

QUOTATIONS

THEY ALSO SUFFER

WHILE war ravages humanity, lower forms of life get scant consideration. Even in times of peace it is difficult to protect the flowers, forests, birds and beasts, and when war comes the bars are wholly down. In the jungles of Malaysia and Papuasias, the wealth of life is so overpowering it is doubtful if thousands of "infiltrating" soldiers can do much permanent harm, but even there some animal and plant life is jeopardized. This is especially true on small islands which often form the exclusive habitat of peculiar animals. A soldier off duty is seldom averse to shooting anything subhuman and he is especially willing when it may provide a variation for the daily mess. He can not be fighting all the time, and his opportunities for wantonness must be frequent. As Kipling pointed out, we can not expect even our own men to be "plaster saints," and when it comes to our enemies, especially the Japanese, there is little hope.

The war has spread to so many out-of-the-way places that natural conditions are bound to be greatly disturbed, and it is not unlikely that exterminations or near exterminations will be among the many deplorable by-products. On the treeless Aleutian Islands of Attu and Kiska, recently occupied by the Japanese, are distinct species of ptarmigan, handsome grouse-like birds, nominally protected by our laws, but doubtless due to go into the soldier's pot by hundreds. In

this region also is the sea otter, one of the most interesting of living mammals and one of great potential economic value. From the verge of extinction it has just been restored to numbers thought to guarantee its continuation, but under war conditions its fate may again become uncertain. Another important animal of this region is the fur seal which passes regularly through the Aleutians on its migrations. It is interesting to note that our long-standing treaty with Japan, by which she agreed not to kill seals on the high seas, was abrogated before war began. This treaty was profitable to Japan, and her refusal to continue it seems explainable only on the assumption that she expected to occupy our territory.

Examples of threats in other regions could be multiplied. North Africa, especially, might furnish a number, but there are some much nearer home. The danger to our western forests from fires set by incendiary bombs is a very real one which was quickly recognized, and protective measures are doubtless being taken, but the task is well-nigh insuperable. We can only hope for success.

As so often said, our first business is to win the war, but the naturalists and conservationists can scarcely be blamed if their thoughts and sympathies turn occasionally to the killings that are not mentioned in the official communiqués.

Field Museum News

SCIENTIFIC BOOKS

ASTRONOMY

Essentials of Astronomy. By JOHN CHARLES DUNCAN. Illustrated. 181 pp., 14 appendices, star maps. New York: Harper and Bros. \$1.85.

CELESTIAL coordinates, spectrum analysis, proper motion—these are the straws which often strain teacher and student alike in the usual college first-year course in astronomy. Also, to greater degree, they and other concepts overthrow good intentions of would-be amateur astronomers and intelligent laymen taking extension and adult education courses.

A formidable text does not help particularly when 90 per cent. of such students are probably making their first and last serious contact with astronomy.

Write a volume in simple, fluid terms (such as should be expected from one of America's best-known teachers of astronomy). Do not, however, be condescending—retain the language of the subject, and include briefly its latest advances. Give them a common-sense introduction to the sky as they see it: "The Appearance of the Sky." Follow later with compact fundamentals:

"The kinship of all the stars, including the sun, is revealed by their spectra which, being of dark lines on a continuous background, show that each star has an intensely hot interior which shines through an enveloping atmosphere of less highly heated gas."

Give them a comparatively thin volume, well illustrated and diagrammed. Give them a Kodachrome (four-color) frontispiece of well-known Orion—the pioneering achievement of "Essentials of Astronomy." Give them attractive star maps. Price the book reasonably.

Wellesley's professor of astronomy has done just these things, and as a result, astronomy classes which follow his lead should have many more "satisfied survivors" than before.

CHARLES A. FEDERER, JR.

HARVARD COLLEGE OBSERVATORY

THE FLORA OF FUKIEN PROVINCE, CHINA

Flora of Fukien and Floristic Notes on Southeastern China. 1 (1). By F. P. METCALF. xviii + 82 pp. 2 maps. 1942.

THIS first part of a projected flora of Fukien