

The Midwife.

THE LEYTONSTONE TRIPLETS.

The charming triplets whose picture appears on this page, and who are aged one year and ten months, recently won a special prize at a Leytonstone Baby Show, where they are very popular, and receive a good deal of attention. We think that their mother is to be congratulated on their healthy and well-cared-for appearance.

THE LUCY BALDWIN MATERNITY HOSPITAL.

Mr. Julian Cahn of Nottingham has presented to Mrs. Stanley Baldwin a Maternity Hospital for Stourport, Worcestershire, at a cost of £10,000, which was recently

London told me the other day that if mothers were properly looked after from the early stages of pregnancy until after the confinement you might close down half the women's wards in the hospitals of England.

"Last year was the lowest on record for infant mortality. We are not alone in our bad record of maternal mortality, but it will come as a shock to you, as it did to me, to know that there are countries in Europe who are dealing with this matter and have left us far behind. You will not be surprised to hear that Sweden, Norway, and Holland, those progressive countries, are far in advance of us, but what will surprise you is to know that one of the Latin countries, Italy, has made much greater progress than we have.

"I think that ought to be a stimulus to us. 'Why is it?' I keep asking myself. I think the reason partly is that we have never bothered about things that are so familiar to us, things that have gone on from the beginning of the world. We think that just as they do go on, they always have done and always will, and we take it for granted in our stupid and unimaginative way that a certain number of women have got to die at that time when it is not necessary.

"We do know this as a fact, that where, as is the case in a very small minority of cases, women will keep in constant touch with a skilled doctor from the earlier days of pregnancy right through, that the danger of death is infinitely diminished, and we know that the danger of trouble to the health afterwards is almost eradicated.

"We know also that an essential is proper attention by a person adequately and professionally qualified as a midwife.

A good deal of progress has been made in the last four or five years, and in some of the large towns, and under progressive local administration, ante-natal clinics have been started, but people don't go to them as they ought, and they don't go by reason of those two causes that play such a large part in our lives—ignorance and prejudice.

"The young women's mothers never went, therefore why should the young women? The husbands never heard of it and it may be that with the first baby probably both of them have got a feeling of unnecessary modesty. What we have got to do is to create a public opinion in the country on this matter. It is not a thing I can do. It is not a man's job—it's a woman's job. I want the women of England to help in this matter and to help their own sex in it. The men will follow fast enough.

GOVERNMENT INVESTIGATION.

"We in the Government—that is, in the Ministry of Health—for the last four years have been investigating very closely this problem of the supply of duly qualified midwives, and considering what can be done to make the



CHARMING LEYTONSTONE TRIPLETS.

opened by the Prime Minister who spoke, in part, as follows: "The only advantage of being a Prime Minister is that when you say something, however foolish, it goes. I want what I am going to say to get into every newspaper in the country. There are few subjects in which I and my distinguished friend, Mr. Neville Chamberlain, are more interested than those combined questions of maternity and infant welfare, because on them are built up the health and strength of the nation.

"The chairman said that in Stourport you lost five mothers for every 1,000 born. That confirms what I believe is a fact, that Worcestershire stands badly. The average for the United Kingdom is four, and that is bad enough. That is according to the record of the last 20 years, which means that we are without the services of some 150,000 mothers who at a normal expectation of life would be alive to-day if they had not been allowed to die with their first baby.

"Far worse than that, it is not only the question of the women that die; it is the question of serious physical injury and the question of invalidity which is often left for life. One of the most distinguished physicians in

previous page

next page