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EDITORIAL.

CONTROL OF MASSAGE ESTABLISHMENTS.

The question of the control of massage establishments has long been one which has caused grave concern to public authorities, and it will be remembered that the London County Council, in its General Powers Act, 1915, took power for the control of Establishments for Massage and Special Treatment. On Tuesday, November 4th, the Public Control Committee reported that as a result of four years' experience in the administration of Part V of that Act, they have come to the conclusion that the Council's existing powers of control are not sufficiently stringent to effect the suppression of the serious social evil attaching to so many West End massage establishments.

It is, the Committee say, clearly in the public interest that the Council should be empowered to refuse, or revoke, a licence for reasons less stringent than those now in force.

The registration of a massage establishment in the County of London can only be cancelled by the Council, at present, if it has reason to believe (a) that the person is of bad character, or (b) that the premises are being used for any immoral purpose.

The Committee are of opinion that the Council should be empowered to refuse, or revoke a licence for conduct less unsatisfactory than the wanton acts alleged in the second ground of refusal, and that if annual licensing were insisted upon it would prove more effective in ensuring a higher standard of conduct than at present obtains in certain establishments. It considers, further, that the Council should apply to Parliament, in the Session of 1920, for power to refuse or revoke a licence on the grounds (a) that a person is under twenty-one years of age, (b) that the applicant is an unsuitable person to hold a licence, (c) that the

premises are unsuitable for the purpose, (d) that the agency has been, or is being, improperly conducted.

The Committee state that cases have come to their notice of (i) registered persons with unsuitable associates, (ii) women carrying on business for and on behalf of persons with bad characters and records, (iii) women unsuitably and immodestly attired when engaged in giving body massage to male patients, (iv) a registered person carrying on an unsuitable business in conjunction with a massage, &c., establishment, (v) a registered person exercising no supervision over the business, being practically always absent, and leaving the management to young and unqualified assistants, and (vi) the extension of a registered manicure business to include body massage in most unsuitable premises.

The Committee also consider that if the evils at which the Statute is aimed are to be effectively grappled with, a definite standard of training should be insisted upon, and that both a licensed person, or any assistant giving massage or special treatment, should be required to hold the certificate of the Incorporated Society of Trained Masseuses, a public hospital, or a teaching school approved by the "British Medical Council."

The recommendations of the Public Control Committee were approved.

What is really needed, if abuses are to be effectively dealt with, is an Act for the Registration of Masseurs and Masseuses, which, like the Midwives Acts, makes it penal to practise if unregistered, on penalty of a substantial fine.

So valuable a remedial agency as massage, a branch of the healing art practised by many trained nurses, should be purged from the discredit brought upon it by those unprofessional persons who use it as a cloak for vice.

It should, moreover, be practised under the direction of the profession of medicine.

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