

the removal of restraints to trade and travel between the British and the United States Virgin Islands. It has given full support to the work of the Federal Works Agency in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, as well as to the programme of works projects drawn up by the Development and Welfare Organization for the British West Indies. At a conference in Washington in July 1943, it was decided that the Commission offered an effective medium for co-ordinating sanitation and health problems in the area, and a consultative committee was eventually formed for this purpose. Quarantine matters have received special attention, including the drafting of model quarantine legislation. This received detailed consideration at a Quarantine Conference in November 1943 under the auspices of the British West Indies Development and Welfare Organization in co-operation with the Commission. The primary objective of this Conference was to consider the adoption of uniform quarantine procedure throughout the British Caribbean Colonies in regard to maritime traffic, air navigation, and the adoption of model quarantine legislation.

Scientific workers will find particular interest in the detailed programme of research required on soil, water and forest conservation appended to the report on nutrition, agriculture, fisheries and agriculture which led to the formation of the Caribbean Research Council. In addition, the report itself includes detailed proposals for investigations on diet and health, food supply and nutrition, nutrition and public health, on animal husbandry, for which a long-range research programme is formulated, on fisheries, food processing, storage and marketing. Special stress is laid on research in animal husbandry, which has been wholly inadequate in the Caribbean; it is believed that no other investment would yield greater returns in terms of nutritional well-being than measures to increase the proportion of animal proteins in the diet, through improved and adapted animal husbandry and a stable and more efficient agriculture.

## ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS SCIENTIFIC REPORT

THE Scientific Report of the Royal College of Surgeons of England for the year 1942-43 gives the welcome news that no further specimens, Hunterian or College, were destroyed or suffered major damage during that year. The general condition of the specimens is satisfactory, but the task of looking after a large collection which is dispersed among various centres, some of which do not provide adequate or suitable accommodation, must be an arduous one, especially when so many of the staff are serving with the Forces. The need for better and more convenient accommodation for the specimens, with working room and technical facilities, is still urgent.

The report gives a list, covering six pages, of additions to the Museum, and an account of the research going on in the Bernhard Baron Research Laboratories under the direction of Prof. J. Beattie. During 1941-42 it was shown that plasma proteins can be removed rapidly from the blood-stream and can also enter the blood-stream very rapidly in considerable quantities. It was found that the rate of entry was so rapid that it could not be due to the synthesis of protein from amino-acids in the liver,

and that plasma protein could be mobilized from tissues other than the liver. Since the end of 1942, the problem of increasing the rate of protein synthesis by the liver has been studied. Casein digests suitable for intravenous or subcutaneous administration are now being tried, with the object of increasing the rate of protein synthesis in the body. It is considered that such digests might be valuable for the treatment of burns, severe infections and fractures, in all of which conditions the loss of plasma proteins is considerable. The use of digests and pure amino-acids for the prevention of severe liver damage is also being studied.

In 1943 a study of toxic hepatitis was begun with the co-operation of the British and American Army authorities. It has been found possible to prevent the liver damage which occurs in syphilitic patients receiving arsenical treatment, and to reduce the period spent in hospital from 27 to 11 days and the convalescent period from three months to ten days.

Nerve injuries are being studied by a Leverhulme Research Scholar at Oxford and, at the suggestion of the Ministry of Health, a study was undertaken of raw materials which might take the place of absorbable catgut for sutures. A suitable raw material has been found, and this has passed laboratory and clinical trials. All the staff of the Buckston Browne Research Farm joined the Forces at the outbreak of the War, and the main laboratories there were taken over by the Emergency Public Health Service.

## CLASSIFICATION OF ANTS

THE naming of the different species of ants and their classification into genera, tribes, sub-families, etc., is but an artifice, a mere convenience, although an all-important one if we are to dispose of our knowledge of myrmecology to the best advantage. In fact, to-day, a knowledge of formicid nomenclature is essential to anyone wishing to make a reasonable acquaintance with myrmecology.

It is perhaps strange, then, that although some five thousand species of ants have been described and given names since the time of Linnaeus, and these five thousand species distributed among approximately four hundred genera and four-score tribes belonging to eight sub-families, no myrmecologist has during the last thirty years published even a complete list of the ant genera, let alone any more comprehensive guide to formicid nomenclature. It is true that Emery in the "Genera Insectorum" (1910-25) covered the whole family, but although he provides the skeleton for the future taxonomic treatment of the group, it is sadly incomplete and in many cases out of date and inaccurate.

Emery lists only two hundred and sixty genera and fifty-three tribes, which he places in five sub-families (*Dorylinae* Leach, *Ponerinae* Mayr, *Myrmicinae* Lepeltier, *Dolichoderinae* Forel and *Formicinae* Forel) as against the modern eight; the three new subfamilies being the *Cerapachyinae* Wheeler (previously a tribe *Cerapachii* Forel and later a section *Prodorylinae* Emery of the *Ponerinae* Mayr.), the *Leptanillinae* (Emery) Wheeler, containing the solitary genus *Leptanilla* Emery earlier attributed to the *Dorylinae* Leach, and the *Pseudomyrmicinae* (Emery) Wheeler, previously considered as a tribe of the *Myrmicinae* Lepeltier. Furthermore, the "Genera Insectorum" is scarce and difficult to obtain except at universities