

## NEWS AND VIEWS

### Cultural Treaty between Greece and Great Britain

A CULTURAL convention, the first treaty of its kind to be concluded by Great Britain with any foreign power, has recently been signed by General Metaxas, Prime Minister of Greece, and Sir Michael Palairret, British Minister in Athens. Under the Convention, the Greek Government will provide every possible facility in the future for the British Council's work of making the English language and the British way of life and thought familiar throughout Greece. From the British point of view, the principal effect of the Convention is to give full scope for the British Council's activities in Greece.

The two most important provisions are as follows: (1) The British Council's Institutes of English Studies in Athens and the provinces are fully recognized by the Greek Government, who are sympathetically considering requests for expansion. The Council's immediate plans involve the opening of ten institutes in addition to those at Athens and Salonika, and five of these are now established. The same recognition is extended to the famous British School of Archaeology, established in Athens since 1886. (2) The British Council is authorized to establish two primary schools and one secondary school for British subjects in Athens and a primary school in Corfu.

The other main provisions are: (1) Exchange of university staffs and men of learning; (2) facilities for the teaching of Greek and English in either country; (3) facilities for students in either country; (4) mutual recognition of degrees or diplomas taken by Greek and British subjects in either country; (5) British students in Greece to enjoy entire equality with Greek students as regards school and examination fees, and *vice versa* in the United Kingdom; (6) mutual facilities for the import to either country of printed matter. Special exemption from tax for books supplied to the Council's Institutes; (7) students' visits to Greece and the United Kingdom are encouraged and facilitated; (8) an Anglo-Hellenic Commission to be constituted in Athens and in London, to which matters of cultural co-operation may be submitted.

### Flora of Town Ruins

THE extent of building sites damaged by air raids in London, Liverpool, Berlin and other cities in belligerent countries, many of which may not be occupied until after hostilities, affords an opportunity for the botanist to observe any correlation of the famous spread of *Sisymbrium irio* over the ruins of London after the Great Fire, a rapidity which earned it the popular name of "London rocket". That there will be such a colonization by plant species even in the centres of great cities is borne out by recent studies of the flora of inner London, Liverpool, Manchester and other towns; but this points more to

a predominating success of *Epilobium angustifolium*, which was not a common British plant at the time of the Great Fire although it is now one of the most abundant weeds. Observations kept on the flora of building sites in London (*Selborne Soc. Mag.*, Oct. 1910; *J. Bot.*, 1911) showed that a building site cleared in Farringdon Street and left for two years before the War of 1914-18 produced twenty-eight flowering plants and ferns, one moss and one liverwort which established themselves, comprising widely distributed plants like *Epilobium angustifolium*, *Senecio vulgaris*, *Trussilago farfara*, etc., refuse weeds and forage or packing weeds.

Wild vegetation noted on a building site in the Strand, 1929, included *Epilobium angustifolium*, *Sisymbrium pannonicum* and *Erigeron canadense*; while a 1939 survey of the wild flora of the Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral building site, by botanists of the Merseyside Naturalists' Association, revealed forty-three species, of which *Epilobium angustifolium* was the most noticeable, others in abundance including *Senecio viscosus*, *Matricaria inodora* and *Trifolium repens*. *Epilobium angustifolium* is introduced to town sites by wind distribution of its seeds, but many plants will be introduced by birds or from seed distribution with commerce and building materials, as has already occurred on the building sites of some public air raid shelters. In the *Journal of Botany*, 1940, Dr. Ramsbottom described the introduction of the beech wood fungus, *Peziza repanda*, in abundance to London in the soil, etc., in rotting sandbags used in A.R.P.

### Flora of South Albania

THERE can be few areas in Europe about which less is known of the flora than southern Albania. Large areas in the south of the country have been either wholly untouched by collectors or visited on a single occasion often only for a single day. Having regard to the richness of the flora of the Balkan Peninsula, the whole area might well be expected to yield results of taxonomic and plant geographical importance. Two expeditions made by A. H. G. Alston and N. Y. Sandwith (*J. Bot.*, May-Oct. 1940) in 1933 and 1935 have shown that the limestone mountains of the area reproduce in the main the characteristic flora of the Greek Epirus and the Pindus, and the vegetation of the higher serpentine areas is similar to that of parts of central Albania.

More than two hundred species new to the country were collected and a few new species and varieties are described. Near Moscopole two well-marked endemic species *Arenaria serpentini* and *Brachypodium serpentini* were discovered. Some notable extensions of range of previously described species are also recorded. Among these may be cited *Stachys decumbens*, previously regarded as endemic in the