

to get that done. Several attempts have been made to pass such a clause. Last year a bill was introduced by a Unionist member and was supported by nearly the whole Nationalist Party, but one member blocked it and it failed to become law. When one examines the duties of guardians it seems extraordinary that women should only of late years have taken up the work in England, and that they are not allowed to serve in this capacity in Ireland, for the management of the workhouse is in a very large measure a matter of household management, such as every woman is accustomed to perform or supervise in her own home. The average man does not pretend to be able to do housekeeping on a small scale—to look after the cooking of the food, the cleaning of the house, the clothing of the children, &c., that is usually conceded to lie outside his sphere. But incompetence to manage a small household seems to 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 the 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; the essentials are the same. 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 20 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