

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. The men who are guardians have not the necessary time to give to these matters, even if they possessed the intimate knowledge of the points mentioned that women have.

It is often laid to women's charge as a fault, that they cannot take a broad and extensive view of a subject—they cannot see the wood for the trees. But this characteristic is a virtue here, for it is only by personal attention to individual cases that success in the administration of the poor laws can be obtained. It is shown clearly by the revelations about barrack schools, for instance, and other large institutions, that no system and no regulations, however carefully framed, are successful in dealing with masses of people, unless wisely and conscientiously and kindly carried out. In the circular issued recently by the English Local Government Board, this is strongly emphasised in the following words:—"All ex-

perience shows that whether a workhouse is well or ill-administered depends to a large extent on the personal interest which the guardians take in the matter." This circular is described by an English paper as "The Pauper's Charter," and it certainly marks the change in people's ideas compared with former times as to the way the destitute poor should be treated. 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. It is a post for which tact and judgment and sound common sense are required, as well as plenty of time to devote to the work, and there would, of course, be initial difficulties, but they are not insurmountable. 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 ratepayers, not arbitrarily appointed, and they would be publicly responsible for their actions. I believe the fact of public responsibility would make all the difference, and women have too long been allowed to use the dangerous tool of influence without responsibility.

The State takes upon itself the duty of caring for the destitute both in health and disease, and medical science is advancing more and more every year along the lines of prevention rather than cure. In the furtherance of these aims I believe the doctors who work under the Poor Law would find women-guardians strong allies in all matters of sanitation and hygiene as well as nursing.