

# Royal British Nurses' Association.

(Incorporated by



Royal Charter.)

THIS SUPPLEMENT BEING THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE CORPORATION.

## ASSOCIATION OF TRAINED NURSES IN PUBLIC HEALTH WORK.

### The Organisation of Public Health Work in New Zealand, with Special Relation to the Society for Health of Women and Children.

Miss Patrick, Superintendent of the Training Centre of the Babies of the Empire Society, lectured on Saturday, July 12th, for the Association of Trained Nurses in Public Health Work. As the Queen visited the Centre on the same day, Miss Patrick was compelled to postpone the hour for her lecture, and previous to her arrival, Miss Jentie Paterson, who had kindly consented to take the Chair at the meeting gave a very interesting account of the work done at the training centre.

In commencing her lecture Miss Patrick said that it must be clearly understood that she could not in any way attempt to solve the whole problem of the difficulties associated with Public Health work, but she would give a summary of the situation in New Zealand and some account of the success which had attended the direct effort to lower the infant mortality rate and to assure a higher standard of health in the whole community.

Miss Patrick said that her three strong reasons for quoting the New Zealand system for lowering infant mortality were: (1) that there is a general system of State Registration of Trained Nurses there;\* (2) there is a Registration of Midwives; (3) there are Government Maternity Hospitals; (4) there is a supervision and inspection of Homes and Hostels for Children; and (5) there is a registration of all births. All these conditions, as Miss Patrick remarked, have not yet been established in the Mother Country.

In 1907 the Society for the Health of Women and Children in New Zealand was established. It commenced its work first in the city of Dunedin, where the infant death rate at that time was 80 per 1,000. In five years it had fallen to its present rate—40 per 1,000. Previous to 1907 the general infant death rate in New Zealand had been 75 per 1,000 and now it is only 48 per 1,000. Miss Patrick

then read the Aims and Objects of the Society for the Health of Women and Children. The Society has branches all over the two islands. Such branches are formed by local Executive Committees numbering from fifteen to twenty members, who are representative of all classes of the community. They are all composed of women, but each committee has an advisory board of men; there is a Central Council in Dunedin. All nurses are trained at the same training school—the Karitane Baby Hospital in Dunedin—and in this way uniform teaching is assured. Only registered nurses are accepted, as Plunket nurses, and the special training given to them extends to three months.

The treatment at the hospital is very simple and mainly preventive; so far as fresh air is concerned the conditions are almost those of an open-air phthisis sanatorium. To avoid chills great attention is given to systematic bedmaking, on lines equivalent to providing sleeping-bags, whereby the babies are kept warm and comfortable while the action of their babies' muscles is not hampered in any way. Feeding is done on the so-called "percentage lines," all milk modifications being accurately made by the nurses undergoing training who have to attain proficiency in making quickly their percentage calculations and who have to master the meaning, bearing and practical everyday use of simple food values and caloric estimation.

The main duty of the Society's nurse is to educate parents in the hygiene of the home. Her work is co-ordinated with the notification of births and she visits the mother and child after the birth and whenever necessary. She has a central office where the mother comes to have her baby weighed and to get advice. The work of the Plunket nurse is entirely apart from district nursing, and her foremost duty is to impress the mothers with the importance of breast feeding and to make every endeavour to have it established. The services of the nurses are absolutely free to all who require them. Local Committees hold themselves responsible for the necessary funds and the Government subsidise all voluntary subscriptions up to 24s. in the £; expenses are kept at a minimum through the co-operation of Government departments and local authorities.

\* The Bill was passed so long ago as 1901.—ED.

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