

Sir Allen says :—

"Many factors have contributed to these results. They include advances in medical knowledge both in the curative and preventive fields and what is even more important the application of that knowledge. But knowledge and its application profit not if those whom it will benefit do not avail themselves of it at the proper time. . . . Simple illustrations in the preventive fields are immunisation against diphtheria and vaccination against smallpox. These should be started in infancy and the immunity reinforced at appropriate intervals. . . . On the curative side there is no doubt that a doctor can do his best and most effective work if he is called in during the earlier, rather than the later, stages of a serious illness and dissemination of knowledge about health and disease with this objective in view is of paramount importance."

Reference is made in the following notes to some of the more interesting information to be found in the Report :—

Vital Statistics.—The estimated population for the middle of the year was almost the same as that for 1949—3,389,620 compared with 3,389,850.

The number of live births was 54,335 and the birth-rate declined to 15.7 per 1,000 of the population compared with 16.7 for 1949 and 17.9 for 1948. The rate for 1938 was 13.4.

There were 38,352 deaths giving a death-rate of 11.3 per 1,000 of the population, slightly lower than in 1949 (11.7).

The death-rate from cancer (2.20) was slightly higher than in 1949, but the increase is mainly attributable to a revision in the "cause of death classification."

Road accidents caused 245 deaths compared with 257 in 1949. This constituted a heavier toll than that caused by any poliomyelitis outbreak so far experienced and was more than the deaths due to diabetes.

Just over half the total number of deaths were caused by two groups—heart diseases and cancer.

Infant Mortality.—A new low record was again reached, 25.8 per 1,000 live births (against 26.8 in 1949).

The campaign to encourage immunisation against diphtheria continues to give very encouraging results. In 1950 there were only 81 cases, a rate of 0.024 per 1,000 population compared with 0.065 in 1949. 75 per cent. of the cases under age 15 were among those who had never been immunised.

The mortality from tuberculosis again declined and the notification rate for new cases of pulmonary tuberculosis (1.53 per 1,000 population) was considerably below the rate of 1.68 recorded in 1949. The rate for non-pulmonary tuberculosis was the same as in 1949, namely 0.16. A special section is included in the report reviewing changes and trends in tuberculosis mortality in London since 1900.

The *Chemical Branch* examined 24,523 samples during the year and carried out many advisory duties for other departments of the Council.

The report records that 79 per cent. of infants attended a maternity and child welfare centre at least once in their first year of life. This compares with 84 per cent. the previous year. In addition, 50 per cent. of all women needing ante-natal care attended the Council's clinics, compared with 52 per cent. in 1949. Nowadays almost every expectant mother has ante-natal care; the balance of 50 per cent. received it from hospitals or from their family doctor.

A special section is included on the care of premature babies born at home. Sir Allen states: "Provided that housing and social conditions reach a reasonable standard babies over 4 lbs. and not more than six weeks premature can be satisfactorily nursed at home and breast-feeding is established in nearly all cases without any difficulty. The smaller and more immature infants have a better chance of survival in a special premature baby unit."

The *Domiciliary Midwifery Service* provided attention for 7,308 confinements during the year, a continuation of the

reduction which began in 1948, due partly to the decreased birth-rate and partly to the attraction of hospital confinement.

The district nursing associations provided *home nursing* on behalf of the Council, paying 1,291,887 visits during the year, an increase of 200,000 compared with 1949.

The demand on the Domestic Help Service continued; 25,805 cases were assisted, a total of 3,159,728 hours being worked by the home helps, an increase over the previous year of nearly 400,000 hours. The equivalent of 1,402 full-time home helps were employed at the end of the year.

There was an increase in the number of children vaccinated—25,777 against 21,507. It is of interest to note that the increase in 1950 was largely confined to the second quarter of the year when smallpox occurred in Glasgow and there was much press publicity.

The demand on the *Ambulance Service* was again very great, over 700,000 patients being conveyed by the General Section (552,000 in 1949) involving over three million miles. In the Accident Section there were 83,791 calls with a mileage of 437,416. The Hospital Car Service, which gives some relief to the General Section, carried over 152,000 patients (against 118,000 in 1949) with a mileage of over two million.

The officers responsible for the removal to *mental observation wards* of patients in need of care and protection for themselves or others because of a mental disorder dealt with 7,392 persons, a slight increase on the previous year.

Eighteen occupation centres for *mentally deficient persons* had been provided by the end of the year.

The *School Health Service* is reviewed in detail. A total of 409,120 medical inspections were carried out during the year and only 17.6 per cent. of the children required to be referred for further medical advice or treatment.

The report of the Council's *Chief Dental Surgeon* again deals with the difficulties of maintaining a priority dental service in the face of inadequate staffing. Even so, 82,650 school children and 24,323 mothers and young children were treated during the year.

Brief reports from the nine divisional medical officers are included and full statistical tables are included as an appendix.

The report, published by the London County Council, may be purchased from the Information Bureau at County Hall (Room 8, South Block), or from Staples Press, Ltd., Mandeville Place, W.1, either direct or through any bookseller. The price is 2s. 6d., by post 2s. 10½d.

Devoted Benevolence

MANY YEARS AGO Miss Isobel Macdonald inaugurated her well-known Calendar Fund to raise the wherewithal through which gifts are sent to aged nurses for Christmas cheer.

In this expression of compassionate sympathy for her colleagues who have weathered the years, the blessing is twofold; it not only helps towards the physical comfort to warm the heart, but in the tremendous amount of labour and talent which Miss Macdonald devotes so ungrudgingly in compiling this charming annual message, she brings to many others a much appreciated literary contribution.

This year the Calendar is rather enhanced than otherwise by its neat dimensions, necessitated by the paper shortage.

The price, including envelope, is 2s. 6d. per copy, and can be obtained from Miss Isobel Macdonald, Royal British Nurses' Association, 194, Queen's Gate, London, S.W.7.

Last Word for 1951.

WHEREVER THERE IS LIFE to be tended, nourished or nursed, educated and saved, whether the life be yet unborn or new-born, or senile or ill, there is the field for womanhood exercising its great function of foster motherhood.

HARRIET LEEK, R.N.

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