

makes its own laws, and what Dr. Maier had to say applies primarily to the canton of Zurich. The enlightened laws of this canton forbid the marriage of the insane and mentally deficient and ordain that if such marriages are contracted in defiance of the law, they shall be dissolved. Sterilisation (that is, ligature of the genital ducts) is legal in Zurich if it is performed on medical grounds; but the judges have ruled that if the condition of the affected person is such that it is certain that he or she will produce defective offspring, then that is a sufficient medical ground for sterilisation. The insane, which in practice means persons afflicted with recurring attacks of insanity, and the obvious mental defectives, are confined in asylums; but this involves a very heavy expense to the canton, and the effort is made by nursing and rest to restore them to a better state of health and then to give them their freedom. If they are sterilised before they go out, all fear of undesirable progeny is eliminated. Sterilisation is also performed where a woman in poor circumstances, who has had a large family and is unable without grave risk to bear any more, desires it, but the written consent of the patient is required. A curious point arises in connexion with what are called borderline cases of mental defect, that is, high grade mental defectives. If, Dr. Maier states, the mental defect is accompanied by moral defect, then sterilisation is insisted on, for experience has shown that such moral defect is very prone to be inherited.

The Eugenic Problem in Great Britain

Scientific men generally, we think, will view with approval the sterilisation laws of Zurich; if obvious mental defectives were sterilised in England, it would be a great benefit, and it would in some degree diminish the numbers of the 'social problem group', but it would not solve the great eugenic problem which confronts the country. Mental defect is not a clearly defined factor or 'gene' but a damage of infinitely graded character. In its higher grades it merges insensibly into mere foolishness and idleness. Yet it is precisely these grades which produce most offspring and hand on the defect to posterity. Until the second half of the nineteenth century, these unfortunate offspring to a large extent died out before producing children. But our social legislation has raised their survival rate and thrown the cost of their maintenance on the really fit members of the community, who have in consequence restricted the numbers of their own offspring. These high grade defectives are people whom no government would dare to sterilise as a result of an examination in a mental clinic, and Dr. Maier frankly admits that this is so. A remedy for this state of affairs would be to adopt sterilisation as a penalty for bringing into the world children whom the parents are unable to support. It would be to apply compulsorily the treatment which Dr. Maier gives to poorer class women of Zurich with their consent. Public opinion in England will not easily be reconciled to this course, but if our over-population and unemployment continue, we may ultimately be driven to it.

Sale of Iron Age Antiquities

WHAT is undoubtedly the most important collection of prehistoric antiquities ever to come under the hammer is to be offered for sale at the American Art Galleries, New York, in the late autumn. The collection of some 20,000 bronze and iron objects, known as the "treasures of Carniola", is to be sold by order of the Duchess Marie Antoinette of Mecklenburg. It is her private property and was formed as the result of ten years' excavation in Carniola, about 200 miles south-east of Hallstadt, where some 1,300 tombs were opened; but it also includes material from a number of smaller sites outside Carniola. The excavations were made under an exclusive licence granted to the Duchess. As the antiquities were obtained at the very heart of the region in which the Hallstadt Iron Age civilisation developed, its importance for the archaeologist is manifest. Yet until now, little has been known of it. The finds range in time from the finest period of the Hallstadt culture down to the beginning of the Roman Provincial civilisation and thus cover a most important period in the development of European peoples. Although all the objects in the collection have been photographed by the authorities of the Swiss Federal Museum in Zurich before shipment to the United States, it will be little short of a calamity that such a collection should be dispersed. Its unique interest and scientific value lie in the fact that as a whole it represents with a measure of completeness the development of culture in one area over a considerable period of time, thus illustrating important phases of transition in European prehistory. Even in the unlikely event that the collection should be purchased as a whole, its divorce from its country of origin, or at least from Europe, is to be deplored. The fate of the collection illustrates once more the danger of private ownership of antiquities which are primarily national possessions but none the less of vital interest to the whole world of archaeological science.

Cost of German Scientific Periodicals

THE complaints with regard to the high cost of German scientific periodicals, which were detailed in an article by Dr. Wilfrid Bonser, librarian of the University of Birmingham, in *NATURE* of July 1, p. 34, were embodied in a memorandum which was sent to the Börsenverein der deutschen Buchhändler on June 1. This memorandum was signed by the vice-chancellors and principals of all the universities and university colleges of Great Britain, and by the presidents of most of the scientific societies interested. An answer has now been received from the Börsenverein. This announces that an agreement has been made between the Börsenverein as representing the publishers and the Verband der deutschen Hochschulen as representing the contributors to the journals. The various demands that have been made in Germany, Great Britain and the United States are dealt with and acceded to. The maximum size and price are in future to be announced beforehand and adhered to, thus enabling librarians to budget