

Infant Mortality.—The infant-mortality rate was 31·21 per 1,000 live births, being slightly higher than the record low figure of 30·96 in 1936.

Still-births. The still-birth rate was 29·38, representing a slight improvement on the 1936 figure of 29·5.

Birth-rate.—The total births were 26,014, equivalent to a rate of 17·29 per 1,000 mean population. This is the highest rate recorded since 1931.

Maternal-mortality Rate.—The maternal-mortality rate, including deaths from septic abortions, was 3·57 per 1,000 live births, as compared with 3·70 in 1936. The number of septic abortions was 23, against 14 in 1936.

The trend of the maternal-mortality rate is shown in the following table :—

Deaths from Puerperal Causes, 1928–37.

| Year. | Number. | Rate per 1,000 Live Births. | Year. | Number. | Rate per 1,000 Live Births. |
|------------|---------|--------------------------------|------------|---------|--------------------------------|
| 1928 | 134 | 4·93 | 1933 | 108 | 4·44 |
| 1929 | 129 | 4·92 | 1934 | 118 | 4·85 |
| 1930 | 136 | 5·08 | 1935 | 101 | 4·21 |
| 1931 | 127 | 4·77 | 1936 | 92 | 3·70 |
| 1932 | 101 | 4·06 | 1937 | 93 | 3·57 |

The Government Statistician in the *Abstract of Statistics* for March, 1938, brings out a point which may well be referred to here :—

“ Among the deaths due to puerperal causes each year are included a considerable number resulting from conditions which should not be considered a normal hazard of the puerperal state. While it is impossible to differentiate these definitely, there can be no doubt that the great majority of septic-abortion cases should be classed under this heading. A truer index of maternal mortality than is afforded by the figure of puerperal mortality can thus be arrived at by deducting from the latter all cases of abortion where septic conditions are reported.

“ Deaths from Puerperal Causes, excluding Septic Abortion, 1928–37.

| Year. | Number. | Rate per 1,000 Live Births. | Year. | Number. | Rate per 1,000 Live Births. |
|------------|---------|--------------------------------|------------|---------|--------------------------------|
| 1928 | 120 | 4·41 | 1933 | 82 | 3·37 |
| 1929 | 110 | 4·11 | 1934 | 76 | 3·12 |
| 1930 | 106 | 3·96 | 1935 | 78 | 3·25 |
| 1931 | 98 | 3·68 | 1936 | 78 | 3·14 |
| 1932 | 75 | 3·02 | 1937 | 70 | 2·69 |

“ On this basis the 1937 maternal-mortality rate shows a substantial decrease from the previous year, and is, in fact, the lowest rate ever recorded in New Zealand.”

INFECTIOUS AND OTHER DISEASES.

(Exclusive of Maori, unless otherwise stated.)

The total number of cases of notifiable diseases in 1937 was 4,203, compared with 3,652 in 1936. This increase is largely accounted for by the epidemic of poliomyelitis, to which reference is made later. Otherwise the year was comparatively uneventful.

Scarlet Fever.—This disease was less prevalent, 924 cases and 6 deaths being reported, as against 1,152 cases and 8 deaths in 1936. The death-rate was 0·04 per 10,000 (0·05 in 1936).

Diphtheria.—Five hundred and ninety-nine cases of diphtheria were notified in 1937, as compared with 513 cases in 1936. Twenty-four deaths were recorded, giving a death-rate of 0·16 per 10,000, as compared with 20 deaths and a rate of 0·13 in 1936.

Medical workers at the Connaught Laboratories, University of Toronto, Canada, in an article contributed to *The Lancet*, of 12th February, 1938, give additional support to the growing volume of medical evidence as to the value of active immunization in the prevention of diphtheria. The following is an extract from this article :—

“ Records show striking declines in diphtheria morbidity and mortality and in the incidence of carriers in various cities and provinces in Canada following the wide use of ‘ toxoid.’ The abruptness of this decline in diphtheria morbidity and mortality and in the incidence of diphtheria-carriers in Canada following the extensive use of toxoid, the absence of any comparable diminution of the number of cases or of deaths from diphtheria before the use of toxoid, and the demonstrated efficiency of toxoid in preventing diphtheria in those vaccinated, leave no doubt that the decline is due to immunization. The extent of the decline in several of the large cities and certain of the provinces of Canada shows indubitably that diphtheria is a preventable disease.”