

beyond helping these men to think of things other than evil ones. There is no need to organize such efforts. The more informal they are the better. Dr Ramsbottom suggests that any fellow who is prepared to help in this direction should get into touch with the Y.M.C.A. or similar organization at the nearest camp; or with the padres at the military hospitals. Here they will find a knowledge of individuals which is amazing, and an offer to talk to one or two men or to give a lecture on some aspect of biology which has a popular appeal will invariably be accepted.

Chair of Electrical Engineering, Birmingham

THE chair of electrical engineering in the University of Birmingham, vacated by the resignation of Prof. B. L. Goodlet, has been filled by the appointment of Dr. Cecil Dannatt. Dr. Dannatt has had many years experience with the Metropolitan-Vickers Electrical Co., Ltd., at Manchester, especially in the Research Department, where he has for some time been in charge of the Electrical and Magnetic Laboratory. His work has brought him into close contact with various branches of the industry and has given him opportunities of judging the needs and capabilities of young men in training for routine work and for research in electrical engineering. In the 1938-39 session, Dr. Dannatt was part-time lecturer in electrical engineering at Queen Mary College, University of London. Prof. Goodlet, who only took office in November last, resigned in order that he might make more effective use of his capacity in war-work elsewhere.

Books in War-time

IN NATURE of May 11, p. 719, we put forward the plea that books should not be subject to the proposed purchase tax. It has now been announced that on June 21 the Chancellor of the Exchequer received a deputation in this connexion composed of representatives of the church, literature, science, and education. The deputation consisted of the Archbishop of Canterbury (who introduced the deputation), Sir Arthur Eddington, Lord Hambleden, Mr. A. P. Herbert, M.P., Prof. A. V. Hill, Dr. Albert Mansbridge, Mr. J. B. Priestley, Sir Charles Grant Robertson, and Prof. R. H. Tawney. The Bishop of Chichester and Sir Will Spens were unavoidably prevented from attending. The deputation was accompanied by Mr. Geoffrey Faber and Mr. G. Wren Howard, president and vice-president of the Publishers' Association, and Mr. Stanley Unwin, chairman of the Books and Periodicals Committee of the British Council.

Pest Control Chemicals

AT a recent meeting of interested firms, the Pest Control Chemicals Export Group was formally inaugurated, with headquarters at 166 Piccadilly, London, W.1. The Group has now received the recognition of the Export Council of the Board of Trade. The broad object of the Group is to promote the export trade in such chemicals. Any British persons, firms or bodies corporate

actively engaged in the manufacture and export of pest control chemical products, such as (a) disinfectants, (b) sheep and cattle dips, (c) agricultural insecticides and fungicides and (d) animal medicines and allied products are eligible for membership of the Group. The main Group comprises four autonomous sub-groups to deal with the problems arising from each of these sections of the industry. Thirty-six firms have already signified their intention of joining the Group. The first problems of the Group will be in connexion with materials in short supply.

Evisulsion of Front Teeth in East Africa

IN reference to recent comment in NATURE (April 20, p. 631) on Dr. Aleš Hrdlička's study of the practice of removing the front teeth found among primitive peoples, Dr. Frank Marsh, c/o Anglo-Iranian Oil Co., Ltd., Pathological Laboratory, Abadan, Iran, suggests an alternative to the ritual origin of the custom, based upon his experience in British East Africa. There, he points out, the practice of removing the incisors is almost entirely confined to the Masai and related tribes. These tribes are warrior castes who under their natural (pre-controlled) condition lived by and for fighting; and in the course of this pursuit they expected to receive wounds, especially from arrows carrying poison derived from putrescent flesh. The juices of putrefaction contain large numbers of the spores of *Clostridium tetani*, causing lockjaw. The victim is then fed on milk and other liquids introduced through the toothless gap. Some recover—a result rare among civilized peoples. Dr. Marsh suggests that this may be a definite practical reason for the ritual removal of the teeth.

While it is unquestionable that practical experience of the kind to which Dr. Marsh refers would tend to perpetuate the practice in a given group of people, its influence probably is secondary. Various reasons are given by peoples who follow the practice; for example, it may be related to the escape of the soul from the body at death; while it is too widely distributed in time and space—it occurs among the mesolithic peoples of Palestine and North Africa—for it to be likely that a single practical purpose is implicated in all the varying conditions alike.

The Populations of Southern Algeria

DR. MAURICE GRONIER devotes his inaugural thesis (*Thèse de Paris*, No. 163; 1940) to the anthropological features and peculiarities of disease of the inhabitants of southern Algeria. The Arab population is characterized by a fairly high average stature, distinct dolichocephaly and leptorhinia, while the Mzabite population is distinguished by a higher stature, a relatively long trunk, a tendency to mesocephaly and a higher nasal index. The dentition of these populations is remarkably good, there being an exceedingly low percentage of caries. In addition to widespread malaria, parasitic invasion of the skin and alimentary canal and especially trachoma, the points in which the natives of southern Algeria show a striking contrast with Europeans are as follows: