Prohibition of NATURE in Germany

The declaration of scientific freedom made by the American Association in the resolutions referred to above is a gratifying sign that men of science remain true to the essential condition of scientific progress. That it should be necessary to reassert a principle for which science—as a pursuit for truth—has always stood, is a depressing commentary upon twentieth century events. Until recent years it was believed that the battle for freedom of scientific thought and work had been fought and won, but we are now often painfully reminded of reactionary tendencies. An example of this is afforded by the following translation of an order issued by the German Ministry of Education (Reichserziehungs-Abteilung) a couple of months ago, a copy of which has just reached us:

"In the scientific weekly journal Nature, articles have often been published containing unpreceeded and base (ernstliche und niedrige) attacks against German science and the National Socialist State. Therefore, this journal must be excluded from general use in scientific libraries. I request that appropriate orders be given to the libraries of the Universities, Colleges, Institutes, and Research Departments. Concerning the secret use and restricted access to the journal I refer to my decrees of the 17th September 1934, 3rd April 1935, and 16th December 1936: U I 22735, W I e 828, and—W I a 2909."

It is, of course, altogether untrue to assert that Nature has ever attacked German contributions to scientific knowledge. Never a week passes without the publication in our columns of appreciative reviews of German scientific works and summaries of papers published in German scientific periodicals, while we are glad also to print original contributions in our correspondence columns. We welcome the opportunity of recording worthy additions to the literature of science or to natural knowledge from any country or any race; but we should be false to the traditions of science if we failed to condemn any influence which would make scientific research subservient to political or theological domination. The misrepresentation of our attitude contained in the announcement of the director of the German Ministry of Education is hard to bear, but we regret that the penalty involved in the withdrawal of Nature from libraries and other institutions will be felt more by some of our readers in Germany than by ourselves.

Science for Peace

A reception was recently given, jointly by the League of Nations Union and the International Peace Campaign, in honour of the Nobel peace prize award to Lord Cecil. Science was officially represented by Prof. Jean Perrin, who spoke as Under-Secretary of State for Scientific Research to the French Government. A number of well-known British men of science, including Sir William Bragg, were also present. Afterwards Prof. Perrin spoke informally to a small group of scientific workers about the work of the Science Committee of the I.P.C. in France. This Committee, which comprises some seventy men of science, among whom are many of the most eminent in France, has concerned itself with the special relations of science to the problems of peace and war. As Prof. Perrin himself put it, in his last meeting at the Sorbonne: "It must be stressed that we scientists, even more than other men, desire peace, because the very fact of our specialization enables us to realize more vividly what we have to lose from war. Let me make myself clear. Other men defend the happiness of mankind, as they know it; we do so too, and this is certainly enough to justify our effort and enthusiasm. But apart from this, we, who have been used to see a little future, are also defending the future of mankind. We are defending the city of the future, that city of the future which is ours and ours alone."