

DURING the deplorable fire which destroyed the St. William's Fever Hospital, Rochester, last week, I am greatly pleased to learn that the whole of the patients—seventeen in number—were removed in the most orderly and deliberate manner, which reflects every credit upon the courage and coolness of all concerned. The Ward which has been destroyed is the Typhoid Ward, and the majority of the patients were convalescent.

S. G.

WOMEN AND THEIR WORK.

THE BOARDING-HOUSE KEEPER.

BOARDING-HOUSES are now a distinct institution, and the keeper thereof is a recognised factor in society. Thus it comes to pass that the lady who finds poverty staring her in the face, and is obliged, *volens volens*, to do something, turns instinctively to boarders as a source of income. The idea sounds so charming. All women are born house-keepers and love catering, and also then the home need not be given up, nor independence forfeited, nor the beloved old china, the well-known portraits, the sofa cushions, and the hundred and one trifles so dear from association, be buried in the dark recess of boxes, or pass beneath the auctioneer's hammer. So the young widow, or the elder sister, and sometimes even the middle aged spinster, who is tired of teaching or Nursing, and thinks it "would be so sweet to have a home of her own," starts forth gaily on the sea of boarding-house keeping, and a very rough sea she oftentimes finds it. Our friends have many a time told us of their sufferings in miserable uncomfortable houses. But now for the other side. First, then, the principal characteristic of a successful keeper of a "board and residence" establishment is good temper. She must be able to listen to complaints with a placid smile, and also be able to let them slip from her mind "like water off a duck's back," as the old saying goes. She must, too, agree and sympathise with all those who, like Mrs. Coddle, prefer the windows open, and with those who, like Mr. Coddle, prefer them closed; with those who like their meat well cooked and those who like it nearly raw, with those who like milk puddings and those who cannot touch them. The next qualification is good management and the art of controlling servants (a rather difficult thing now-a-days, when *les domestiques* are at a premium), for the boarding-house lady is held responsible for all faults. Then the visitors will quarrel amongst themselves, and one day the boarder who has been the longest, and has come to be looked upon as a stand-by, departs suddenly because he cannot

agree with Mr. D——. Again, people wish to have maximum comfort at minimum price, and no extras. They forget that the mistress as well as the maids requires an adequate return in coin of the realm for her trouble and hard work—for hard work it is, and disappointing work also. Like the policeman, the boarding-house lady's life is not a happy one, and though some have made considerable fortunes thereat, many have lost their last little all. House rent, taxes, rates, wages are all expensive items and the boarder may disappear, leaving but empty boxes behind, or oftener still, after innumerable letters, chooses another establishment more highly recommended.

ONE thing I would warn all who dream the dream of boarders to beware of, namely those advertisements of "house furniture, goodwill, &c., going extra cheap." Many are bogus, or at best the last chance of some unlucky speculator who, having been, to use Barnum's word, "humbugged," would now humbug others. This field of labour will prove, I fear, nowadays but barren ground anywhere, but I would recommend anyone desirous of trying it to seek a sea-side, not a London house, unless of course a *bonâ fide* advantageous offer occurs. In the summer season people will go to the watering-places, and are often willing to "get in" wherever they can. Also the season at most places is short, and the establishment can be reduced in the winter. Again, people are out all day as a rule and on a holiday, therefore in a good humour; but usually ravenously hungry, and inclined to eat their provider "out of house and home." In London boarding-houses are suffering from a reaction. People have discovered there are cares other than house keeping, and seek privacy even at the expense of comfort. The residential flats too tempt the bachelors astray.

Apropos of windows. Two fellow-passengers (I leave the reader to guess the sex) were seated one in one corner, the other opposite, the bone—I beg pardon, I mean the window—between them. Passenger No. 1 exclaims, banging it down, "I must have some fresh air." Passenger No. 2, shutting it sharply, "I have a cold; I must insist on its being closed." Passenger No. 1 waits until Passenger No. 2 has comfortably resettled himself or herself, then reopens it with a little more noise than necessary. Ere a minute has elapsed it has been jerked up again by Passenger No. 2 with an air of determination. A lively half-hour ensues, ended only by the train steaming slowly into a station. Behold, the guard approaches that unhappy window. "I must apologise," he says; "the window was broken clean out yesterday, and

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