introduced into all the infirmaries, and under the inspiration of its honoured chief there is little doubt that this Society will, through the women guardians of the country, remove, and that before long, the stigma of the employment of inefficient Nurses.

Did Emily Brontë write "Wuthering Heights" credited to her name? The question is a disquieting one, and suggests the propriety of asking if there is such a place as Haworth, or if Charlotte ever lived. Emily has now been in her grave, so we understand, more than forty-six years, and yet the wicked little sprite, Doubt, has been lurking all these years in the dark. Sir Wemyss Reid, in his lecture on Emily Brontë, given recently at the Royal Institution, referred to this new literary mystery. How came a girl without experience of the world to write such a weird book? Years ago it was said that "Wuthering Heights" read like the dreams of an opium eater.

Did Branwell, the clever though dissolute Branwell, write it? In a letter lately come to light he refers to "Wuthering Heights" as being a book he was writing. Again, between his letters and the book there are verbal similarities. But Sir Wemyss Reid will not desert his heroine Emily, and she finds in him a staunch advocate. "First," he says, "can one trust the boastings of a man as vain, as dissolute, as degraded as Branwell? I do not believe he wrote it, because the great woman whom he thus attempted to rob was herself the very soul of truth. Above all, I do not believe it, because against it we have the unbiassed testimony of Charlotte Brontë herself, a woman who would have died rather than commit herself to such a fraud." But how account for the mystery we are thus plunged into? Sir Wemyss believes we have a clue. It was in the enforced companionship of this lost and degraded man that Emily Brontë conceived many of those impressions she conveyed to the pages of her book.

Studies in Scotch Characteristics.

"BESIDE THE BONNIE BRIER BUSH."*

Among the new school of Scotch story-tellers there is no one who has made a greater success than Mr. Watson, who writes under the pseudonym of Ian Maclaren. During the last few years many writers, such as Barrie, Crockett, Q., Raymond and others have given us excellent examples of what might be called the provincial novel. They have discovered that the British public, as an agreeable change from the "tendency" novel, are very appreciative of well-described pictures of provincial life. There is considerable attraction to town people in these kind of fresh and unfamiliar sketches of the customs and manners of a race of people who are almost as unknown to the average English reader as the inhabitants of South Africa or North America. Some people are born with a natural and very strong objection to reading any books that are written in a dialect which it requires some slight effort on the reader's part to comprehend, but if once that objection can be surmounted, provincial phraseology gives a grand opportunity to a cunning novelist, and the racy original remarks that are so frequently to be heard from nature's children (who have not been corrupted by reading books and hearing too much of other people's ideas) help a writer very considerably in his endeavours to place a picture of country life and character before the mind's eye of the reading public. Of course the danger is, that after a time audiences grow a little weary of the dialect novel, and the writers themselves get to depend too much upon eccentricities of speech, and in their search for novelty lose sight of the humanity of the being that they wish to describe for our benefit—for phraseology, however original and quaint, will not by itself make an artistic book, nor win its way alone to our sympathies and libraries.

Ian Maclaren rises above these temptations, and though all his sketches "Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush" are written in Scotch, and not in English, phraseology, yet the humanity that pervades every line that he writes makes all stories from his pen acceptable, and, indeed, eagerly looked for. He belongs to the genus of quiet humourists, and beguiles many a thoughtful smile from his readers, which, as George Meredith has pointed out, is a far greater achievement than mere laughter. But it is in his pathos that this author is at his best, and I do not think any person possessed of a heart could read aloud certain portions of "Dornsie," "His Mother's Sermons," or the three last stories in the book, with dry eyes and a steady pulse, the characters in them, in spite of their rugged exterior, are so intensely, humanly, lovable.

The quaint descriptions of the mystical appreciation of the Scotch for sermons, prayers and funerals are admirably described, for Ian Maclaren avoids the exaggeration of caricature, and no one who ever heard a Scotch congregation converse after hearing a sermon can fail to appreciate the fidelity to life of these sketches of the inhabitants of Drumtochty with their dry humour, severe judgment of outsiders, and deep, though undemonstrative affection for each other. It

* "Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush," by Ian Maclaren. 6s. (Hodder and Stoughton.)

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