

PROFESSOR OSLER ON NOTIFICATION
OF TUBERCULOSIS.

Sept 2
1909

The following letter has been addressed to the Secretary of the Women's National Health Association of Ireland by Dr. W. Osler, Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford:—

"I am sorry that you are having opposition to the adoption of the compulsory notification of tuberculosis.

"As is often the case, difficulties vanish when squarely faced, and this has been the history of the question in debate. The experience of New York City is overwhelmingly in favour; at first there was opposition on the part of many medical men, partly on the ground that it would cause hardship to the poor, partly lest the well-to-do should be put to any inconvenience. It is universally acknowledged that the Act works smoothly, and with practically no inconvenience. I am assured by members of the New York Board of Health that no single measure has been so important in the fight against tuberculosis.

"That notification will cause loss of employment to a large number of persons is in the highest degree improbable. Certainly, it has not done so elsewhere.

"Slight increase in the rates may follow notification—just as it naturally follows any great public improvement. No doubt typhus and smallpox corresponded with low rates.

"Truth is often unpleasant, and in Ireland you are at present suffering from the shock of the realisation of what has been known to the health authorities for many years.

"That working people will hesitate to send for the doctor because of the risks involved in notification applies as little to tuberculosis as it does to typhoid fever or measles, and appears to one to be entirely fanciful.

"That there is to be a cruel crushing of the poor workman in notification is a myth—there is no class legislation, as the Act applies to rich and poor alike.

"I do wish Dr. McWalter would go to New York and study the work of his brethren—mostly Irish brethren—in this battle against tuberculosis. The conditions are in some ways quite as bad as in Dublin. He would return a wiser and a gayer man, and I should not be surprised at the next meeting of the British Medical Association to see him down for a paper on 'The Advantages of Compulsory Notification of Tuberculosis in Dublin.'

With best wishes, sincerely yours,

(Signed) WM. OSLER."

Oxford, September 2nd, 1909.