

any country without good health. Personally, he had no definite ideas as to the best means of impressing upon the Government the importance of a Ministry of Health. He understood that the Irish Medical Committee had already sent a deputation to Mr. Blythe. He thought that it would be more efficacious for all to organise together. The Nurses' Union were specially strong on this question, because they had special knowledge of what people needed, and were in touch with labour and those outside. The Labour Party was the only one which made health a point in their programme. If it was made only a matter of improving the salaries of nurses and doctors they would not succeed.



### WHAT NEW ZEALAND IS DOING. THE LOWEST INFANT DEATH RATE IN THE WORLD.

By Miss J. B. N. PATERSON.

New Zealand is the nation with the lowest infantile death-rate in the world, and this abnormally low rate has this year been again reduced. Sixteen years ago, when Dr. Truby King, C.M.G., now Director of Child Welfare for the Dominion, founded the Royal New Zealand Society for the Health of Women and Children (the Plunket Society), the death-rate among infants was 80 per 1,000; last year it was 47, and this year 41.8.

#### Striking Results.

The result of Dr. King's work is so striking that America recently sent over Dr. Woodbury to tour the Dominion and report on the Child Welfare work. His report is now published, and makes interesting reading. So also does the present New Zealand Child Welfare report, which shows that, whereas 16 years ago the infantile death-rate from diarrhoea stood at 20 per 1,000 both in Australia and in New Zealand, New Zealand has reduced her figure to 3, while Australia still records 13 per 1,000. Forgetting this, authorities in Australia stated recently that, were it not for this scourge, "unknown in New Zealand," the death-rate for the Dominion and the Commonwealth would be much the same.

#### Training in Mothercraft.

Without doubt this reduction in the infantile death-rate is almost entirely due to the general education of all mothers in mothercraft through the medium of the Plunket nurses, specially educated on Dr. King's lines and distributed all over the Dominion.

Plunket nurses are general trained nurses who receive post-graduate training in the Karitane Hospitals, the New Zealand hospitals run on Dr. Truby King's lines. Nursery nurses as well are trained in these hospitals; they reside in the hospitals for a year, and during that time are grounded in the fundamentals of nutrition, which is not limited to the word feeding, as is often mistakenly done. These girls are in no sense

sick nurses, but fulfil an even more important part in the community, as they know "how to keep a healthy infant healthy."

As Dr. King says, after all "hospitals are only monuments of failure," and for every infant who is "killed," five or six are damaged. Not only is New Zealand lowering the infant death-rate, but also raising the standard of health of the survivors.

#### Uniform Advice.

The keynote of all Child Welfare work in the Dominion is uniform authoritative advice. The Government publishes and distributes free an official guide, "The Expectant Mother and Baby's First Month," written by Dr. Truby King. This is issued by the registrars with the marriage lines. It is also to be had from the society's nurses.

The Government subsidises the Karitane Hospitals, where children are treated on Dr. King's lines, nurses trained, and in "The Mother's Cottage" mothercraft is taught to mothers who come into residence with their infants because of some failure in the supply of breast milk.

The Government also subsidises the salaries of the Plunket nurses 24s. to the £1.

The Plunket nurses receive notification of all births from the registrar, and immediately send a printed form to the parents, offering their advice and giving address and telephone number. Rich and poor alike bring their children to the Plunket rooms, which are kept bright and cheerful with flowers, pictures, and gay chintzes by the local branch committee. Maternity homes having trouble with lactation invariably call in the Plunket nurse; and some, as a matter of course, do so to introduce the mother to the nurse for future help and guidance. It is quite a common occurrence for a mother to arrive at the rooms and say: "Dr. So-and-so sent me along because baby's food does not seem to be agreeing."

Such a system of uniform authoritative guidance is far more effective than that in vogue in Great Britain, where each city, town, or borough publishes its own "guide," setting forth its own particular health expert's views and ideas, to the confusion of the mother.



#### COMING EVENTS.

September 29th.—Mental Hospital Matrons' Association. Meeting (by kind permission of Dr. Wolseley Lewis and Miss Macauley), Kent County Mental Hospital, Maidstone. 2.30 p.m.

October 1st to 3rd.—British Commercial Gas Association: Twelfth Annual Conference, Birmingham.

October 5th.—Registered Nurses' Parliamentary Council. 431, Oxford St., London, W. 4.30 p.m.

October 16th to 22nd.—National Council of Women of Great Britain and Ireland. Annual Meeting and Conference, Music Hall, 54, George Street, Edinburgh. Reduced fare tickets from October 15th to 24th.

October 20th.—Urgency Cases Hospital. Fifth Annual Dinner. Gatti's Restaurant, Strand, London. 6.30 for 7 o'clock.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)