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THE GOLDEN AGE OF BOTANY¹

By Dr. EDGAR N. TRANSEAU

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

THOSE of us who were so fortunate as to enter the field of botany about the beginning of the century have witnessed the period of its greatest growth and differentiation. In no other country and at no other time have there been so many undergraduate students of botany, so many graduate students and so many botanists employed in educational and research institutions. We vividly recall that this 40-year period began just after the Spanish-American war when America took over the Philippine Islands. We have likewise had a part in all the educational phe-

¹ Address of the retiring president of the Botanical Society of America, delivered at Dallas, Texas, on December 29, 1941.

nomena before, during and after the first World War. The period closes as World War II is thrust upon us.

This time the war is not "to make the world safe for democracy," but to keep democracy from being crushed against the wall at its back. After the first world war came the collapse of European credits and subsequently a variety of social revolutions that have ended in ruthless dictatorships. The state-supported Continental universities were first impoverished, then regulated and finally regimented or liquidated. Because of declining financial aid, teaching and research in botany have been possible only to men of independent means, and in many of the Continental

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