

The Midwife.

THE CENTRAL MIDWIVES BOARD.

Mr. A. J. Bennett, previously Assistant Secretary, has been appointed Secretary and Chief Executive Officer of the Central Midwives Board as from October 1st, 1945, in succession to Mr. Leslie Farrer-Brown.

SLIGHT FALL IN BIRTH-RATE.

The war-time upward movement in the birth-rate in England and Wales was slightly arrested in the first quarter of this year, although it was well above the average for the same period in the past five years.

The Registrar-General's Return of births, deaths and marriages registered in the quarter ended March 31 records a total of 177,893 live births, representing a rate of 17.0 per thousand compared with 17.4 in the same quarter last year. For the five preceding first quarters the average rate was 15.2. The rate for the March quarter of 1918 was 17.5.

Boy babies numbered 91,545, giving a proportion of 1,060 boys to 1,000 girls; this compares with an average of 1,061 for the ten preceding first quarters. Births exceeded deaths by 20,070.

The provisional infant mortality rate was 59 per thousand related live births, 11 below the average of the ten preceding first quarters.

A death-rate of 15.1 per thousand, compared with 13.8 for the same period a year ago, and an average rate of 16.0 for the corresponding period in the previous five years.

The number of marriages in the quarter was 76,614, being 14,015 more than in the same period last year, but 1,074 fewer than the average for the first quarters of the five years before 1944.

Those of us who have been interested in social evolution for half a century realise the wonderful improvement in the care of babes in prams and toddlers in our public parks, and note the refined beauty of the children with thanksgiving—proud young parents, for father helps to push the pram in these days, have learned a lesson in the care of children, which is of more value to the country than millions of gold.

BLOOD TRANSFUSION TO SAVE LIFE.

It is reported from the Ministry of Health that reports have been received of a growing belief—since the end of the war—that the blood transfusion schemes will be coming to an end. This is not so. The need for blood transfusions to save life is not only a war-time one and the Ministry of Health wants to keep the scheme in being to meet the peace-time needs.

Accidents occur every day, in the street, in factories, in the pits; and there are many illnesses for which blood transfusion is needed just as vitally as it was when it was flown to the battlefields. During the war 1 out of every 10 wounded men needed transfusion; and thousands of lives were saved.

Not everyone has stopped to realise this fact or that blood donors are still urgently needed to maintain adequate supplies in the blood "banks" for the use of hospitals, clinics, etc.

The uses of blood transfusions in maternity cases are also of general interest.

A special appeal is made to those already on the donors' panels to continue their support and attend when called upon for a further gift. In addition, many more volunteers are needed. Those not already enrolled in the blood

Donors' Service should apply to the nearest large hospital or the Local Blood Transfusion Depot.

We should be grateful for any publicity which will help to spread the knowledge that this service to humanity is an all-time one and not only a war-time one.

OVALTINE RESEARCH LABORATORIES.

Annual Report (1944).

The Ovaltine Research Laboratories were originally established to control the manufacture of Ovaltine and certain pharmaceutical products. They were subsequently extended to undertake general research work in nutrition. The advantage of access to the well-known Ovaltine farms and consequently the close proximity of raw material to finished products afforded a unique opportunity of studying food values at every stage; first in the diet of cows and hens; next in the milk and eggs they produced; and finally in the preparations manufactured from the milk and eggs. In 1940 it was decided to extend further, and a special department was equipped for the estimation of vitamins, minerals, proteins, and other essential factors by chemical and physical methods.

Apparent Vitamin C in Foods.

Work has been in progress for some years on an interesting group of substances occurring in natural and processed foods. These substances are closely related chemically to vitamin C, from which they cannot be distinguished by the ordinary analytical methods, but do not possess the anti-scorbutic properties of the true vitamin. They have been provisionally named "apparent vitamin C," until their true chemical nature can be determined.

Seasonal Changes in True and Apparent Vitamin C in Walnuts.

Most natural foods, particularly vegetables, appear to contain only small amounts of apparent vitamin C, which does not form more than 5 or 10 per cent. of the total vitamin C, and therefore causes no serious error in the vitamin C value of the food, even if no allowance is made for its presence. Walnuts, however, are a notable exception to this rule. The apparent vitamin C in walnuts may form more than half the total vitamin C.

Experiments involving thousands of estimations provides evidence for a new theory concerning the origin of vitamin C in plants. Vitamin C, if directly produced by photo-synthesis, should occur in highest concentration in the outer tissues where photo-synthetic activity is highest—(i.e., the epicarp of nuts, the mesophyll of leaves, and the phloem of the stem and leaf and fruit stalks). But results clearly showed that in walnuts the highest concentration of vitamin C is not in any of these outer tissues, but in the endocarp of the nuts.

Apparent Vitamin C in Other Fruits.

Examination of a number of other fruits, such as rose-hips, blackcurrants, tomatoes and oranges, has shown them to contain only traces of apparent vitamin C.

In this work, the results of which are not yet complete, the Ovaltine Research Laboratories have been greatly helped by Dr. F. Bergel, Research Director, Messrs. Roche Products, Ltd.; and by Professor R. A. Morton.

Vitamins in Malt Extract.

The Ovaltine Research Laboratories are continuing and extending their work to other B vitamins with the object of ensuring the highest possible food value in their malt extracts.

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