

be a qualification for the post of managing a large one, contrary to the usual rules in such cases.

Among some of the duties which Boards of Guardians have to perform, and in which surely they would find a woman's knowledge of service, are the following:—

(1) Engagement of officials, the majority of whom—Matron, Nurses, and servants—are women.

(2) Superintending the quality of the material and the making of the clothes for the women and children.

(3) Inspection of the supplies sent in, to see that they fulfil the contract requirements, and inspection of food to see that it is properly cooked and served.

(4) Inspection of the infants and children, to see that they are well fed and cared for.

(5) Inspection of beds, bed linen and towels. All these matters a woman is accustomed to see to as a matter of routine in her own house, and she is trained to notice them, and if they are badly done to have them set right. It is no question of special professional training, it is a question of using the training and habits of home in a wider field and on a larger scale. It is often said that women are unbusinesslike, and this might be urged as an objection to their undertaking the more extensive work of a guardian, but business habits are largely a matter of training, and most women who have to organise and manage their households have a very fair idea of business in their own line at least, though they may not understand stocks and shares. They are also often more economical than men, because they are accustomed to deal with smaller sums of money. Besides, it is not proposed that any Board should be entirely feminine—I believe in the co-operation of men and women here as elsewhere; what I wish to urge is the very great need for one or two women on each Board to assist and give advice in matters concerning the women and children and domestic affairs. And as I believe that nearly four-fifths of the paupers are women and children, this does not seem a very unreasonable proposal. As examples of what women have done as guardians in England during the last twenty years, I may instance the following points:—

(1) Investigation into the clothing of the women and children. The women were found in many cases to wear the same clothes in all seasons of the year, and suffered greatly from the cold in winter. The children too were often insufficiently and uncomfortably clad.

(2) In many cases the workhouse school has been abolished and the children are sent to the nearest Board school, and allowed to play and mix with the children there, in order that they may be as free from pauper associations as possible. This has everywhere been found to be of the greatest advantage to the children physically and mentally, besides saving the cost of a separate school.

(3) Pocket handkerchiefs have been provided for the inmates, adults, and children. This is not a very extravagant or luxurious addition to their toilette requisites, but it is one which is still lacking in many workhouses, and though it is a small matter, on the score of cleanliness, at least, it seems desirable.

(4) Careful supervision is carried out concerning the facilities for washing, and provision made that each person should have fresh water and a separate towel. Inspection is made of the women's baths and sanitary conveniences.

(5) Frequent inspection is made of the nurseries to

see that the infants' bottles are kept clean and the children well looked after. Old pauper women are found as unsatisfactory for this work as in workhouse hospitals, and in several places paid attendants have been substituted.

(6) Properly trained Nurses for the hospitals are being gradually recognised as absolutely necessary, and in several cases the lady-guardians have been instrumental in bringing about this change. They also supervise the Nurses' rooms, and see that they have good food, open-air exercise, and holidays at suitable times.

(7) In many of the cases concerning women which come before the Board, such as that of the unmarried girls who have been recently confined in the hospital, the women-guardians have done good work in assisting them to employment where they can redeem their characters, or putting them into communication with charitable institutions where they can be trained. In some of the larger Boards these questions are relegated to a sub-committee of ladies.

(8) Boarding-out or emigration of children, and proper inspection of them when boarded out, have also been taken up recently by the women, as well as inspection in asylums of female lunatics sent from the district.

(9) Also the supervision of the training of the girls for service, and finding suitable situations for them when ready, not merely sending them to the first place that offers, is work that the women-guardians do. While some of the above reforms represent increased expenditure, the women have been able to exercise economy in other matters, so as to have the paupers better treated and with less expense. In the matter of the able-bodied male paupers and tramps, however, it has been noted on several Boards that the women-guardians incline to making treatment even more severe and deterrent than it is. Their sympathies are not with this class, but with the sick, the aged, and the children.

For all these matters a great deal of individual attention to the cases and the household details is necessary, and that is another point where the value of women as public servants in this capacity comes in, as the women who devote themselves to the work have generally a good deal of leisure.

Women-guardians have also done a great deal towards humanising the workhouses by having the wards brightened with pictures and flowers, by providing toys for the children, and interesting easy employment for the old people in connection with the Brabazon scheme. In many of these alterations women have called in the assistance of various charitable societies, so that the schemes of private and State benevolence co-operate instead of overlapping.

Surely if women have found so much work to do in English workhouses, and have been able to do it with considerable success, there is also work for them to do in Ireland if they were allowed to try, and I believe that suitable women could be found in most of the districts. The question of religious differences would probably come into this as it does into everything in Ireland, and I believe there have been unfortunate instances of injudiciousness on the part of some lady-visitors to workhouses. But women-guardians would differ from the visitors in being elected by the rate-payers, not arbitrarily appointed, and they would be publicly responsible for their actions. I believe the fact of public responsibility would make all the differ-

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