

OBITUARIES

Dr. Walter Arndt

716

steady extension of contact-tracing and social service and the educational campaign.

Although morbidity studies of various kinds have lately been introduced, including a monthly sampling survey of sickness incidence in the population, it must be admitted that we still know too little of the incidence and trends of the diseases (lethal and non-lethal) outside the notifiable group. Nor can we say how far some of these may have been increased by war-time stress.

Perhaps the greatest and most favourably influential of all the public health undertakings of the war period was the maintenance of a high level of nutrition by rationing and fair distribution of foodstuffs throughout the population, together with the special advantages secured for expectant and nursing mothers and children. To this in large measure may be attributed the resistance to infection and strain of the people of Britain as a whole.

Passing to some of the special services created and maintained during the War, we find credit justly given to the Emergency Public Health Laboratory Service, organised by the Medical Research Council and now destined to remain as an integral part of the new health services. The Emergency Medical Service, with its vast hospital provisions for civil and military battle casualties and sick, and its first-class special hospital units for thoracic, facio-maxillary and head injuries, not only met the needs of many urgent situations, including the bombing offensives of the enemy and our own invasion of Europe, but resulted also in an upgrading of the hospital services of the country and helped to prepare the way for the unified hospital service which the new Health Bill envisages. Civil defence, shelter accommodation and shelter health provisions, the establishment of rest centres and the extension of day nurseries, were among the many other concerns of the Ministry of Health working alone or in conjunction with other ministries. Action in anticipation of introduced epidemic diseases from abroad, including typhus, smallpox and malaria, was taken at the ports and elsewhere. The care of the aged and infirm and of numerous children and other refugees from the Continent was a further responsibility. There were remarkable developments in therapeutics, especially in the use of penicillin and the sulphonamides, and of new protective insecticides such as D.D.T.

Sir Wilson Jameson pays tribute to the numerous expert advisers, specialists and general practitioners, to much generous American aid, and especially to the medical officers of health, who between them made this vast organisation and achievement possible.

The obvious comment is that if so much can be accomplished in face of the difficulties and under the impetus which war provides, what might not be achieved by similar 'combined operations' as between administrators, men of science, consultants, practitioners and the ancillary medical and social services, in times of peace. The sciences as a whole put more into destructive effort during these six years than had ever before been deemed possible, but the medical and allied sciences at least demonstrated by contrast and in comparable measure what a part they can play in the saving of life and limb and in the considered protection and improvement of a people's health.

In concert with the fuller descriptions which will later appear in the official medical history of the War, this report—with its sober, factual descriptions—will provide an enduring testimony to much wise prevision and to some very notable conquests.

It is with much regret that we learn of the death in 1944, at the hands of the Gestapo, of Dr. Walter Arndt, of the Museum für Naturkunde (section; Zoologisches Museum), Berlin.

Dr. Arndt was a prolific writer on sponges; beginning in 1912, then after a lapse of years due to the First World War, he contributed upwards of fifty publications between 1922 and the year of his death. There is only a comparatively small amount of original research to his credit; but this little is reliable and well done. His main contribution was as a compiler, and in this he was extremely thorough. A good example of his work is seen in the contribution "Schwämme" in "Die Rohstoffe des Tierreichs", Bd. 1, 2 Hälfte, 1937, p. 1,577. In this he has brought together an astonishing wealth of facts and statistics relating to bath sponges. But whether in the writing of a compilation of data, of a handbook, a dissertation on museum technique or a systematic paper, there is always conveyed an impression of painstaking attention to accuracy of detail, and of a desire to bring together any knowledge or obscure facts that might make the work more comprehensive.

Born in 1891, at Landeshut, Silesia, Dr. Arndt studied in Breslau under Kükenthal. He received doctorates both of medicine and philosophy (zoology), a fact which doubtless explains the broad field his writings usually contrived to cover.

A prisoner in Russian hands in the First World War, in the Second, Dr. Arndt appears to have been a staunch anti-Nazi. According to a letter written by his sister, he was arrested in his room at the Berlin Museum on January 12, 1944, as the result of a denunciation by a colleague and a friend of long standing. On May 11 he was condemned to death for 'defeatism' by the so-called Peoples' Court in Berlin. Several petitions were submitted for his pardon, all of which failed, because Arndt in the face of death would not retract the anti-Hitler and anti-war statements which formed the ground for his denunciation. He was executed on June 26 in the prison at Brandenburg.

It was never my privilege to meet Dr. Arndt, although I had often corresponded with him. My impression was of a kindly and courteous scholar, who spared no pains to be of the greatest assistance to a colleague. He freely responded to requests for advice, use of specimens or exchange of materials, and the rich collections of sponges in the British Museum have been enlarged to an appreciable extent by Dr. Arndt's friendly actions.

MAURICE BURTON

WE regret to announce the following deaths:

Prof. George Baborovský, professor of physical chemistry at the Technical College, Brno, on October 10, aged seventy-one.

Sir Louis Barnett, C.M.G., emeritus professor of surgery in the University of Otago, and a founder of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, on which he was president during 1937-39, aged eighty-one.

Mr. A. W. Lupton, senior lecturer in pharmacy and pharmaceutical chemistry in the University of Leeds.