

The Midwife.

Hospital Cots for Children.

HITHERTO, THE RELEVANT British Standard has required that the maximum width between the bars of hospital cots should be $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. (cf. R.H.B. (49) 75/H.M.C. (49) 61/B.G. (49) 62). A number of accidents have, however, occurred because babies were able to put their bodies through the bars of the cot and were then caught or suspended by their heads, and the British Standards Institution has in consequence now agreed a revised standard ("Hospital Ward Cots for Children." B.S. 1694 : 1953). The effect of the revision is that the space between the bars of cots should be within the range $2\frac{3}{4}$ in. to 3 in., with an upward tolerance of not more than $\frac{1}{8}$ in.

Boards and Committees are asked by the Ministry of Health to ensure that any new cots they may purchase conform to the revised British Standard; they are asked also to examine all the cots at present in use in their hospitals and to arrange for those which do not comply with the revised standard to be reconstructed or adapted as soon as possible. In the meantime suitable precautions should be taken to eliminate the possibility of accidents.

Estimate of Future Births.

325,000 Babies Expected in September and December Quarters

THE QUARTERLY ESTIMATE of the numbers of live births to be expected in England and Wales as a whole during the six months July - December, 1953, was announced recently by the Registrar General.

The final estimate for the September quarter is 170,000 and the provisional estimate for the December quarter is 155,000 giving an estimated total of 325,000 babies in the six months.

There were 167,938 live births registered in the September quarter of 1952, and 158,029 in the December quarter of that year—a total of 325,967.

In the week ended 25th July there were 7,675 live births registered in the 160 Great Towns of England and Wales compared with 7,751 in the previous week. This brings the total in those towns from the beginning of the year to 228,260 compared with 224,606 in the same period a year ago.

Infant Mortality and Stillbirth Rates Continue on Low Level

PROVISIONAL FIGURES FOR England and Wales published recently by the Registrar General show that in the March Quarter, 1953, the stillbirth rate was the lowest ever recorded for a first quarter in this country.

Deaths

Deaths at All Ages.—There were 171,268 deaths registered in the quarter, during which there was a moderate influenza epidemic. This represents a rate of 15.8 per thousand population compared with 13.5 a year earlier and the record low rate of 12.3 in the first quarter of 1948 on the one hand and a rate of 19.1 during the first quarter of 1951 when there was a severe epidemic of influenza.

A table giving provisional figures for 74 groups of causes of death in the separate quarters of 1952 is included. This shows, for example, that in the whole of 1952 deaths from diphtheria numbered only 33, the same as in 1951, deaths from influenza numbered 1,750 compared with nearly 16,000 in 1951.

Infant Mortality.—(Deaths of children under one year of age.) 5,645 such deaths were registered during the quarter, giving a rate of 33.8 per thousand related live births. The lowest rate ever recorded for a March quarter was 33.4 in 1952.

In the whole year 1952 the lowest rate for deaths of children under one year of age in the 23 towns with populations over 200,000 was that of Croydon C.B. with 19.6 deaths per thousand and related live births. The next lowest was Wandsworth Met. B. with a figure of 20.4. Bristol C.B. came next with 21.5. These figures compare with a national average of 27.6, which was the lowest figure ever recorded in this country.

Stillbirths

There were 3,957 stillbirths registered during the quarter, representing a rate of 22.5 per thousand total live and stillbirths—the lowest rate ever recorded for a March quarter in this country. The previous lowest rate for a March quarter was 23.0 in 1950.

Births

The birth rate showed a very slight decline to 15.8 per thousand population (171,705 births) from 15.9 in the first quarter of 1952, after a gradual fall from the peak figure of 22.8 in the first quarter of 1947.

Marriages

The number of marriages in the first quarter of this year was 95,959 compared with 106,560 in the first quarter of 1952, 109,567 in the first quarter of 1951 and an average of 78,945 for the first quarters of the years 1941-50.

Health Statistics from Northern Ireland

THE NORTHERN IRELAND Registrar-General, in his return for the quarter ended 31st March, 1953, states that the birth rate was 21.3 per 1,000 population, being 0.5 higher than March quarter, 1952, and that the death rate was 13.4 per 1,000 population, which shows an increase of 0.4 over the corresponding quarter last year, but is 1.3 below the average rate for the first quarters of the five years 1948-1952. The higher death rate in March quarter 1953 was mainly due to an increase in the number of deaths from the respiratory diseases, especially influenza, pneumonia and bronchitis.

The death rate from tuberculosis, which has continued to fall, was returned at 32 per 100,000 population, a decrease of 8 when compared with March, 1952, and the lowest record for March quarter of any year.

One death was registered as due to diphtheria—the first from this disease since June quarter 1951. The number of cases notified was three as compared with 2 for the first quarter of 1952.

The marriage rate fell from 6.7 per 1,000 population in March, 1952, to 6.0. The number celebrated was the lowest during this quarter since 1949.

The Earthquake Pill

I REMEMBER when our whole island was shaken by an earthquake some years ago there was an impudent mountebank who sold pills which, as he told country people, were very good against an earthquake.

ADDISON.

GENTLEMEN WASH

A little boy was rubbing his face with his mother's powder puff, when his small sister snatched it from him. "You're not supposed to do that," she informed him. "Only ladies use powder. Gentlemen wash."

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