

# OUR BABIES.

(By **HYGEIA.**)

Published under the auspices of the Society for the Health of Women and Children.

"It is wiser to put up a fence at the top of a precipice than to maintain an ambulance at the bottom."

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## ANNUAL REPORT.

THE following extracts from the annual report of the Dunedin Society, which acts as the Central Council for the federated branches, are commended to the earnest attention of our readers:—

### The Karitane Harris Hospital.

#### ACCOMMODATION FOR MOTHER AND CHILD.

Besides presenting the Hospital and grounds, Mr. Wolf Harris gave an additional £250 to assist towards putting the building in a state of thorough repair, and making the necessary additions to render the institution more effective from every point of view. These alterations and additions are now finished, and the Nurses' Home, containing a sitting-room, bathroom and ten bedrooms, affords sufficient accommodation to enable the Society to take in one or two mothers with their babies where this is found desirable. This is a very great advance.

#### Establishing Breast Feeding.

A sojourn of a few days or a week at Karitane may enable a mother, otherwise unable to nurture her child satisfactorily, to succeed perfectly not only in regard to the feeding, but in regard to a number of other practical details apart altogether from food—details which, taken together, make all the difference between health and sickness, strength and debility, comfort and discomfort, for both mother and offspring. Proper simple methods and provisions in regard to air, light, bathing, clothing, outing, housing, and the formation of the most suitable daily habits may prove as beneficial to health of the mother, as to the growth and development of the child. Indeed, your committee becomes more and more impressed with the accumulating evidence brought under its immediate notice in the course of the practical work of the Society, showing that in doubtful cases the question as to whether a mother is to succeed or fail in breast-feeding her baby is determined mainly by the establishment of proper all-round habits at some critical period, as opposed to allowing her to continue in a wrong course. A week's change in a practical school for mothers, freed from the pressing cares and responsibilities of her own home, broken sleep, and vain efforts to comfort or satisfy the baby at her breast, may suffice (along with the simple hygienic regimen required as to fresh air, exercise, regularity, etc.), not only to cause the mother to secrete a sufficiency of milk, where the supply has previously been scanty, but may so change its composition that health and comfort rapidly take the place of sickness and discomfort. Where entire breast-feeding cannot be

established, the mother is taught the more difficult art of bottle-feeding, is practically impressed with all its dangers and disadvantages, and is brought to see and appreciate the simple measures needed to lessen these risks as illustrated in the case of the babies round about her, who are being brought back to health in the institution.

#### Illustrative Case.

Already one mother and baby have been in residence, and your committee think you will be interested in the practical result. The baby appeared to be suffering from such hopeless unvariability of the mother's milk that the momentous decision had been arrived at that breast-feeding would have to be given up. At the Karitane Harris Hospital the hygienic conditions of mother and child were attended to, and then the baby was weighed before and after every suckling. When it was found that the mother was only giving about half of the necessary quantity of milk for her infant's proper growth and nutrition, the natural supply was made up to the normal quantity at each feeding with humanised milk. The baby at once went ahead by leaps and bounds, and from steadily losing weight it gained over 1lb in the first five days after supplementary feeding began, and then it continued to gain over 1lb a week. At the same time there was a marked improvement in its general demeanour. From being dull and lethargic it became lively and began to kick and exercise itself. The effect on the mother was equally striking.

While her baby was losing ground she was dull, miserable, and dejected. When the baby began to improve she grew happy and contented, and her milk supply increased. The progress of mother and child has been all that could be wished ever since.

#### Weighing Before and After Suckling.

In each of 48 cases where the mother was nursing her baby and the child was not doing satisfactorily the Plunket Nurse systematically weighed the infant before and after suckling (as strongly recommended on page 51 of the Society's book), so as to ascertain the amount of milk derived from the mother. Where this was deficient she supplemented the nursing with humanised milk. The results were most satisfactory, and in 12 cases the health and habits of the mothers were so greatly improved that in a short time they had a full supply of milk available, and artificial feeding was discontinued. In other cases, the breast-feeding markedly improved, but some supplementary feeding had to be continued. As you are aware, members of your committee have had similar experience with failing breast-fed babies, and the Central Council feels that the establishment of every facility for accurate weighing in this connection is a most important aspect of the Society's work, and one that cannot be too generally extended throughout the Dominion. By this means it is clear that many mothers who now give up nursing at an early period under the impression that their milk is hopelessly unsuitable, find on weighing before and after suckling that it is merely inadequate, and that when the shortage has been ascertained everything goes well on making up this deficiency by giving the baby just what is needed—neither overfeeding nor underfeeding. In the experience of our nurses, the secondary results of this have proved almost as beneficial to the mother as to the child—cessation of anxious worry on account of the child failing to thrive acting as the best of tonics and sedatives, and tending among other things to restore a full and healthy supply of breast-milk. The case referred to above shows how much can be effected by careful, well-timed help given to the nursing mother.

## PROSTRATING BILIOUSNESS.

LIFE DID NOT SEEM WORTH LIVING—BILE BEANS ARE THE AILING HOUSEWIFE'S FRIEND.

Mrs. J. Keogh, of 78 Davis Street, Boulder City, W.A., says:—"For a long time I was subject to violent fits of biliousness, which would lay me up for days, during which time I was not able to do anything and could not even hold up my head. These attacks, which were of frequent occurrence, made me feel most wretched and life did not seem worth living. Awful headaches also added to my suffering, and I became run-down and in a very debilitated state.

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