

[REVISED EDITION.]

The Irish Women's Suffrage & Local Government Association.

SUGGESTIONS FOR INTENDING WOMEN WORKERS UNDER THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT.

THE Local Government Act of 1898, following closely upon the passage of the Women's Poor Law Guardians Act of 1896, and more recently the Act of 1911, enabling women to be elected on the Borough and County Councils, have opened up a boundless field of useful public work for philanthropic Irishwomen. That work ranges itself, as follows, under the heads of: **Electors, Poor Law Guardians, District, Urban, Borough, and County Councillors.**

ELECTORS.

It is estimated that not fewer than one hundred thousand women, married and single, are qualified to become Local Government Electors under the operation of the Acts; and upon the faithful fulfilment of their duties by these Electors, in voting for the best, and most capable, men and women for the offices of Poor Law Guardian, Rural, Urban, Borough, and County Councillors, no small proportion of the beneficial working of the Acts depends. And this is more especially true of the Election of capable women Guardians, of whom not fewer than from two to four, at the very least, are needed in each of the 158 Unions into which Ireland is divided. Every woman, therefore, who is qualified to become an Elector, should spare no pains in seeing that her name is placed upon the list of registered Voters at the time of Registration, *so that she may not be deprived of her vote when the day of Election comes round.* And the following are the *more important* qualifications under which women are entitled to register:—

1. As **Inhabitant Occupiers** or **Householders**, occupying as Owners, or Tenants, either an entire dwelling-house, or part or a house *separately* occupied as a dwelling-house, subject to the statutory conditions of continuous occupation of the premises for the twelve months previous to the 20th of July, and the payment of all Poor Rates due to the previous 1st of January, or else occupying, as an *employé*, a dwelling-house, or a room or rooms in a dwelling-house, used as a separate dwelling-house, in which the employer does not reside; in both cases irrespective of rating valuation. To this latter class belongs the **Service Franchise**. A woman occupying as a dwelling-house, a *separate* room, or rooms, in her employer's house, or place of business,—the employer not living upon the premises,—is entitled to be registered as an **Inhabitant Occupier**.

2. As **Rated Occupiers**, being owners, or tenants, of holdings,—whether lands, tenements, or hereditaments,—valued for rating purposes at £10, or upwards, but subject to various statutory conditions,—the chief being continuous occupation of the premises for the twelve months previous to the 20th of July, and the payment of all Poor Rates due to the previous 1st of January. In the Counties there may be *two* such Rated Occupiers if the premises are rated at £20 or upwards; and there may be a greater number in special cases. In the Cities, Towns, and Boroughs, there may be one such Occupier for every £10 of rating.

3. As **Lodgers**, occupying a room or rooms of the value of 4s. weekly, (£10 yearly),—if unfurnished,—provided that they have resided in such lodgings during the twelve months immediately preceding the 20th of July, and have claimed to be registered as voters at the next ensuing period of registration. No actual money payment of rent is necessary, but there must be a specific letting contract founded on a good consideration, between the Lodger and her Landlord. **Two** Lodgers may occupy jointly, provided the room or

rooms occupied are of the value of 8s. weekly,—if unfurnished.

4. As **Non-Resident Leaseholders**, with a term of sixty years to run, and a profit rent of £10 above all head rents; or with fourteen years to run, and a profit rent of £20 above all head rents. In both cases twelve months' possession, or receipt of rents and profits, before the 20th of July, is necessary, except in the case of a person claiming by descent, or under a Will, or Settlement.

5. As **Non-Resident Freeholders**, having a profit of £20 a year; or, having freehold property rated at and value for £5 or upwards. In both cases six months' possession, or receipt of rents and profits, previous to the 20th of July, is necessary, except in the case of a person claiming by descent, or under a Will, or Settlement.

Women, coming under any of these categories, *provided they are duly registered*, can vote for the County Councillors, the Borough Councillors, the District Councillors, Urban and Rural, and the Poor Law Guardians. But husband and wife cannot both be registered as Electors (and cannot, therefore, both vote), *out of the same property*. Husbands, who are desirous that their wives should possess a vote, should transfer to them the necessary property, and should see that it is duly registered in their name, as Leaseholders, or Freeholders, as the case may happen.

REGISTRATION OF ELECTORS.

Women, who possess any of these qualifications, and who are doubtful as to their mode of procedure, should at an early period of the year, consult either Hunt's "Franchise and Registration Law," 1898,—the recognised authority upon these subjects; some experienced friend, or solicitor, who has a practical knowledge of registration; some Registration Association in their immediate neighbourhood; or, failing all of these, the Secretary of the County Council, or the Town Clerk, in their respective Districts.

As a general rule, it is the Town Clerk who makes up the list of the Electors in the Towns, and the Secretary of the County Council does so in the Counties.

Rated and Inhabitant Occupiers. The list of these is made up in the early months of each year, in part from the returns of the Rate Collectors, and in part from the Requisition Forms supplied to the Rated Occupiers and filled up by *them*,—excluding the names of all Occupiers who have neglected to pay their Poor Rate due up to the previous 1st of January, before the 1st of July of the current year,—such defaulters being thereby disfranchised for the ensuing year. *It is imperative, therefore, that all Rated, and Inhabitant Occupiers should see that their Poor Rate is duly paid to the Collector within the statutory period, whether by themselves, or if according to special agreement, by their landlord.*

These lists of **Registered Occupiers**, as made up to the 8th of July, are posted up in a conspicuous position outside every Courthouse, Town Hall, Police Barrack, Post Office, and various other places, in their respective Districts, from the 22nd of July to the 4th of August, for public inspection. Every qualified Occupier, therefore, should see that her name is included therein; or, if not, should, on or before the latter date, lodge her claim to registration with the Town Clerk, or Clerk of the Peace, respectively, and subsequently attend and prove her claim before the Revising Barrister, or County Court Judge, at the time of Revision,—*otherwise she will be disfranchised for the ensuing year.*

Lodgers. The registration of Lodgers is effected in a different way from that of the Rated and Inhabitant Occupiers. Every qualified Lodger must make a declaration of her claim, on the prescribed form which will be supplied by the Clerk of the Peace, or Town Clerk, in the presence of a witness, and lodge same at the Office of the Town Clerk, or of the Clerk of the Peace, respectively, between the 21st of July and the 4th of August, inclusive, every year,—*otherwise she will lose her vote for the ensuing year.*

Rated and Inhabitant Occupiers, who have changed their residence during the qualifying period, must give notice of their claim to vote between the same dates; they do not lose their votes provided they continue to reside in the same Parliamentary Division. There is no *removal claim* in the case of Lodgers moving from one house to another; but they can move from one room to another in the *same* house without losing their claim,—provided the several apartments occupied are set forth in the claim.

The last day upon which claims to registration can be presented is the 4th of August. Notices of objection can be served up to the 20th of the same month. Such notices must be given in writing both to the Town Clerk, or Clerk of the Peace, respectively, and to the person objected to. The Lists are finally revised by the Revising Barrister, or County Court Judge, respectively, between the 8th of September and the 25th of October; and every claimant, other than Lodger claimants, whether objected to or not, must appear, either in person or by qualified deputy, before the Revising Barrister, or County Court Judge, at the Court of Revision, on one of the days advertised, and substantiate her claim, or otherwise lose her vote. Lodgers need not appear unless objected to. The lists, as so revised and signed by the Clerk of the Peace, are delivered to the Returning Officer of the Borough, or to the Sheriff of the County, on or before the 31st of December; and are thenceforth operative for the ensuing year.

POOR LAW GUARDIANS, RURAL, URBAN, BOROUGH, AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS.

Every woman who is a registered Elector, under the Act of 1898, can be elected as a Poor Law Guardian, and as a District Councillor, Urban or Rural; and women are now by the Act of 1911 eligible for election as either a Borough Councillor, or Alderman, or a County Councillor. Not less important is the *Residential qualification*. Every woman, *whether married or single*, can be elected as a Poor

Law Guardian, or as a District Councillor, Urban or Rural, provided she has, during the whole of the twelve months preceding the election, resided, and continues to reside, in the District; but in order to qualify her to sit as a Councillor, or Alderman of a Borough, or as a County Councillor, she must be on the Register for the Borough, or County. And although husband and wife cannot both *vote* out of the same property, this *residential* qualification renders married women eligible for election even though their husbands should be elected as Members of the same Board.

The Elections for the Borough and Urban District Councils take place on or about the 15th of January; those for the Urban Poor Law Guardians, for the Rural District Councils, and for the County Councils, take place on or about the 1st day of June; and all Rural District Councillors are Poor Law Guardians in virtue of their office. All Candidates for any of these offices must either be registered Electors, or must possess the residential qualification in their respective Districts, or Wards; and they must be accurately nominated according to a prescribed form by two, *but not more than two*, registered Electors, residing in their respective Districts, or Wards, upon a Nomination Paper supplied them for that purpose by the Returning Officer. These Nomination Papers must be delivered to the Returning Officer, accurately filled up, within a specified number of days before the day of election, otherwise they will be invalid; and, in order to guard against contingencies, it is advisable that, in every case, a second such Paper, duly filled up, and signed by different qualified Nominators, should be delivered to the Returning Officer within the specified period. The Elections for the Poor Law Guardians, for the Rural District Councillors, for the County Councillors, and in nearly all cases, for the Urban District Councillors, are for three years; and the voting in all cases is by ballot.

Poor Law Guardians. Of all the public offices now thrown open to Irishwomen, the Guardianship of the Poor, if not intrinsically the most important, is by far the most immediately necessary. Without speaking of the still greater number of the occasional recipients of Out-door Relief, and the duties arising therefrom, there are within our Workhouses a permanent population of more than forty thousand inmates of all ages, including a very large proportion of women and children; and for the adequate care of these the vigilant co-operation of capable, motherly women is everywhere indispensable. There are probably thousands of our fellow-countrywomen thoroughly competent to perform these duties; and the most encouraging fact in our recent social history is that already more than one hundred of these have been *elected* for this responsible office. But for the efficient discharge of the necessary duties in our 158 Workhouses the services of at least several hundred women will be requisite; and it is eminently desirable that these should be elected, not upon any narrow or exclusive party lines, but solely from the point of view of their practical efficiency.

Rural and Urban District Councillors. In the *Rural Districts* no woman can become a Poor Law Guardian without being elected primarily as a District Councillor. There are certain departments within the jurisdiction of these Boards in which the help of experienced women Councillors is an absolute necessity. It is not too much to affirm that the thorough sanitation of their respective Districts,—more especially in the case of the common Lodging-houses, where such exist,—will never be adequately carried out until it is largely entrusted to the control of such women, assisted by keen-eyed and well trained female Inspectors. In the provision of healthy Labourers' Cottages, again, with all the necessary sanitary appliances, upon a sufficient, but not too costly scale, the advice of such women is equally valuable. In the case of the *Urban Councils*, the duties more especially devolving upon women

are identical in kind, though probably more onerous ; but their complete disjunction from those of Poor Law Guardianship has rendered the office much less attractive to women generally ; and therefore the fact that very few have offered themselves as Candidates, and only five have so far been elected, is neither surprising nor disheartening.

Borough and County Councils. Women are now eligible for membership upon these Bodies ; and three have already been elected in the Boroughs of Dublin, and Waterford ; and there are several most important offices at the disposal of these and our other public Boards, in which the co-operation of women is as necessary as in the Guardianship of the Poor. Our social requirements will never be adequately fulfilled until capable women are everywhere freely appointed as Sanitary Inspectors, as School Attendance Inspectors, as Inspectors of Workhouses,—and more especially of Boarded-out children,—as Inspectors of Industrial and Reformatory Schools, and Lunatic Asylums, &c., as Relieving Officers, and also as Assistant Doctor in any Workhouse where a second Medical Attendant is required. And,—which is in no degree less important,—women are now eligible for appointment as members of the Governing Committees upon the District Hospitals into which, under the Local Government Act, our present Workhouse Hospitals may be transformed ; and also, under the Agriculture and Technical Instruction Act, as members, not only of the Council of Agriculture and the two Central Boards, but also of the Local County and Urban District Committees which may be appointed for the purpose of assisting those Central Boards in advising the Department. *And it is exceedingly desirable that Ladies' Committees should be formed in all our leading towns, who would make it their special business to see that capable women shall henceforth receive their due proportion of all these appointments.*

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Copies can be obtained from Mrs. Sanderson, 7 Mount Temple Terrace, Dartry Road, Dublin, at 1s. per dozen, post free.