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Memorabilia.

IN the April number of the *Journal* of the Ministry of Agriculture, Mr. W. B. Alexander, Director of the Oxford Bird Census, makes report concerning the numbers of House Martins. In 1931 and 1932 these birds were surveyed over a small area, with the object of ascertaining whether it is true that their numbers are decreasing. Over a tract of 56 square miles, each person who took part in the survey covered an area of 4 square miles (or a duplicate thereof). The location of nests, the first business to tackle, is by no means easy, and when they have been discovered, it has yet to be made out whether they are occupied by their original builders or by the intrusive sparrow. It is probable that at both counts some nests were missed, and that some which were counted were not occupied by House Martins. Probably the two errors cancel each other out. The total number of nests counted in 1931 was 757; the number for 1932 was 715. The City of Oxford occupies three of the fourteen 4-mile squares surveyed, and within this area the House Martin population—325 pairs, 1931; 323 pairs, 1932—was found to be stationary. In the eleven other squares, a small decrease was recorded, and it is interesting to observe that this was confined to the villages furthest from Oxford; some areas which are becoming suburban in character showed increase. This tends to refute the opinion of writers who attribute an alleged decrease in Martins and Swallows to the tarring of roads, and deficiency of mud for nests. Mr. Alexander makes the very reasonable suggestion that the number of the bird population fluctuates from year to year, so that changes in successive seasons are not of great importance.

The number has three important articles rather beyond our scope, but of such great interest that we will mention them here: the speech on Agricultural Policy delivered at

Newton Abbot on March 10 by Major Walter Elliot, the Minister of Agriculture; Dr. Hudson's account of New Methods of Plant-Breeding, and the report by Dr. Brenchley and Mr. Warrington on Fallowing for Weed Suppression, in which so many of our best-beloved field flowers have to be treated as most obstinate weeds.

THE April number of the *Antiquaries' Journal* begins with Miss Joan du Plat Taylor's description of a water cistern recently discovered and excavated at Salamis, Cyprus. This is interesting, principally for the paintings and inscriptions it bears. The actual purpose of the cistern has not been definitely ascertained, but the character of the decoration might indicate that it had at one time been used as a baptistery. In a long, very thorough and scholarly paper, abundantly illustrated with figures and plans, Mr. E. Cecil Curwen, F.S.A., sets out the results of the excavations on Thundersbarrow Hill, a few miles north-west of Brighton. This is followed by Mr. K. P. Oakley's discussion of the pottery found on the site. The Coleshill helm has recently been re-discovered by the Duke of Rutland, and is the subject of an article by Mr. J. G. Mann, F.S.A. Mr. Mann recalls correspondence on the topic in our columns fifty-five years or so ago, when a writer stated that he had seen the helm in Coleshill Church in 1841. Since then it has been transferred to Sherborne Castle. It belongs to a group of five, which, Mr. Mann says, "constitute practically all we have to show of English-made armour of the Middle Ages," so that its reappearance is more than ordinarily welcome. We have besides, account of another, and much older, helm—the only head-piece, Mr. Charles foulkes says, ever dug up in this country—that found in the moat of Pevensey Castle and exhibited by him to the Society of Antiquaries in November of last year. There is an expanded drawing and section of the mediaeval copper bowl with engraved figures of Virtues which was found in 1928 during excavation for re-building on the site of the Bank of England.

A LENGTHY correspondence about the camp-beds used by Napoleon, particularly at St. Helena, is continued in the second April number of *L'Intermédiaire*. It appears that there were two beds used by him in his captivity; and then a correspondent adds the information that, in the course of his campaigns, Napoleon used forty-four several camp-beds.