

Czech Culture under German Rule

DR. BENEŠ has written a restrained but authenticated account of some of the Nazi crimes in a pamphlet (London: Allen and Unwin. 6d.) which has just appeared. It was the pride of the Czech nation that its culture, bound by numerous traditional ties with Britain and the West, was acknowledged by the whole civilized world. Now, after more than a year of German occupation, relics alone remain. The Nazis have attacked all sections of cultural life in an attempt to destroy the fundamentals of Czech national ideals. Besides the universities and colleges, many schools are closed and modern educational buildings used as barracks, so that the education of Czech children is impossible. The dictum of the Nazi commissioners is that "for the Czechs as an *Arbeitervolk* elementary schools are sufficient". These serve for mass Germanization. School books have been "revised", and new ones with Nazi theories are systematically imposed upon the nation.

Meanwhile, twenty thousand students have been driven from their lecture rooms, and those employers who tried to alleviate their lot by giving them employment have been punished. Scientific equipment has been destroyed, valuable libraries wrecked and books and volumes of scientific journals burned or at best carried off to Germany. Results of years of research by Czech professors lie as rubbish on the floors of the lecture rooms and laboratories. The professors (some hundreds) and their assistants (about a thousand) were not allowed to take even their private possessions and note-books from their rooms; many have been sent to concentration camps and others given minor duties in administrative offices for which they were not fitted. The pamphlet merits the attention of learned men throughout the world and should arouse them to the danger now facing civilization.

Seasonal Mortality in England and the United States

SEASONAL variation of mortality has long been a fact of common knowledge, and its cause the subject of speculation. The maximum invariably falls in the first quarter of the year and the minimum in the third quarter. The difference between the two quarters is considerable; in 1931-35 the maximum was 60 per cent greater than the minimum. Is there any way, it may be asked, of reducing this difference, or is the winter excess due to causes of death over which at present we have little means of control? A comparison of the mortality figures of England and Wales with those of the United States shows that the winter peak is higher in the former, although in summer they fall to a lower point than the United States figures.

This seasonal difference of mortality in the two countries has been the subject of a detailed statistical study by Dr. Lewis-Faning (Medical Research Council, Spec. Rep. Series, No. 239. H.M. Stationery Office, 1940. 1s. net). He reaches the conclusion that the winter disadvantage and the summer advantage of Great Britain are not due to climatic factors only, but are both also dependent, at least in part, on

factors of mortality preventable in some degree. Thus, the main contributors to the British unfavourable winter balance are influenza, respiratory tuberculosis, bronchitis and pneumonia, and it has long been held that the last-named is at least partially preventable. The two most important contributors to our summer advantage are diseases of the heart and deaths from violence. The former shows a large decline in summer in both countries, the latter reveals no decided seasonal variation in Great Britain but a large summer rise in the United States. The relatively high rate of mortality from this cause in the United States is clearly one that may be open to attack.

Cambridge University Botanic Garden

BOTANICAL gardens contribute living interest to the teaching of plant science, and it is significant that their development began in the earliest days of the study of botany. The University of Cambridge was not one of the first bodies to recognize the value of providing living plants for study, but it had some early associations with botanical science. Mr. F. G. Preston has published an interesting paper on the history of the gardens now under his charge (*J. Roy. Hort. Soc.*, 65, Pt. 6, June 1940). The famous Gerard attempted to establish a botanical garden at Cambridge in 1588, but without success. John Ray studied the Cambridgeshire flora, and later handed his mantle to the University's professor of botany, John Martyn, who extended the floral studies to other counties, and lived to see the first botanic garden at his University. In 1762, Dr. Walker, vice-master of Trinity College, obtained about five acres of land, on the advice of his friend, Philip Miller of Chelsea. The garden remained in poor condition until 1831, when Prof. Henslow was successful in obtaining the present site, and transferred the plants to their new surroundings. The names of Babbington, Lynch, Marshall Ward and Sir Albert Seward show to what extent the directors of the garden have contributed to the development of modern science, and in more recent times W. Bateson and Prof. R. C. Punnett have worked there. Development after the War of 1914-18 was along the lines of closer contact with the teaching of botany, and was associated particularly with the names of Reginald Cory and Humphrey Gilbert-Carter.

Accessions to the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

THE annual report of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, for the year ending December 31, 1939, includes in a considerable list of accessions in the period a number of no little archaeological interest and importance. Among these a bequest of an Egyptian bronze cat of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty by the late Claude G. Montefiore is said to be "the best of the type in the department". A steatite figure of Amen-ra and a hematite amulet of Ta-urt given by the director (Mr. L. G. C. Clarke) were the only further additions to the Egyptian antiquities apart from a valuable collection of choice specimens given by Mr. G. D. Hornblower. Mr. Hornblower was