

was also found to be high, and wherever a child died the other brothers and sisters often grew up weak, and were found to be unable to take part in the struggle of life, and to fill, in later life, the hospitals, asylums, and prisons; for a great deal of wickedness was, no doubt, caused through their not being able to take care of their health. It would be thought that there would now be a school, and she ventured to say that if women had their proper political position that would long ago have been taken up. The speaker then gave an interesting account of the St. Pancras School for Mothers.

LADY PLUNKET.

The next speaker was Lady Plunket, who said she was very pleased to have the opportunity of placing before the Association the methods New Zealand had adopted to fight against the appalling and unnecessary death-rate amongst infants, of the means which were being taken to build up the constitutions of those babies, who for different reasons had been deprived of their proper rights to nature's food—those ill-fed weaklings who were supposed to have been born with unhealthy hereditary tendencies, and who seemed on the verge of death, but who, as a matter of fact, struggled on to maturity and swelled the crowd of the unfit, filling the hospitals and charitable institutions. The pioneer in the defence of the infants in New Zealand was Dr. Truby King, an eminent nerve specialist. Dr. King threw himself enthusiastically into the fray, and by means of lectures, speeches, newspaper articles, pamphlets scattered broadcast, he brought before the people of the Dominion that the percentage of infant mortality in New Zealand (as in all civilised countries) was absolutely undefeatable, and could, with comparative ease, be enormously reduced. He brought before his hearers and readers the now well known and admitted fact that nearly every baby was born healthy and normal, that the deterioration, so constantly observed during the first months of life, was simply due to incorrect feeding, gross ignorance, want of fresh air, unsuitable clothing, neglect, and dirt, and the predominant cause of mortality amongst infants could, in practically all cases, be traced to digestive troubles.

THE FIRST BATTLE.

The first battle he had to fight was to persuade mothers that a life had been placed in their hands, and that it was in their power to cripple or to do justice to it; that they had no right to bring a child into the world, and then intentionally or through want of forethought to deprive it of its birthright, Nature's food. Where artificial feeding was absolutely necessary Dr. King pointed out that the only reasonable substitute for maternal food was cow's milk, accurately modified to give a composition as nearly as possible identical with that of mother's milk. The greatest difficulty he and the Society that was founded had had to face was the universal notion that a "mother's instinct" would teach her how to rear her child, and that fallacious idea had hastened the death of many millions of babies. Dr. King summarised this fallacy in these words:—

"Instinct becomes weaker and weaker as civilisa-

tion increases, being replaced in mankind by the higher power of understanding and reasoning. The maternal instinct is not even a sufficient guide for the mother who nurses her baby, and it is no guide at all to those who resort to bottle-feeding."

INFANTS' HOSPITAL.

After a short time Dr. King, backed up by his friends, succeeded in starting a small hospital for babies, which was now known far beyond the shores of New Zealand as the Karitani Infant's Hospital. Percentage feeding, modified cow's milk, fresh air, and constant attention had taken the place of patent foods, milk and barley water, bread and milk and tea—a most popular diet. The curtained cots and the binders had no place; the babies slept practically all day and all night in the open air, quite regardless of the thermometer registering several degrees of frost. The results had been wonderful. In the first two years about 100 babies were admitted at the last gasp, four of whom only died. The hospital soon became overcrowded, and as many cases could be treated at their own homes, one of the nurses was sent out to attend and to advise the mothers.

BABIES' NURSES.

Shortly after this a public meeting was held in Wellington to establish a similar babies' nurse to work in that city. It was on this occasion she (Lady Plunket) had the privilege of meeting Dr. Truby King, and, hearing him lecture, she was deeply interested and truly horrified to realise all the crimes she had committed quite unwittingly in her own nursery on her own children. Like many others who heard Dr. King, she felt she must help him in his great crusade. After much consideration they decided that to make any distinct effect on the infant death-rate mothers of all classes must be educated, and that the simplest plan would be to train hospital and maternity nurses at the Karitani Hospital, and then place them all over the country as teachers and friends to the mothers and babies, supplanting the neighbour, with her very well meant, but so frequently disastrous, advice.

POSITION OF THE NURSES.

In planning the campaign two most important questions arose. The first was how to make certain that the nurse would be welcomed by the mothers. This possible difficulty was avoided by one of the few rules for the nurses being that no Plunket nurse should undertake a case unless invited to do so by the mother. The second question was whether some doctors might not view the nurses' work as an interference or a slight upon themselves. Accordingly the rule was made that no Plunket nurse was to visit a case which a doctor was attending unless sent for by him, and that she must carry out his orders implicitly, even when they appeared to contradict her Karitani training. In such cases the nurses were expected to use great tact. They always found that between the nurse's special knowledge regarding infant feeding and the doctor's general knowledge of health a satisfactory treatment was arrived at. Having formulated their general scheme and rules, they had to consider ways and means. It was never their intention that the Society should be a charity, its objects being

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