

The Midwife.

Low Stillbirth and Infant Mortality Rate. Birth Rate Still Falling.

PROVISIONAL VITAL STATISTICS for England and Wales for the June quarter of this year given in the Registrar General's Quarterly Return * published on October 11th, show that the infant mortality and stillbirth rates were the lowest ever recorded for any second quarter in this country. The infant mortality rate was 28 per thousand related live births, compared with 30 in the corresponding period a year earlier and an average of 43 for the second quarters of the ten years 1940-49. The stillbirth rate was 22.5 per thousand total live and still births, or 0.4 lower than for the second quarter of 1949.

Births.

There were 181,784 live births registered during the quarter, representing a rate of 16.7 per thousand total population. This compares with 192,038 births and a rate of 17.6 in the June quarter, 1949. For the second quarters of the five years 1940-44 the average birth rate was 16.5, for the five years 1945-49 it was 18.8, and for the ten years 1931-1940 it was 15.9. Illegitimate births formed 5.1 per cent. of the total. This was the same percentage as that for the corresponding quarter of 1949.

Deaths.

Deaths registered during the quarter numbered 120,746, representing a death rate, based on the 1949 total population, of 11.1 per thousand. This was 0.1 above the rate for the same period last year, and 0.5 above the average for the June quarters of the five years 1944-48.

Deaths from acute poliomyelitis (provisional total) numbered 71, compared with 28,250, 319 and 86 in the four preceding quarters.

The diarrhoea death rate for children under two years of age was 1.7 per thousand births (300 deaths), compared with 2.4, 2.6, 2.9 and 2.6 in the four preceding quarters.

There were no deaths from smallpox registered in this quarter. There were four cases notified, three in Halifax C.B. and one in Liverpool Port Health District.

Natural Increase.

The births registered exceeded the deaths by 61,038, the corresponding natural increases for the second quarters of 1949, 1948 and 1947 being, respectively 72,066, 93,336 and 117,181.

Marriages.

There were 161,082 persons married—38,084 fewer than the average for the corresponding quarters of the preceding five years 1945-49.

Survey of Sickness.

Of the persons interviewed about their health in the March quarter, 1950, 65.5 per cent. out of 8,814 men and 75 per cent. out of 10,825 women reported that they had suffered illness or injury of some kind during January, February and March. The corresponding figures for the March quarter 1949 were 67.4 per cent. and 77.8 per cent.

The percentage of men who consulted a doctor during a month in this period was 49.4 and that of women 55.1. The average number of days' incapacity in a month due to sickness was 1.22 among men and 1.31 among women.

Housewives (65 per cent. of the women interviewed) had more consultations with doctors than other women (56.2 per cent. per month). Although a higher proportion of them suffered some illness or injury (77.6 per cent. per month) they reported slightly less incapacity (1.30 days per month).

* The Registrar General's June Quarterly Return, No. 406, H.M. Stationery Office, price 1s. net (or by post from P.O. Box 569, London, S.E.1, price 1s. 1d.). General Register Office, Somerset House, Strand, W.C.2.

Charity Ball for Unmarried Mothers' Home.

A CHARITY GALA BALL ORGANISED BY SUPPORTERS of Dr. Donald Soper's appeal for a residential home for unmarried mothers and their babies was held at the Lyceum, Wellington Street, Strand, W.C.2, on Tuesday, October 17th, from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m.

Dance music by Harry Roy and his band, and a cabaret, side-shows and competitions were provided.

The sponsors' target was 2,000 dancers at 5s. a ticket to obtain a minimum of £500 towards the £5,000 needed to convert and equip a property in Highbury Grove, N. London, where 17 mothers and babies can live, and the mothers go out to work, leaving their children in safe hands in the daytime. This home will be completed early next year and will be open to mothers of all denominations.

Sponsors of the ball were Mr. Cyril Tibbett, head of a Dunstable and Luton Printing and Publishing firm, and Mrs. Nancy Tibbett, youngest sister of the late Group Captain "Boy" P. C. Pickard, D.S.O., D.F.C., hero of the raid on Amiens prison on February 18th, 1944, who lost his life leading a force of Mosquito bombers in an attack which enabled 70 French patriots to escape sentence of death.

Bristol's Public Health Services on Show.

MEMBERS OF THE MEDICAL PROFESSION and public health specialists from Italy, France, British Guiana, Singapore and Brazil assembled in Bristol on September 8th for a three-week Public Health course arranged by the British Council in association with the city's Medical Officer of Health and the University.

By means of lectures and visits of observation the course dealt with sanitation in the house and in restaurants and other public places, the handling of food and drink, and the control of nuisances and offensive trades; and particular attention was paid to maternity and child welfare services. Housing problems were also considered, both in the City of Bristol and in rural areas; and during the final week of the course members were able to pursue individual professional interests and make contacts with British colleagues.

Higher Salaries for Senior Nursing Staff in Mental Hospitals.

Revised salary scales have been agreed for senior nursing staff in mental hospitals and mental deficiency institutions, it was announced by the Nurses and Midwives Whitley Council recently. The new scales are part of the general review of nurses' salaries which has been proceeding for some time and they have retrospective effect from February 1st, 1949. Details will be published as soon as possible.

Scales for senior staff in general and fever hospitals and sanatoria have already been agreed. The scales for senior staff in maternity hospitals are now under consideration.

Last Words for 1950.

RIDE ON! ROUGHSHOD IF NEED BE, smooth shod if that will do, but ride on! Ride over all obstacles and win the race.

CHARLES DICKENS.

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