

sanitary authorities began, a few years ago, to make an effort to reduce the high rate. This has succeeded to such an extent that the mean infant death-rate for 1901-5 had fallen to 138 per 1,000 births. This was accepted as being in some measure due to the low summer temperature prevailing in 1902 and 1903 having materially reduced the mortality from infantile diarrhoea, a form of disease which is one of the controlling factors in the annual rate of infant mortality. The summer temperature for last year was, however, above the average; still, the Registrar-General, in his annual summary for that year, reports the infant mortality for the year as 128 per 1,000* "the lowest on record since the commencement of civil registration in 1837†" It may therefore be taken that the great fall in the deathrate during these years is, in great measure, to be credited to the effects of the authorities having provided well-trained female inspectors to visit and teach the mothers how to care for and feed their offspring properly, and to other measures taken to help towards the same end. The infant mortality in England and Wales varies from little over 80 per 1,000 in some country districts up to far beyond 200 in some of the large towns. Epidemic infantile diarrhoea is a "town disease," and it is in the towns where the great decrease in mortality has been brought about.

The "*Lancet*," of the 26th May, 1906, in its review of the Registrar-General's recently issued detailed annual report for 1904, states that the tables "show that the mean rate of infantile mortality in England and Wales in 1904 was equal to 145 per 1,000, of which 10 were due to the principal infectious diseases . . . 32 to diarrhoeal diseases, 46 to wasting diseases including premature birth, congenital defects, atrophy and debility). . . . It may also be pointed out that in recent years there has been a marked and steady increase in the deaths referred to premature birth. During the five years 1866-70 these deaths were equal to a proportion of 11 per 1,000 births registered, whereas

* Along with these figures should be considered the very nearly related and important subject of birthrate—and although this would not materially alter the figures its importance may in some measure be appreciated from the fact that during the last 20 years it is estimated that there is a shortage of 4,000,000 births, which there is good reason to believe is not due to diminished fecundity.

† Registrar-General's annual summary for 1905, *Lancet* 26th May, 1906, page 1481