

The Society for the Health of
Women and Children of Victoria.

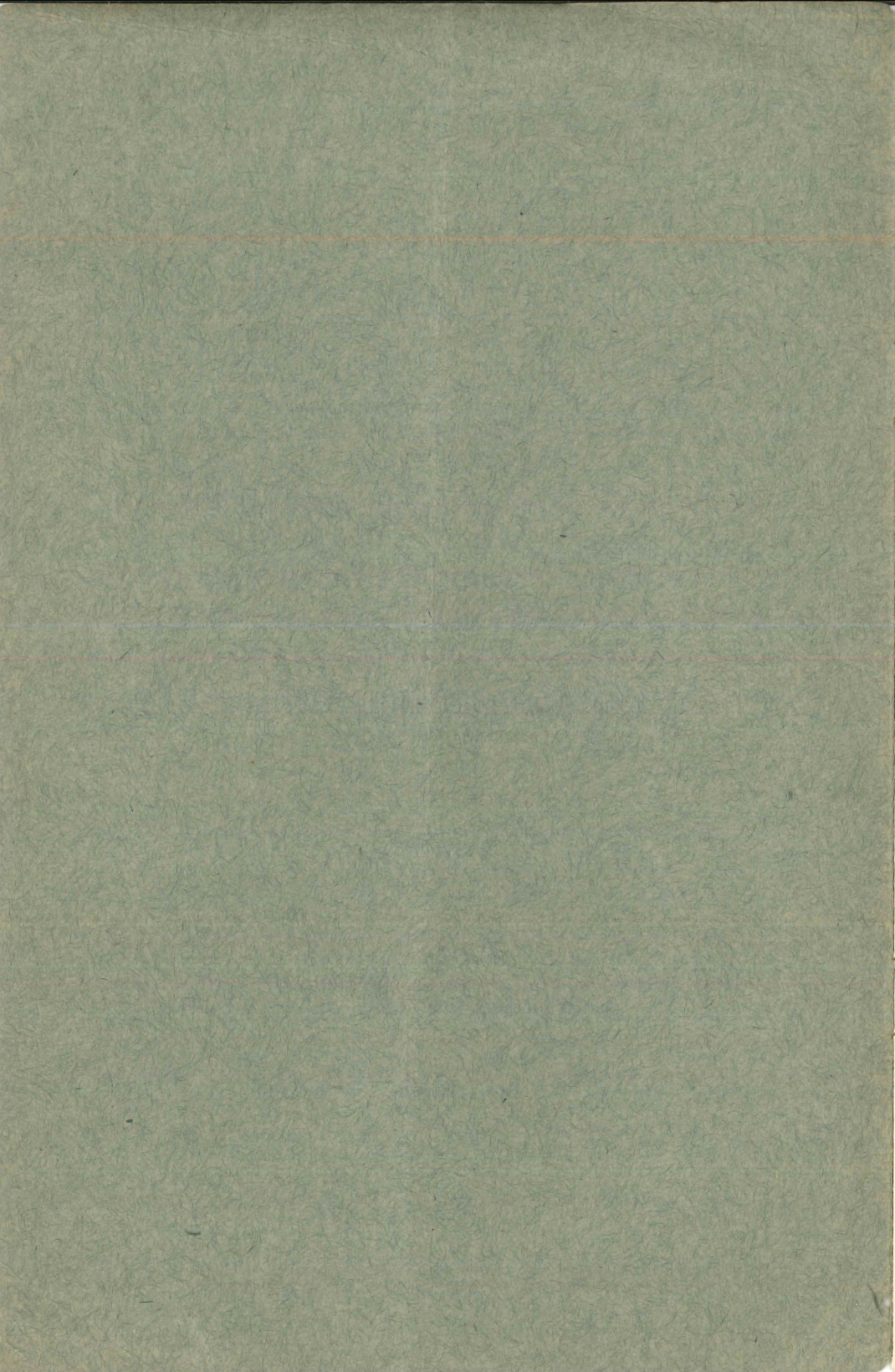
Plunket System.

FIRST
ANNUAL REPORT.

1920-21.



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48 Lygon Street.



The Society for the Health of Women and Children of Victoria.

PLUNKET SYSTEM.

Patroness:

HER EXCELLENCY LADY STRADBROKE.

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Honorary Consultant:

Dr. TRUBY KING.

The Society for the Health of Women and Children
of Victoria.

(PLUNKET SYSTEM.)

First Annual Report.

To the Members,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Council of your Society has the pleasure to present its First Annual Report.

During the period under review there has been a steady growth of the Society's activities, and a very satisfactory record of work accomplished, notwithstanding certain unavoidable delays and difficulties at the outset.

As you are aware, the Society was formed in September, 1920, after a very careful study of the methods and practices of Dr. Truby King with regard to Infant Welfare in New Zealand. It was found that the results achieved by carrying out his Plunket System were so completely satisfactory and so superior to all other systems, that it was decided to adopt it for Victoria. *As will be proved later, the experiment was more than justified, the results showing that in the centre where it was carried out there was a decline in the infantile death rate, whereas, in other places, and under other systems, the number of infantile deaths either remained stationary or is, with two or three exceptions, on the increase.*

For the information of those not connected with the Society, it has to be stated that the work is not charitable, but chiefly educational; for, so far as mothercraft is concerned, there is just as much need of reform on the part of those mothers who are "well to do" as on the part of those whose monetary position in life is not so thoroughly assured.

OBJECTS.

Briefly, the objects of the Society are:

- ✓ 1. To educate potential mothers and mothers in the essential work of mothercraft.
2. To promote the natural feeding of infants.
3. To see that the baby, where the natural supply has failed, is put on to a food approximating as nearly as possible to human milk.
4. To disseminate knowledge with respect to maternity matters.

5. To place fully qualified ~~Plunket~~ nurses in charge of given districts; in order that those requiring attention may receive it.

INFANTILE MORTALITY STATISTICS.

It is with regret your Council notes the increase in the infantile death rate for Victoria; but it is pleased to be in a position to draw attention to the fact that in Coburg the Plunket System has justified itself by reducing in twelve months the infant death rate of that town from 13.42 to 9.75. Nevertheless, your Council is not so much concerned with the reduction of the death rate as the education of the mother; the ultimate object being to ensure a hardy virile race.

PROPAGANDA.

Much time has been given to this most important branch of the Society's work. Lectures and addresses have been given to mothers. With the sanction of the Education Department, lectures are being given to classes of schoolgirls in those districts where Plunket nurses are placed.

Many letters have been written to all parts of Victoria in answer to enquiries on the care of mother and baby. Pamphlets and other information have been sent by request to Western and South Australia.

In the course of the year the following pamphlets have been published and circulated broadcast.—“The Mother's Duty to Her Baby,” “Milk and the Baby,” “Errors of Maternity,” “The Plunket System and What It Stands For.”

ROYAL SHOW.

As last year, the Society had an educational exhibit and rest room for mothers at the Royal Show; it was decided to again be in evidence. This was chiefly due to the fact that the Show offers a great opportunity for extending the Society's influence. Charts and diagrams bearing on the welfare of mother and baby were displayed; also simple devices for the keeping of milk in hot weather.

Matron Moreland, Sister Holland, and members of the Committee were in attendance, and, beside answering questions, gave demonstrations of many of the methods advocated by the Society for the care of the baby.

The Society's pamphlets were also distributed. Visitors to the pavilion showed a keen interest in the simple hygienic methods by which the Society carries out its work.

CENTRES.

Two new Centres have been opened—one by the Municipality of Footscray, the other by the Preston Municipal Council.

The Centre at Footscray was unofficially opened on June 1st by the Mayoress (Mrs. Johnson). On September 24th this Centre was officially opened by Her Excellency the Countess of Stradbroke.

Preston has not yet had its official opening, but the Centre is in full operation.

It was with great regret your Council found itself compelled to authorise Preston to share with Coburg the services of the same Plunket nurse. Such a course necessarily interferes with the number of visits that can be paid to mothers, and so impairs the general efficiency of the work. With an increase in the Society's funds, and the training of other nurses, that temporary difficulty will be overcome, and each Centre have its own fully qualified full-time nurse.

At a special meeting of your Council, it was decided that the Society's Centres should in future be called "Baby Welfare and Mothercraft Centres: Plunket System."

SUMMARY OF WORK DONE BY PLUNKET NURSES IN VARIOUS CENTRES.

Coburg.

From 1st November, 1920, to 21st October, 1921.

Visits to rooms	4091
Babies brought to rooms	2017
Individual babies treated	963
Visits to homes	778
Mothers shown how to prepare humanised milk	60
Meetings addressed	9

Footscray.

From June to October, 1921—Five Months.

Visits to rooms	1104
Individual babies treated	259
Visits to homes	448
Mothers shown how to prepare humanised milk	65

Preston.

From August to October—Two Months.

Visits to rooms	204
Individual babies treated	103

EXPECTANT MOTHERS.

It is a cause for regret that expectant mothers do not more freely avail themselves of the services of the Society's Plunket nurses. If members would induce prospective mothers of their acquaintance to seek the advice of a Plunket nurse, much ill-health would be prevented.

The Plunket nurses will be only too pleased to call on any expectant mothers, and advise on matters pertaining to the well-being of themselves and their prospective offspring.

EXTRACT FROM LETTER.

The following extract from a letter, under date 21.8.21, received from a mother who, during a short visit to Melbourne, availed herself of the services of the Plunket nurse will serve to show and voice the appreciation of many mothers who come under the Plunket nurses' influence:—" . . . Let me thank you with all my heart for the help and advice which made it possible for me to feed baby myself. If only all mothers could have the benefit of such advice as you can give, what a tremendous difference it would make! There are so few women who would not do their utmost for their babies, yet our ignorance is appalling. Surely in the near future some sort of simple instruction in the general principles of child-rearing will be made compulsory for girls. . . . Women do the most outrageous things in all kindness of intent. . . . It is a wonderful work you are doing, and in wishing you the greatest possible success in it I am sure I am only echoing the sentiments of every woman who has come under your influence."

BENEFITS OF THE PLUNKET SYSTEM.

By way of illustrating the benefits of the Plunket System in the case of nursing mothers, a few notes are given on one of the many cases under supervision at our Centres.

Mrs. A. brought her baby to the Plunket room, as she was not satisfied with the progress it was making. The baby, aged 2 months, had been naturally fed from birth, but did not appear to be thriving; there had been little or no increase in its weight, which, when first seen by the Plunket nurse, was $7\frac{1}{4}$ lbs. On being weighed before and after nursing, it was found that the mother's supply was insufficient, averaging about 10 ozs. short in the 24 hours. The mother was advised as to diet and treatment of breasts. She was shown how to make humanised milk, and supplementary feedings were given. There was an immediate response to treatment, and at the end of four weeks the supplementary feedings were discontinued, as the mother's supply had so increased that she was able to give her baby the required amount. During this time the baby gained 2 lbs. 6 ozs. This baby is still under supervision, and is putting on weight steadily, gaining on an average 7 ozs. per week. There has been no decrease in the mother's supply.

*To illustrate the case of a baby artificially fed on humanised milk, the following is given:—*Mrs. B. brought her baby to the Centre at the age of $2\frac{1}{2}$ months. The baby had been nursed by the mother for a fortnight only; the supply having failed. Baby was then put on to various brands of patent foods in the hope of "getting one to suit," but in each case severe symptoms of indigestion resulted. Cow's milk and water was tried with no better success. At this stage the baby was taken to the

doctor, who ordered her to the Centre to be put on to humanised milk. Weight, 7 lbs. $\frac{3}{4}$ oz. After the usual routine treatment, baby was put on to a very weak mixture of humanised milk. The first few days showed a marked decrease in vomiting. The food was therefore gradually strengthened. In one week vomiting had entirely ceased. In three weeks baby was on full strength food, and had gained 1 lb. 4 ozs. in weight. In three months she gained 5 lbs., and is now a happy normal baby.

PATRONESS.

During the year, Her Excellency the Countess of Stradbroke has consented to become a Patroness of the Society.

ATTEMPT AT CO-ORDINATION.

With a view to arriving at co-ordinated effort, and in the hope that the Plunket System might be adopted, efforts were made to junction with the Baby Health Centres Association. The endeavour proved resultless, notwithstanding the fact that your Council's representatives did their utmost in the matter.

FINANCE.

An audited statement of receipts and expenditure is attached hereto. As will be seen, the Society's funds come from two sources—members' subscriptions and donations. Members' annual subscriptions are now due, and should be forwarded to the Treasurer without delay. The Society's most pressing need is a Training Home for Nurses, the demand for these being far greater than the supply. But it is impossible to establish a Training Home without substantial additions to the Society's funds. That such a home would amply repay its cost in lives saved, and infantile troubles averted, is so completely demonstrated by the success of the Plunket nurses in this respect, that your Council confidently appeals to the members and others for the necessary financial support.

SUPERIORITY OF THE PLUNKET SYSTEM.

That the Plunket System is superior to others in dealing with infantile troubles needs no further proof than is afforded by the statistics of the Victorian Year Book, 1920-21 (see pages 139 to 145).

A glance through these will show the gratifying decrease in the death rate of children under one year at Coburg, where the system is in operation, as against the increases in most of the other municipalities where the system is not practised.

A further examination of the official figures will prove that (excluding Coburg), out of the twenty-two other municipalities named in the table printed hereunder, fourteen show an increase of deaths for 1920 over 1910-14; and no less than seventeen out of the twenty-two show an increase for 1920 over 1919.

Another disquieting fact disclosed by the Year Book proves that for the last year shown, 1920, the infantile mortality—deaths under one year—was, for *Victoria, the highest in Australasia.*

On the other hand, *New Zealand* (in which country the Plunket System is in full operation) is shown to be at the other end of the scale—the infantile mortality there being *the lowest in Australasia.*

This condition of things is most unsatisfactory, and calls for a searching inquiry by the Government to discover why it is that, despite the money and efforts of those interested to decrease the infantile death rate, in the majority of instances, instead of a decrease there is an increase.

TABLE EXTRACTED FROM THE VICTORIAN YEAR BOOK, 1920-21.—Page 139.

Infantile Death Rates for Metropolitan Municipalities.

Municipality	Deaths under One Year per 100 Births			Municipality	Deaths under One Year per 100 Births		
	1910-14	1919	1920		1910-14	1919	1920
*Coburg Town ...	12.30	13.42	9.75	Oakleigh Borough ...	7.65	7.34	9.00
†Port Melbourne City ...	12.00	9.13	10.29	†Prahran City ...	7.27	5.83	7.15
†Fitzroy City ...	11.24	11.45	13.09	St. Kilda City ...	6.38	6.30	8.08
†Richmond City ...	10.23	11.73	7.06	Caulfield City ...	5.87	4.40	4.01
Preston Shire ...	10.01	10.34	14.67	Essendon City ...	5.79	6.19	6.78
†Collingwood City ...	9.89	10.99	9.23	Hawthorn City ...	5.72	6.00	6.73
†Melbourne City ...	9.22	8.85	12.66	Camberwell City ...	5.58	4.83	6.21
†South Melbourne City ...	9.05	10.27	11.36	Malvern City ...	4.51	5.21	5.02
†Brunswick City ...	8.50	10.10	10.63	Northcote City ...	5.47	8.09	6.37
Footscray City ...	8.11	4.19	8.50	Kew City ...	4.76	3.11	5.78
Williamstown City ...	8.03	7.35	7.79	Sandringham Town...	8.53	8.04
Brighton City ...	7.84	3.65	3.20				

* Plunket System in operation more: Operating 3 to 7 months only—Caulfield, Kew, Brighton, Hawthorn, Camberwell. † Baby Health Centres operating for 12 months or more.

CONCLUSION.

In concluding this Report, your Council desires to place on record its keen appreciation of the wholehearted way in which Matron Moreland has devoted herself to the cause and to her work. As will be remembered, she was Matron for Dr. Truby King in New Zealand, the founder of the Plunket System, and came directly from there to undertake the work in Victoria. No better appointment could have been made, for her knowledge of the System is full and complete, whilst her enthusiasm is unbounded.

To the Plunket nurses also your Council wishes to express its thanks. They have done their work well.

With all good wishes for the continuing success of the Society.

For and on behalf of the Council,

J. W. SPRINGTHORPE, Chairman.

J. HUME COOK, Hon. Secretary.

The Society for the Health of Women and Children of Victoria.
(**PLUNKET SYSTEM.**)

STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURE, Year Ended 18th Oct., 1921.

RECEIPTS.		EXPENDITURE.	
To Members' Fees	£8 0 0	By Salaries	£361 19 4
" Life Members' Fees	84 0 0	" Printing, Pamphlets, etc.	115 4 9
" Donations	725 13 11	" Incidental Expenses	47 0 5
		" Propaganda Committee's Expenses	20 0 0
		" Petty Cash	15 0 0
			£559 4 6
		" Cash in Hand	£75 0 0
		" Commercial Bank of A./lia.	183 9 5
To Balance, 18/10/21.	£258 9 5		258 9 5
	£817 13 11		£817 13 11

Audited and found correct.

STUART A. DAVIS, A.C.P.A.,

Auditor.

26th October, 1921.

J. HUME COOK, Hon. Secretary.

LOUIS J. LEVY, Hon. Treasurer.

