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EDITORIAL.

THE NOTIFICATION OF PREGNANCY.

The value of child life and the necessity for care of women with child, and through them of their unborn children, has caused consideration to be given to the best method of getting into touch with child-bearing women, and prominence is being given in some quarters to the suggestion for the notification of pregnancy.

In our opinion the proposal is one which is not only lacking in an appreciation of the finer instincts which inspire womanhood, but it is unworkable, and it would mean an interference with the liberty of women which we do not believe they would tolerate or Parliament sanction.

Is there anything more sacred to a woman happily circumstanced than the hope gradually developing into certainty of her dawning motherhood? It is a cherished secret shared only with her husband, and a few intimate relations and friends. Anything more distasteful to such a woman than compulsory attendance either in person or by proxy at the public office of a Registrar to notify her condition it is impossible to imagine, and the law would certainly be evaded, and therefore of little use.

And if this is the case with married women, what of their unfortunate sisters who look forward to maternity not as their crowning glory but as their shame? To compel such women to notify their condition would be a refinement of cruelty to which no civilized nation should subject them, and compulsion could only be enforced by the imposition of severe penalties. Those who advocate notification of pregnancy can surely not have considered its ultimate effects. The first instinct—and the right—of a wounded animal is to hide itself. The

first instinct of a woman betrayed is—assuming that she is not absolutely brazen—is to keep silence as to her condition when she has acquainted the few whom it is necessary to take into her confidence. And it is most essential that her reserve should be respected, and her self-respect fostered not trampled under foot. We venture to think that so crude a suggestion as that for the notification of pregnancy never emanated from a woman, but from someone so saturated by officialdom that only the end to be attained appeared important, and the road to be traversed to get there of no account.

The golden dreams in which the expectant mother enshrines her unborn child are of delicate tissue which, like the bloom on a butterfly's wing, is easily damaged and irretrievably destroyed, yet, to her child, her attitude is of the greatest importance. It is the exact antithesis of that which finds expression in the proposal for the notification of pregnancy. Whatever the means eventually adopted for public authorities to get into touch with the mothers of the race, during the ante-natal period, compulsory notification will never be effective. These authorities will be wise if they place upon the thoroughly trained district nurses and certified midwives throughout the country, the duty of getting into touch with the expectant mothers in their respective areas, for they are in the majority of instances the trusted friends and confidantes of the women with whom it is desired to help.

Now that the nation has at last realized that the lives of expectant mothers are of value, and that their health should be conserved, let us at least treat them with consideration and respect, and not demand the notification of pregnancy, which is no more or less than a proposal for the registration of pregnant women.

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