

## EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN.

## EMPLOYMENT OF GIRLS.

## DEPUTATION TO THE PUBLIC SERVICE BOARD.

Yesterday a deputation from the Woman Suffrage League waited upon the Public Service Board, and requested that equal opportunities, equal pay, and equal punishment should be made the rule for women employees in the public service, as compared with male employees.

Miss Rose Scott urged that the openings for women in the civil service should be extended, and more opportunity afforded for the employment of girls who had passed the required examinations. She pointed out that at the examination held in June, 1899, for postal assistants, out of 40 successful candidates, 23 were girls, while six other girls had obtained more than the minimum number of marks. Out of those 23 a large number still awaited employment. At the examination in December, 1899, for junior clerkships, four girls passed and six others obtained the minimum number of marks. Yet only three out of the four successful girls had received appointments. With regard to the question of female employment, the girls in the Census Department had been interrogated by the league, and had stated that the male employees in their department were most kind and obliging. The gentleman in charge of one of the rooms at the Census Office had also stated that he found the men worked better when associated with women, and generally speaking, their behavior was improved. The Government Statistician had also stated that two of the female junior clerks were superior to the junior male clerks, and a third was quite equal to the average male clerk. She urged the board to give women greater opportunity for employment in the public service.

Mrs. Ferris asked that equal punishment for offences might be dealt out to males, as compared with women. She contended that at present an offence would be tolerated in a man which would cause a woman's dismissal.

The chairman (Mr. Delohery) asked Mrs. Ferris to quote an instance.

Mrs. Ferris again made general statements on the subject, and being repeatedly urged by the board to give a specific instance, could only refer to a case in a department outside the control of the Public Service Board.

Mrs. Ferris insisted that drunkenness had been tolerated in men in the public service, but the board pointed out that in one instance a female in the service had been charged with drunkenness, and let off with a strong caution, notwithstanding the fact that it was not her first offence.

Mr. Wilson said Mrs. Ferris should now mention one case to support her argument, seeing that the board had given one.

Mrs. Ferris again repeated the case outside the service.

Mrs. Martel urged the claims of public school teachers. The lady teachers, she said, were not paid the same salary for the same results as was the case with the male teachers. The girl school-children had to pass the same examinations as boys, and, pro rata, girls passed higher than the boys. Yet the women who prepared those girls received less pay than the male teachers. Very nearly as many girls as boys attended the public schools. There would, in her opinion, be less competition among the sexes if women were paid the same salary as the men. An excuse for women going into competition with men was that they often had to support aged parents.

The chairman, in replying, said the whole matter had been fully dealt with by the board in its reports of 1898 and 1899. In the latter report (which was now really the answer of the board to the deputation), it had been stated that "the board are endeavoring as opportunities occur to carry out the intention of Parliament relating to the employment of women. The board regret that it found some difficulty in placing the candidates who have passed the examinations, owing to want of proper accommodation in the offices. Fears have been entertained that the extension of the system will mean a loss of work for men, or, possibly, lowering their salaries. The board say the apprehension is groundless. No doubt the employment of women in such places as are suitable to them will have the effect of curtailing to some extent the employment of men, but this will produce a beneficial result to the State, because an equal number of men will be compelled to seek positions which women cannot occupy, and, therefore, will be available to engage in occupations tending to develop the resources of the State." The Postal Department, continued the chairman, had given several women employment owing to the increased accommodation provided in the building

THE STATE AND ITS WOMAN  
EMPLOYEES.

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Yesterday a deputation from the Womanhood Suffrage League waited upon the Public Service Board with the object of setting forth some of the grievances of which woman employees of the State complain. Of these the most important would seem to be that offences which would be regarded as justifying the expulsion from the Public Service of woman offenders are regarded as mere peccadilloes when the offender is a man. If this statement were true, the Public Service Board has been guilty of a grave dereliction of duty; not so much because it favoured men as against women in the service of the State, but because it winked at the neglect of duty by public servants. The difference of sex does not properly enter into the discussion at all, and the question really resolves itself into a purely business consideration. There are so many servants of the State employed to do certain work. Is it a fact that these servants, or any of them, are allowed to shirk their work and to enjoy themselves in business hours? What they do after business hours is no concern of the State as employer, but it is to the interest of the State to insist upon the due performance of their work by the servants who have been selected to do it. As a matter of fact the statement that offences committed by men were overlooked which would ensure dismissal in the case of women was withdrawn by the lady who made it. It was unsupported by evidence and was plainly untenable. Still the accusation was made, and it is matter for regret that people should make charges of the kind. They can do no good to the persons who advance them or to their cause, whilst they may do a deal of harm. The State has recognised the advisability of employing women in the Public Service, but that does not mean that places shall be found straightway for all the woman candidates who pass the entrance examination. Appointments can only be given when vacancies occur, and, with the transference of the Postal Department to the Federal Government, such appointments are only rarely at the disposal of the State authorities, comparatively speaking. But, so far as can be seen, there is no difference in the treatment of public servants once they are appointed. The Board rightly makes no distinction so far as regards the sex of public servants. To the Board public servants are public servants, and nothing more or less.

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