

As a matter of fact, a considerable proportion of the public are extremely careless, not to say reckless, as to the danger of spreading infection amongst their neighbors, and, even when vigilantly watched and compelled by the law, it is not possible to obtain from every householder information as to infectious disease which shall be early, accurate, and complete. Owing to this experience, Local Authorities have sought in recent years to impose the duty of notification on the medical attendant, and in a number of towns they have succeeded. In 1878 the attention of the Local Government Board was directed to this subject, and that Board framed and passed through Parliament the now well known Manchester Provisional Order Act, 1878. As its provisions have been generally adopted, it may be desirable to mention details. It provides for the compulsory notification of infectious disease by the householder and the medical attendant, direct to the Local Authority, and the penalty attached is "a sum not exceeding forty shillings." The term "infectious disease" means and includes small-pox, cholera, typhus, typhoid, scarlet, relapsing, continued and puerperal fever, scarlatina and diphtheria, "and such other diseases as the Corporation, under the provisions and for the purposes of this act, may from time to time declare to be infectious." The fees payable are 2s. 6d. for each certificate, and 1s. for cases occurring in practice as medical officer to any public body or institution.

In 1881 a Royal Commission was appointed to inquire respecting small-pox and fever hospitals, and in their report the commissioners deal with the notification and isolation of disease. They state as follows:—"In effect, it is only by the medical attendant, if any, that the disease can be intelligently notified, since it is only he who can be presumed to know what it is, and who has no interest in concealing it. But it is represented that to impose this duty upon him directly and unreservedly, would interfere with the relations which ought to exist between him and his patient, and might prevent the aid of a medical attendant being sought at all. If this be so, it may be sufficient that the medical attendant should be required by law to furnish a certificate to the householder, who should be bound to forward it to the authorities." This report has been frequently cited as recommending compulsory notification by the householder, and not directly by the medical attendant. Its terms, however are cautious and qualified, the phrase, "if this be so, it may be sufficient," leaving the whole question open.