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EDITORIAL.

THE NOTIFICATION OF VENEREAL DISEASES.

In another column we publish an important letter addressed to us on behalf of the National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases. This letter, which will of course receive both from the medical profession and the public the full consideration which the eminence and the high expert knowledge of its signatories naturally demand, states that the National Council "will lend no support to any proposals having for their object the establishment of compulsory notification of venereal disease," and desires to point out that it will adhere strictly to the recommendation of the Royal Commission, which body, after careful consideration of the question, arrived at the conclusion that notification at the present time was impracticable and might be detrimental to the operation of the measures it advocated.

As our readers are aware, we have, in this professional JOURNAL, for some years past adopted a strong standpoint on this subject, and especially advocated the national necessity of a public inquiry into the prevalence and prevention of Venereal Diseases. We, therefore, welcomed the appointment of the recent Royal Commission and earnestly congratulated it both on the excellence of its investigation and on the most valuable and historical records which it produced. Most of the recommendations of the Royal Commission were received with complete approval. But it was a cause of sincere regret, to many who had studied the subject, that the Commissioners came to the conclusion that notification of the diseases in question was at present impracticable in this country. By "notification"—we may explain to those of our readers who have not considered the

matter—is meant, the notifying to some Public Authority that such and such a man or woman has been found to be suffering from a venereal disease, precisely as, by the law, for some years past, medical practitioners have been compelled to notify to their local Medical Officers of Health that such and such a person was suffering from small-pox, or some other notifiable disease. The Local Authority then took steps at once to isolate such persons in Fever Hospitals and to disinfect the rooms or houses they came from. Since this Act came into force, the epidemics of infectious disease, which formerly devastated a whole district, have been promptly stamped out, with incalculable benefit to the national health and prosperity.

Every doctor and many nurses know the awful results of Venereal Diseases, and how infinitely more appalling and destructive the effects of constitutional syphilis are, not only on the individual attacked, but even on his or her offspring. Even those diseases which are more lightly regarded are known to wreck the health, if not the lives, of hundreds of innocent young wives every year; and to doom them—if they survive the necessary operations—to a childless future.

We are well aware of the strong arguments which have been employed against notification of these diseases. The most powerful is that publicity of any sort, in such a case, would be often fatal to the individual affected. But the system suggested for use in Australia, which we publish in another column, would obviate the need for public notification, while gaining a measure of isolation and treatment which would be of immense benefit to the patient, while it would be a direct preventative of infection to others. It will also be observed that the Australian methods are highly deserving of imitation in this country in order to avert the dangers of quackery.

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