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 Papuasia, 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.

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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

Province, China, is much more than a flora of that particular province. While the Fukien species of the families treated are considered in detail, with keys to genera and species, descriptions, synonymy and citation of specimens, a great many species from neighboring provinces are included, particularly those of Chekiang, Kiangsi, Kwangtung, Hunan and Kwangsi. In addition to the introductory and historical matter appertaining to the Province of Fukien, many species occurring in neighboring provinces are described. The first part, now available, considers the families and genera of the Gymnospermae and the dicotyledonous families from the Casuarinaceae to the Fagaceae, inclusive. The work is published by Lingnan University, 150 Fifth Avenue, New York.

E. D. MERRILL

REPORTS

THE NATIONAL HEALTH IN GREAT BRITAIN AFTER NEARLY THREE YEARS OF WAR[1]

GOOD reports on the national health during the war have previously been given. The survey can now be extended to the third winter of the war and most of the third year, with similar results. In the House of Commons the minister of health, Mr. Ernest Brown, stated that after one thousand days of war the health of the nation was in many respects better than in days of peace. The birth rate of 1941 was 14.2 per thousand as compared with 15.1 in 1938 and 20.9 in 1916. (This only exemplifies the falling birth rate, which was causing concern before the war). But for the first quarter of 1942 the rate was 15.5, the highest in any March quarter since 1931. The rise can be accounted for by the increase of marriages promoted by the allowances paid for wives and children of the young men joining the fighting services. The infant mortality rate for 1941 was 59, as compared with 53 in 1938 and 91 in 1916. The rate for the first quarter of 1942 was 61, the lowest rate for any first quarter on record. The maternal mortality rate in 1941 was 2.77 per thousand births as compared with 2.97 in 1936 and 4.12 in 1916. Thus while over a long period the birth rate had been falling, over the same period the survival rate had increased. The "crude general death rate" was 12.9 in 1941 as compared with 11.6 (the lowest on record) in 1938 and 14.4 in 1936. The risk of epidemic disease calls for special care in wartime, but during the past two and one half years of war the infectious disease rate has been normal and, on the whole, below the average.

Apart from tuberculosis, the only infectious disease which has shown a rise during the war is cerebrospinal fever. This was expected, since cerebrospinal fever has always been a wartime disease. In 1916 there were about 2,000 cases and in 1938 and 1939, 1,500 and 1,300, respectively. But in 1940 there were nearly 13,000 and in 1941 over 11,000 and, for the first half of 1942, 4,000. The fatality of the disease has been reduced from a percentage of 69 in 1935 to 34 and more recently to 20.

[1] London correspondent of the *Journal* of the American Medical Association.

The problem of tuberculosis is causing some concern. There were 28,669 deaths due to it in 1941, compared with 28,144 in 1940, 26,176 in 1938 and 53,858 in 1916. The steady fall in tuberculosis which has been a feature of the twenty-five years of peace has been interrupted in the last two years. Wartime conditions, such as the blackout, overcrowding and the cessation of house building, predispose to tuberculosis. In the past we tended to concentrate on treatment rather than on early diagnosis. The recent developments in miniature radiography are providing a new weapon to detect cases for more detailed examination. From earlier diagnosis better results in treatment are expected. Also rehabilitation and securing gradual return to suitable employment is to be tackled on more comprehensive lines.

The incidence of diphtheria, the chief killing disease of children between 4 and 10, has not fluctuated very widely in the last twenty-five years, but the number of deaths has fallen from 5,300 in 1916 to 2,600 in 1941. During the past year the Ministry of Health has been engaged in a campaign for immunization of children against diphtheria, and this has given striking results in reducing both incidence and fatality of the disease. Scarlet fever has become a scourge of the past, and there were only 133 deaths from it in 1941. In that year there were only 148 deaths from typhoid and fewer than 5,000 as compared with 6,000 cases and 1,100 deaths in 1916. During the heavy bombing of our cities not a single death from typhoid was due to pollution by water-borne infection, in spite of the continuous bombing of our crowded areas. American visitors marveled at this. The number of deaths from pneumonia was much greater in 1941 than from all the other infectious diseases combined other than tuberculosis. There were 50,000 cases and 26,000 deaths, compared with 29,000 deaths in 1940 and 23,000 in 1939.

An increase in venereal diseases was not unexpected in view of war conditions but was not so great as in the last war. At the outset steps were taken to expand the existing services. We have always relied on propaganda and education for controlling these diseases. But the work of limiting the spread of infec-