Armstrong's remarks in this report on the establishment of a National Sanitary Authority are given on this and following pages.

WOMEN'S WORK IN PUBLIC HEALTH.

IN a recent paper on the aim and scope of women's work in relation to public health, Dr. Meredith Richards draws attention to the importance in allotting women's work in public health administration, of paying due regard to the fundamental differences between the two sexes, not only in training, but also in their physical and mental capabilities. Evidently, as he points out, we are not making the best of the human material unless we recognise these aptitudes, and assign to each the task which each can do most efficiently with the greatest ease to themselves and advantage to the community. This is not a question of superiority, or inferiority, but one of recognising differences. Women's minds, as was observed by Buckle many years ago, are not only more deductive than men's, but quicker of apprehension; and these qualities make them specially valuable for the educational side of public health work, as in the instruction of mothers, the care of children, and personal hygiene generally. Their work, Dr. Richards added, would undoubtedly be greatly increased when the compulsory medical inspection of school children was begun; for much of the preliminary work of medical inspection could be entrusted to a trained nurse.

A NATIONAL SANITARY AUTHORITY.

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THE treatment of tuberculosis as a serious national menace is one of the highest imaginable, and one to the promotion of which any man may be glad to devote the best energies of his life. Such a work to succeed must be carefully planned and energetically executed. Its scope extends far beyond the selfish aims of party politics or the restricted sphere of an incorporeal Local Government Board; it requires for its conception, initiation and direction, a governing body freed from narrow interests and local prejudices, and having in view only the good of the State; a body so constituted as to represent the hygienic interests of all classes of the community alike; and prepared to give to the public health service that continuity of attention and breadth of treatment which the subject demands. An Authority, constituted of representatives of County Councils, Metropolitan and Provincial, and the large Sanitary Authorities, Urban and Rural, of the kingdom would form a truly representative and popular

SUPREME NATIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY

to consider and deal with all questions of purely public hygiene, including, *inter alia*

Tuberculosis in man and animals;

* From a special report to the Newcastle City Council.

Milk and meat supplies ;
Infant mortality ;
Occupational diseases ;
Water supply ;
Vagrancy ;
Vaccination ;
Physical degeneration ;
The disposal of sewage ;
The pollution of rivers ;
The prevention of disease through shell-fish in polluted waters ;
The promotion and encouragement of the use of bacteriology as a preventive measure in relation to disease ;
The prevention of syphilis as a national evil ;
The housing question in all its phases ;
The stimulation of lax local authorities and the assistance of others in the carrying out of necessary sanitary reforms in their respective districts, &c., &c.

The securing of the necessary powers and funds to carry out the requirements in respect of the foregoing matters ; and

Any other questions relating to public health.

In the contemplation of an original scheme of the nature and extent above indicated, among the first questions likely to arise are those as to the necessity for it. It may be asked " Are not the means already available for promoting the physical health of the population sufficient for the purpose ? If not, in what respect do they fall short, and what are the advantages of the innovation proposed over those of existing institutions ? "

The answers to the foregoing queries are as follow :—

The consideration and carrying out of all matters relative to the maintenance and improvement of the public health at present rest with

1. Parliament.
2. The Local Government Board.
3. Occasional Royal Commissions and Departmental Committees.
4. Local Sanitary Authorities.

With respect to the first of these, it has been truly said that Parliament has neither time, opportunity, nor inclination for the study of public health questions, each political party being too much absorbed in its own immediate concerns to be able to attend to matters of mere general sanitary interest, unless these are forced into notice, for example, by the dread of some impending epidemic. If it be advanced that the above drawback is met by the establishment of the Local Government Board, the reply is that that Board has already as much

work to do as, *from its singular constitution*, it can manage.* Moreover, its organisation and the character of its existing duties unsuit it for the consideration and treatment of questions such as those at issue. Of strictly orthodox views, it perceives from the outside only, and fails to appreciate the difficulties which Sanitary Authorities see and feel from within. Accustomed to stereotyped methods of procedure and averse to new departures, instead of leading, it discreetly sails in the wake of public opinion.

Royal Commissions and Departmental Committees do unquestionably excellent service in collecting and analyzing information on matters of public importance. But their function is advisory, not administrative; their investigations are merely special in character and limited in scope; and their work usually ends with the issue of their report.

Local Sanitary Authorities, as at present constituted, being isolated from each other and entirely self-centred, have no common bond of union, such as the health of the population at large, for which to work. That they are quite able and willing to combine in the promotion of such objects is proved by their readiness to meet in conferences for the consideration of questions of public health, and by the unanimity of their conclusions on these occasions. Here again the efforts of a large assembly of Authorities are apt to fail in effect through want of continuity of action and permanent cohesion on the part of its members.†

State medicine demands fuller and more special attention than under existing circumstances it either receives or can be expected to receive. The remedy for this is the establishment of a permanent *Supreme National Health Authority*, representative of the whole of the Sanitary Authorities of the kingdom, and entrusted with the sole object of safe-guarding and improving the bodily health of the race. Such an Authority will find ample scope for its deliberations and ever-increasing demands on its energies.

* See Annual Reports of the Local Government Board.

† This was only too plainly demonstrated at the Conferences convened by the London County Council on Small-pox in relation to Vagrancy in 1894 and 1904. The resolutions passed at the first of these Conferences were forwarded to the Local Government Board, and were heard of no more. At the second Conference a Committee was appointed to wait on the President of the Local Government Board, but the then President declined to receive the deputation. Shortly afterwards, on this gentleman leaving office, his successor was induced to receive the deputation, and did so, but almost immediately had to relinquish office on a change of Government. Since then, so far as is known to the writer of the present report, no further steps have been taken in the matter.