

- NEWSY NOTES -

BY AGRICOLA

An Odd Character

An old print in the writer's possession, entitled "Lord Lovat on his way to trial. The last person beheaded on Tower Green..."

Green, in his "Short History of the English People" devotes a single line to Lovat and is contemptuous. After recalling that terrible day in April 1746, when the Highlanders melted away before the fire of the English musketry on the plain of Culloden, and the throne of Britain barely escaped with his life, Green goes on to say "Three Scotch Lords, Lovat, the Earl of Argyll, and the Earl of Mar, were brought to the block."

Neither age nor long lineage can insure wisdom. The excellent Baron Lovat was eighty years old when he staked his fortune on the ill-fated invasion of England. Moreover, his own life has been stained by every variety of tergiversation and Hogarth's picture represents him tucking off on his fingers the names of the clans who had joined in the rebellion, with the possible idea of gaining a pardon by betraying them. Double-dealing seems to have been second nature with him.

The witty old scamp, however, was no coward. After he had been sentenced to death he turned to the judge and smiled. "Good day, my lords," he said. "You and I shall never meet again in the same fashion."

Executions were public in those days, and great crowds drew to these gruesome spectacles. As Lovat stood on the scaffold, a stand bearing a number of spectators collapsed. He had his last: "The red mist of the main sport," he chuckled.

It is a matter for speculation as to the meaning he intended in his last words. As he laid his head upon the block, he was heard to say "Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori—Sweet and proper it is to die for one's country." Was it a jest?

Garlic and Onions

A note in The Guardian of April 14th, says that two Russian soldiers, Dr. V. Toroptsov and Dr. A. O. Platova, have been looking into the belief of the peasants that garlic and onions have medicinal virtues. The Russian peasants have long used the pungent vegetable as a preventive of typhus and the doctors think there is some reason to believe that garlic actually has an effect against the disease. They have found that the "peppery" quality of onions is an aid to the healing of wounds, and that the bulb itself contains a powerful germicide, which however they do not quite understand.

Well, now, the garlic (Allium sativum) and the onion (A. cepa) are first cousins, and have much the same virtues, though the garlic has the stronger physique. With regard to their effect on wounds I recall that in the last war it was found that water in which garlic was pounded up, had a remarkably healing effect on open wounds, and was much used in British hospitals. The use of garlic as a preventive against typhus is new to me, though I am certain that the much maligned bulb contains a powerful germicide.

Last year I grew a fairly large crop of garlic for the first time. Most visitors asked what it was and being told the word "garlic" remarked: "That's what the Jews eat, isn't it?" or again "I know that, what the Italians sound like some kind of reproach!"

However, I was growing this vegetable because it is a wonderful source of vitamin C, containing (weight for weight) about six times the amount as compared with onions. Vitamin C is anti-scorbutic, and is necessary in winter when fresh vegetables are not to be had; it helps against infections and tones up the blood vessels. Garlic, from its bactericidal qualities is useful against infections of the nose and throat so that the "vapour" or smell helps against colds. Some herbalists say garlic is also useful in cases of high blood pressure, while oil of garlic, in capsules, is sold for the relief of prostatic trouble. Furthermore, a noteworthy effect of eating raw garlic is its power to stimulate a sluggish peristalsis in a natural manner thus relieving condition which, an old Scotch resident once told me, is the "curse of Canada". This again may explain the partiality for garlic, shown by the inhabitants of hot countries. "Garlic" was one of the food-plants that the Hebrews yearned for in the Wilderness (Numbers 11, 5).

The germicidal substance in garlic, has been termed crotonaldehyde by chemists, and this may be the agent in the prevention of typhus already noticed.

Onions are rarely used than garlic in Anglo-Saxon countries; this is due to their milder flavor and less pungent smell. The rustic inhabitants of northern "haggs" used to roast onions for a stew, or lunch before getting to bed; this was supposed to ensure "a good night's rest". It is likely that it worked for I have seen this recommended in a medicinal work quite recently.

The active germicidal principle of the onion is called allyl aldehyde. It may have something to do with sulphur, which is known to exist in the bulb in some quantity. Boiled onions were believed to ward off colds.

The reason conveyed in these brief remarks is: Eat onions and garlic for health next winter! And you'll feel better if you grow them yourself!

The Amphibians Again

Through the kindness of Dr. R. P. Gochman of Fredericton, I am in possession of "The Amphibians of British Columbia", Handbook No. 2, of the Provincial Museum. Nature has amply provided B.C. with amphibians: nine species of salamanders, three species of toads, two of Tree-toads and six kinds of Frogs—twenty species altogether. Out of this number, only the Leopard Frog and the Green Frog are common to the Island also.

The casual reader doubtless thinks that it would be no loss if all these humble creatures in every Province of Canada, perished, but the biologist finds valuable material in their life-history. Let the reader remember that the amphibians go back to the time when the living creatures that "moved in the waters" were urged by the Creator to try their fortune on the dry land—an experiment that was to culminate in the coming of Man. Many creatures, large and small, were used in the Great Experiment, and very many proved unsuitable and only their fossil bones remain to tell us that they once existed. But as witnesses, the little creatures we count so insignificant, still carry out the original plan.

The larvae of the Salamanders resemble the fishes in that they breathe by means of gills, and have tail-fins. After their second summer, the gills and tail fin are absorbed, joints and nostrils develop, and the creature (now adult) is fitted to dwell on the dry land. The nostrils, by the way, are in the roof of the mouth!

There are reactionaries, it seems even amongst Salamanders. Two species of the B. C. salamanders occasionally display a phenomenon called "neoteny", which means that some individuals never assume the adult state. The larva remains a larva, but it grows to a much larger size and may even reproduce! "The discovery of neoteny among amphibians," says the Handbook, "has given rise to many experiments... to discover the factors which regulate the change from youth to adulthood. In some tests larval salamanders, which were fed thyroid extract, rapidly lost their gills and became adults, thus suggesting that the activity of the thyroid gland probably controls the process of metamorphosis."

In the lower walks of life, many animals, such as worms and crabs, have the ability to replace portions of the body or legs which are lost by accident; but this power of renewal is usually absent in the vertebrate animals. In the amphibians, however, the power of regeneration is well developed, especially in the Salamandrine larvae and the tadpoles of frogs. These may replace completely a leg or tail which has been bitten off, and the ability is even retained by some adult salamanders; but in the adult stage of the frogs and toads, the complete renewal of a part, such as a leg, is very rare.

There are several other aspects of the amphibians which may possibly be examined in future Notes, but enough has been written to make it plain that the creatures are not altogether worthless as objects of study.

Olds and Ends

Edinburgh. The name commemorates Edwin, King of Northumbria, who founded the city of "Aedwina-burgh" in A.D. 826. The district which Edinburgh stands, belonged to the Saxon Kingdom till 968, when it was captured by the Scots.

Nature Notes from the North

There was a snow-drift in the orchard 12 feet high at the end of March but it is now about 10 feet. It has probably done some damage. On April 2nd, a "Crane" (properly Heron) was observed flying north, over the house on his way to the bay; he wouldn't get much! Robins here, April 3rd. "Tame" Bees flying April 6. Afternoon of April 7, the weather which had been bright for a few days, changed; the wind blew from the NW, and snow fell, clogging the trees and covering the bare fields, which were "all clear" again by the 9th. On the 9th, the clogged in the big Meadow Vole, normally called a Field Mouse. On Easter Sunday (April 9), the first blossom of the Climb of Gold Cress (C. Sistanus) opened its little yellow flowers. In 1936, according to the Naturalists' Calendar, this hardy little bulb bloomed on March 19th.

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Wherever you are, whatever you're doing, you wear your tin hat and respirator for a certain part of a certain day each week at one of the RCAF's Pacific coast stations. Telephone operators audibly sound as if they'd developed cleft palates. Stenographers catch up on typing practice as dictation is suspended until voicemail is in the open once more. The airman who whips up a smart salute can accompany it with a rude face—no one is the wiser—and cooks can peel onions without a quail.

How the protection program works is illustrated here. Leading Airwoman Bertie Johnson of Winnipeg, left, finds that keeping her eyes on the notebook has complications, but types bravely. Even off duty, the girls don't let the dull interfere with their routine. Left to right (and, high families wouldn't know them) the crinkled players are Leading Airwoman, Edmonton; Cpl. Jesse Cassidy, Belton; Sgt. Barbara Wilson, Esquatoon; and Cpl. Bernice Martin, St. Vital, Man. (RCAF Photos)