

The Midwife.

CONTINUED RISE IN BIRTH-RATE.

Infant Mortality Lowest Ever Recorded.

The Registrar-General's return for England and Wales for the September quarter,* which was published recently, gives more details of the births registered during the three months concerned. These, as previously announced, represented the highest birth-rate (19.7 per 1,000 total population) recorded in any quarter since 1921.

The total number of births was 213,135, compared with 167,807 for the September quarter, 1945, when the birth-rate was 15.6. The average birth-rate for September quarters of the five years 1940-44 was 15.4. Of the total, 109,598 were boys and 103,537 girls—1,059 boys to 1,000 girls, which is about the average proportion.

Illegitimate births numbered 13,123, or 6.2 per cent. of the total births recorded, compared with 15,243, or 9.1 per cent. in the corresponding quarter of 1945.

Births in the September quarter exceeded deaths by 112,772, the corresponding excess for the September quarter, 1945, being 70,648.

Infant mortality, provisionally corrected, was 35 per 1,000 related live births. This is the lowest rate ever recorded for England and Wales, and is 7 per 1,000 below the average rate for the third quarter of the ten preceding years 1936-45 and 2 per 1,000 below that for the September quarter, 1945, which was the previous lowest. The diarrhoea death rate for children under two years of age was 3.2 per 1,000 live births (687 deaths), compared with 6.2, 5.5, 5.6 and 4.2 in the four preceding quarters.

The number of deaths was 100,363 representing a death rate of 9.3 per 1,000, compared with 9.0 for the September quarter, 1945, and an average of 9.8 for the third quarter of the five years 1940-44.

Marriages totalled 109,047 which was 10,400 fewer than the number registered in the September quarter, 1945, but 9,663 more than the average for the five years 1940-44.

RETIREMENT OF COLONEL L. W. HARRISON, 27 YEARS AS MINISTRY'S ADVISER ON VENEREAL DISEASES.

Colonel Lawrence Whitaker Harrison, C.B., D.S.O., M.B., Ch.B., F.R.C.P. (Ed.), has retired from the staff of the Ministry of Health, to which he has been Adviser on Venereal Diseases since 1919. Colonel Harrison has been associated with the control of venereal diseases in England and Wales for nearly half a century. In recognition of his work, the American Social Hygiene Association awarded him the William Freeman Snow Medal for 1946.

Appointed as pathologist at the Rochester Row Military Hospital, London, in 1909, Colonel Harrison did pioneer work in devising aids to diagnosis. He also played a leading part in the early investigations which proved the efficacy of the compound "606" (later known as Salvarsan) as a means of making syphilis rapidly non-contagious. This research had an important influence both on the routine treatment of venereal disease in the Army during the 1914-1918 war, and also on the recommendations of the Royal Commission which sat from 1913-1916 to inquire into the incidence and effects of venereal disease in this country.

In 1915, Colonel Harrison took charge of the Venereal Disease Military Hospital at Le Havre—the only one in France at that time. The following year he became O.C. Military Hospital, Rochester Row, and Adviser on Venereal Disease to the War Office. From 1919 onwards

he combined the work of Adviser on Venereal Disease to the Ministry of Health with the Directorship of the Venereal Disease Department at St. Thomas's Hospital. He was, therefore, concerned simultaneously with the framing of policy and with practical work.

During Colonel Harrison's first 20 years at the Ministry of Health there was considerable progress in control of venereal disease. Clinic attendances indicate that early syphilis decreased by about two-thirds between 1920 and 1939. It is estimated that the incidence of venereal disease among British troops stationed in this country in the last war was only about two-fifths of the corresponding rate in the 1914-1918 war.

All the same, in this, as in other countries, there was a steep increase in venereal disease, favoured by war conditions, from 1940 onwards (the incidence of early syphilis, for instance, increased from 4,986 in 1939 to 10,741 in 1945). Colonel Harrison's last years at the Ministry were associated with an energetic campaign to combat this evil. Increased facilities for diagnosis and treatment were provided, Regulation 33B was enacted to control the irresponsible spreader of venereal infection, and the control of venereal disease became, for the first time in this country, the subject of mass propaganda by the Ministry of Health.

Colonel Harrison is the author of a number of publications on venereal disease, among them "The Diagnosis and Treatment of the Venereal Diseases in General Practice, 4th Edition, 1931"; "A Manual of Venereal Diseases for Students, 1920"; "The Modern Diagnosis and Treatment of Syphilis, Chancroid and Gonorrhoea, 1924."

RETIREMENT OF MISS S. E. DAVIES.

After 28 years' service as Matron of the Royal Naval and Marine Maternity Home (Canada House), Gillingham, Miss S. E. Davies has recently retired.

We are sure she will be missed from the Institution she has served for so many years.

JENNIFER RUTH MAKES HER ENTRY.

At exactly one minute after midnight on January 1st Jennifer Ruth Jones was born at the General Lying-in Hospital, York Road, Lambeth, London, weighing 5 lb. 14½ oz.

She is almost certainly the first baby to be born in this country in 1947. We wish her happiness.

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* Registrar-General's Return of Births, Deaths and Marriages for the September quarter, 1946, H.M. Stationery Office, York House, Kingsway, W.C.2, price 6d. or post free 7d.

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