

NEWS AND VIEWS

The War and the British Fauna

It is probably still too early to judge the effects of the War upon British wild life, for it was not until the second or third years of the War of 1914-18, when the calling-up of older men had more extensively depleted the gamekeeping profession, that the great increase in so-called 'vermin', including rarer species like the wild cat and polecat, became of national concern; nevertheless, the present War has speeded up a great deal of this disturbance of wild life by the greater activity at home. The most noticeable effects have been an extension of the range of normally persecuted species like the carrion-crow, fox, otter, kestrel, little owl and sparrowhawk, and this may be followed by a slower extension of species like the badger and raven. The use of sand-dunes and lonely islands in the coastal defences and of rural parks for training the army has considerably disturbed the nesting haunts or 'sanctuaries' of uncommon species, particularly birds, more so than the building of factories in rural areas, and this may have a permanent effect in further reducing the nesting population of terns, waterfowl and waders.

On the other hand, the breaking up of estates and game preservation is furthering the extension of the little owl and the grey squirrel in the north of England. As in 1914-18, the rumour has gained popularity that warfare on the Continent has sent rarer Continental birds to nest in England, notably the avocet in Essex, but it is unlikely that the campaign abroad had any effect upon the British avi-fauna. Pollution of rivers has again arisen, notably on the Severn, Bristol Avon, and the Derbyshire Derwent, with considerable loss of fish life. It yet remains to be seen if the rosebay willow-herb will emulate the story of the London rocket in spreading over ruined buildings in London and other cities; that the poppy will recolonize the Flanders area in its former abundance is very likely, for the destruction of buildings has again made the soil highly calcareous.

Civic Development under War Conditions

A LEADING article in *Engineering* of September 27 shows that if no effective means be found to ensure the abolition of warfare the motives which have influenced the location of communities in certain districts of the earth's surface will be much the same in the future as in past history. Food and water, a dwelling-place of some kind and a reasonable measure of security against weather and the assault of enemies, these things are desired by the human race and by beasts and birds and even insects. Applied science has facilitated the establishment of communities in places where otherwise life could be maintained—if at all—with the greatest difficulty. On September 13 was celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of Southern Rhodesia by the pioneer column which had trekked from Kimberley to take over and

develop the territory for which mining concessions had been granted to Cecil Rhodes by Lobengula, the Matabele chieftain. On September 29, as related by Mr. W. J. Jarvis, city engineer of Salisbury, in a paper published in this number of *Engineering*, a beginning was made in the construction of the water-works. The intervening fortnight had been occupied with the building of a fort which the pioneers had completed on the previous day. It is significant of the unchanging essentials of colonization that the assurance of a proper water supply was regarded as a necessary preliminary to all other activities, even though the fort was erected in close proximity to a river. It was only on the following day, September 30, 1890, that mining law was provisionally proclaimed, and prospective licences were issued to enable the provisional members of the column to proceed about the business which had brought them into what is now Southern Rhodesia.

This is a good example of the processes which have led to the establishment in their present situations of so many capital cities, the origins of which go far back into the history of mankind. It was not chance that located London and Paris and Rome and the many industrial cities like Newcastle and Sheffield in their present situations. In many cases the main considerations were the military ones which governed communal life until the general spread of a more ordered existence. Prior to 1914 this state had remained for so long in Great Britain that people had begun to regard it as settled and immutable, in spite of the wars that had periodically afflicted other European nations. The four years of war from 1914 to 1918, while they may have shaken this belief to some extent at the time, did not eradicate it. In fact the conviction that a war of such a prolonged and costly character could not be quickly followed by another seems to have encouraged both civil and industrial expansion in directions which it could scarcely have taken if the lessons of history had been properly assimilated. The experiences that Europe in general has undergone in the last twelve months suggest that the military considerations which have gradually lapsed into the background should once again be given due weight in planning for future mass movements of populations.

Heating Private Air Raid Shelters

THE efficient heating and lighting of air raid shelters is a problem of interest to many at the present time. A solution suggested by Mr. D. Bellamy, the general manager of the Hull Electricity Undertaking, has much to recommend it. He has prepared a scheme extending the existing assisted wiring scheme so as to include lighting and power plug points in domestic shelters free to the consumer. The offer is to install one lighting and one five-ampere plug socket for a charge of 1s. per week for 18 months;