

THE STORY OF POOR ALICE HOLT

SHE GAVE HER MOTHER ARSENIC

ancient copy of The Times.

THIS IS THE STORY of poor Alice Holt, whose public execution in 1863 was mentioned in the last issue of The Slasher. It is a sad and sorry story, told by a correspondent who traced the details in an

Alice, it seems, lived with her mother and a man named Holt, with whom she "cohabited", at Stockport, Cheshire. She was undoubtedly ingenious, for in order to insure her mother with the Wesleyan Insurance Association for the sum of £26 she arranged for a substitute to undergo the required medical examination. The policy issued, the mother, Mary Bailey, steadily deteriorated in health and after a while was dead and buried. Something, however, aroused the suspicions of the authorities or the insurance company, for the old lady was exhumed and (to quote the evidence at the subsequent trial of Alice Holt for murder) "the body was found perfectly fresh" and contained a great quantity of arsenic.

When Alice was arrested she "was sullen and strongly protested her innocence"; she accused Holt of trying to coerce her into setting fire to the mother's bed while the old lady lay in it, asleep, and of offering her (Alice) strychnine with which to perform the murder. Holt, she alleged, gave the mother arsenic in her beer, and Alice related how she said to the man: "Thou hast brought me to destruction and now thou wants to bring me to the gallows."

But nothing - not even the fact that between the time of her arrest and trial she gave birth to a child - could save Alice Holt from being hanged and on the morning of December 28th, 1863, she was taken from the City gaol at Chester to the nearby gallows. "When near the drop," it is recorded, "her courage failed her and she was half dragged, half carried to the scaffold. On the platform she fell on her knees and moaned piteously 'The Lord have mercy upon me', which she continued to do while Calcraft pulled the bolt. The drop only fell partially, and when it was at last pulled down she swung about partially strangled for two or three minutes, the fall not being enough to break her neck."

The execution took place at 8.10 a.m. and was witnessed by about a thousand people.

HOME GROWN TOBACCO

EXPERIENCE OF A DISTRICT
OFFICER

OUR REFERENCE last month to the growing of tobacco at home produced a number of requests for further information, the inference being that the staffs of several of our offices are likely soon to experience something new in the way of aromas!

Estates Officer A. W. ARENDS, of South Wales, has already grown his own tobacco with some success. "Readers might like to know something of the experience of a novice," he writes. "Last year I obtained some plants (variety Montcalure) from the British Pioneer Tobacco Growers Association and some other plants (no name) from a friend. I had no difficulty in growing the tobacco, and as I sent it away for curing I had no difficulty in that respect, either. When cured and flavoured by spraying the Montcalure made a very reasonable, though mild, smoke. The 'no name' was not so good. This year I intend to grow several varieties and try blending them. It certainly seems to me that a perfectly satisfying tobacco can be grown in one's own garden.

"Montcalure can be smoked uncured with some satisfaction, but if this is done there is an unpleasant smell; this, however, does not bother me, for my sense of smell is almost non-existent. In consequence, only the most determined and loyal Civil Servants interrupt my office work when I am smoking; I believe my output has thereby been considerably improved. Furthermore, Acquisition Officer L. H. WILLIAMS (who shares my room) spends the minimum time in the office, thereby attracting, I imagine, the fervid approbation of his superiors."

MORE MONUMENTS

WHAT STORY lies behind the following inscription, which is to be seen by the main doorway of Shrewsbury Church? If any readers know more of this very early attempt at flight we would like to hear from them.

"Let this small monument record the name of Cadman and to future times proclaim how by'n attempt to fly from this high spire across the Sabrine stream he did acquire his fatal end. 'Twas not for want of skill or courage to perform the task he fell. No, no, a faulty cord being drawn too tight hurried his soul on high to take the flight which bid the body here beneath good night. February 2nd, 1739, aged 28."

While on the subject of odd monuments and memorials we would mention the handsome stone to be seen in the graveyard at Winchester Cathedral. This was erected in 1802 by officers of the North Hants Militia and replaced an earlier stone to the memory of one Thomas Thetcher, a Grenadier of the Militia "who died of a violent fever contracted by drinking Small Beer when hot the 12th of May, 1764, aged 26 years." A further inscription denotes that the memorial is "in grateful remembrance" of the Grenadier - "Here sleeps in peace a Hampshire Grenadier who caught his death through drinking cold small beer; soldiers be wise from his untimely fall and when yere hot drink Strong or none at all."

We leave readers to reach their own conclusions as to whether Thomas Thetcher drank small beer made hot or was hot when he drank cold small beer.

AN EDUCATION OFFICER REPLIES LAST MONTH'S "popular misconception" of a day in the life of an Education Officer has provoked the following letter from Mr. IAN ROBERTSON, Education Officer at the Forester Training School, Faskally, Pitlochry.

SEQUEL TO A POPULAR MISCONCEPTION

"I fear," he writes, "the Education Officer who wrote in the last number of The Slasher must have had a bad morning with his domestic problems."

"It is true that an hour or two a day may be taken up with such matters, but the remaining fifteen hours of an Education Officer's day can be spent on the theory and practice of forestry in all its aspects. He can range from mensuration, with the Hummel-Brett formula at his fingertips, to tariff tables and timber height measurements. Ecology is incidental, teaching technique and psychology are part of his day's work; he must know something about the Engel planting procedure; he must be conversant with Agostini's paper on the introduction of Eucalypts to Italy and he must be able to explain Mayer-Wegelin's theory of wood texture in annual rings. Why? Because some over-brainy student is liable to ask awkward questions. The Education Officer must also be able to give a sound basic training in forestry."

"So much for your anonymous Education Officer."

FALL OF THE ANCIENT THE FAMOUS Cedar of Lebanon, said to have stood for two and a half centuries in the grounds of Bretley Hall (now a hospital) near Burton on Trent, has been felled - a victim of decay. It is reported that because of the historical associations of this tree, the stump is to be preserved (by what means we do not know) by the Derby Hospital Management Committee, who also plan to place a cross-cut of the trunk on display in the hospital.

A legend concerning this tree was that every time a branch fell a member of the house of Chesterfield would die. It was said that the tree was splashed with the blood of Lady Margaret Chesterfield, when she jumped from a tower of the Bretley Hall keep.

Fewer things are more closely associated than legends and trees, of course; in Priory Street, Carmarthen, in South Wales, can be seen the remains of Merlin's Oak and a nearby inscription reads "When this oak falls down, so will the town." What is left of the tree is "bolstered" by cement, but this does not mean that Carmarthen, in taking such steps to "preserve" this oak, is worried. Carmarthen, of course, means Caer Merlin, or the fortress of Merlin.

RETIREMENT OF FORESTER AFTER a quarter of a century with the Forestry Commission, Forester T. W. POWELL, of Hensol Forest, South Wales, has retired. Mr. Powell commenced his employment with the Commission in 1928, as a forest worker at Gwydyr, North Wales, where he served until his transfer to Hensol three years later. He was promoted to Foreman in 1940 and to Forester in 1948. To mark his retirement colleagues from both North and South Wales Conservancies presented him with a clock, the gift being handed over by Mr. W. D. RUSSELL, Conservator for South Wales.

~~WE~~ WE JUST CAN'T BELIEVE IT!

READ the following slowly, lest righteous indignation and blood pressure get out of control.

"Admission into the Civil Service is indeed eagerly sought after, but it is for the unambitious and the indolent or incapable that it is chiefly desired. Those whose abilities do not warrant an expectation that they will succeed in the open professions, where they must encounter the competition of their contemporaries, and those whom indolence of temperament or physical infirmities unfit for active exertions, are placed in the Civil Service, where they may obtain an honourable livelihood with little labour and no risk."

It should now be carefully noted that the above is from an official Report, prepared by Sir Stafford Northcote and Sir Charles Trevelyan and submitted to Parliament - in 1853! We are indebted to Foreman D. T. PATTERSON, of East England, who brought the item to our notice.

~~TRANSFERS~~

THE FOLLOWING TRANSFERS have been notified to Headquarters:

District Officers R. D. PINCHIN from Research, Alice Holt Lodge, to Shrewsbury, N(W); F. C. WILKINS from Stepaside, S(W), to Narberth, S(W); D. J. COOPER from Woodchurch, SE(E), to Farnham, SE(E). Foresters W. ARNOTT from Bramshill, SE(E), to Andover, SE(E); T. N. BROWN from Wentwood, S(W), to Tintern, S(W); C. J. MACKIE from Crychan, S(W), to Hensol, S(W); E. G. HOLLOWELL from Coed Caerdydd, S(W), to Wentwood. Foremen A. NIKKIN from Charlton, SE(E), to Queen Elizabeth Forest, SE(E); W. T. O. REES from Talybont, S(W), to Coed Caerdydd; W. J. STEVENS from Margam, S(W), to Crychan.

Executive Officer G. G. HODGSON from Lyndhurst to Edinburgh. Clerical Officers C. A. H. BASSETT from Lyndhurst to Cardiff; D. J. COX from Lightmoor Depot to Parkend, Dean; A. TOWNEND from Research, Alice Holt Lodge, to York.

Newcomers are: Head Keeper J. HUMBY to New Forest. Clerk of Works H. REDFORD to N(W). Clerical Officers Miss J. BARLOW, A. PRSTELL, A. M. JEFFREY and J. R. PRICE to N(W); F. C. FRAAS to Research; J. E. CLARKE to SW(E); Miss P. E. DAVIES to D(W); E. CARR to D(S); A. E. BRADFIELD to New.

~~CONGRATULATIONS TO A~~
MOBILE MECHANIST

Mr. H. S. MARTIN, Mobile Mechanist covering the East Midlands area of the North West England Conservancy, is C.O. of the Mansfield (384) Squadron of the Air Training

Corps. He is to be warmly congratulated on the success of his squadron in winning the Corps' premier award, the Sir Alan Less Silver Rose Bowl, given to the most efficient squadron in the whole of Great Britain. But this fine achievement is not all, for the squadron has recently won another trophy - the B. V. Reynolds Cup, awarded to the most outstanding squadron in the Group.

~~TROUBLE ON THE BRIDGE~~
OR THE CONSIDERATE
CONTRACTOR

THE FOLLOWING letter was received by one of our Scottish Conservancies from the Director of a firm of haulage contractors. There is no need for closer identification; we assure you that this is just another case where truth is stranger than fiction.

"Dear Sir,

As you can see from the attached invoice, we had a spot of trouble when delivering a Bailey Bridge to your site. The lorry driver found that he could not get his vehicle turned on this side of the river and attempted to cross the wooden bridge that was in existence at the time. When halfway across the bridge the thing collapsed and the vehicle ended up in the river some ten feet below. We had to employ six men and two lorries to have the vehicle removed. Fortunately the vehicle was not seriously damaged, but we incurred considerable expense on the salvage operations. I understand that it was the intention of your Department to have the wooden bridge knocked down and removed the following day. I also understand that our efforts made this unnecessary as the bridge was completely destroyed when the lorry went through it.

In these circumstances we wondered if you would consider paying a proportion of our expenses and have enclosed our invoice for £4 4s. to which we trust you will give every attention.

Assuring you of our best attention at all times,

Yours faithfully, etc."

SEASONAL CELEBRATIONS - AND
A FILM SHOW

~~THERE is further news of seasonal celebrations.~~

Forester N. R. HARBURN tells us that to commemorate the establishment of the new forest "colony" at

Hallyburton, East Scotland Conservancy, a Coronation Avenue of trees was planted at Christmas by employees' wives and other members of their families. "To further celebrate the occasion," writes Forester Harburn, "a grand party was organised. A company of 40, which is a large gathering for this part of the world, assembled in the hostel, which had been transformed into a fairyland of colour and culinary delight. During the revels there arose the cry 'Listen!', and in the great hush there came a sound from the still, frosty night. From far away there came the strain of the bagpipes - then nearer, still nearer, until the swelling surge of 'Scotland the Brave' echoed and re-echoed. In the great exodus from the hall there was not a heart but stirred to the wondrous sight; for there, preceded by his piper, and wearing the red costume and the long white beard, and with the bottomless sack over his shoulder, was Santa. Later, in the hall, the children gathered round in a rapt circle and the Spirit of Christmas blessed us all."

The annual party held by the New Forest staff was staged at Northerwood House and was attended by about 130 people, including the Deputy Surveyor, Mr. E. WYNNE JONES, and Mrs. Wynne Jones, and Mrs. and Mrs. F. E. B. de UPHLUGH. Mr. V. G. WRIGHT was an energetic M.C.

The staff of the Aberystwyth office and their guests attended a film show arranged by the local entertainments committee. To do this high winds and dashing seas that swept across the promenade were braved, but the entertainment proved well worth while. The programme included "The Culbin Story"; which tells of the Commission's work in stabilising and planting sand-dunes on the Moray Firth, and a film made by a private firm on the great windblow in Scotland.

A dinner and dance arranged by the Headquarters Social Club, and held this month at the Pavilour's Arms, Westminster, proved such a success that it is hoped that similar events will be held annually. Members of the staff and their guests formed a company 80 or so strong and among those present were the Director General, Mr. A. H. GOSLING, and Mrs. Gosling; the Deputy Director General, SIR HENRI BERESFORD-PEIRSE, and Lady Beresford Peirse; the Secretary, Mr. H. A. TURNER and Mrs. Turner; and the Controller of Finance, Mr. CORMACK, and Mrs. Cormack.

BIRTH OF A DAUGHTER
daughter.

CONGRATULATIONS to District Officer P. OVERALL, Aberystwyth, and Mrs. Overall, on the birth of a

HUMOUR - UNCONSCIOUS AND
OTHERWISE

EXTRACT from a circular issued by another Department (needless to say!). "The unit will be able to advise the whole Service, including the Stationery Office, on the most up-to-date methods of reproduction and will help ensure that spare capacity in Departments is used to the best advantage a technical knowledge of reproduction processes is not essential, though some experience of reproduction work would be useful".

Here's your chance, Foresters! From the classified "ads." of a German forestry magazine comes the following: "An independent, healthy, 50-years old dressmaker desires to make the acquaintance of a steadfast, strong-willed, reliable Forester with a view to matrimony. Being very fond of nature, a Forester's lodge would be desirable."

Now for a few extracts from our own Departmental writings: "However strong and fragrant this case looks it is obvious that an approach must be made to the timber merchants before we can consider prosecution." "Staff for the Conservancy as a whole - technical and non-technical - has been tight during the year, but not unduly so."

Then there is the quotation from an Irish forestry journal: "Pinus contorta (Douglas) is an evergreen tree of moderate or small size, of conical outline with numerous branches." The following gem (shades of the author of "Plain Words") is taken from a letter to the Commission from another Department. "I offer apologies for this omission, which I can only account for by the thought that the desire to provide adequate facilities obliterated the realisation of necessity for the prior financial approval."

IF YOU DO SOMETHING, SEE SOMETHING, OR HEAR SOMETHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY, TELL
YOUR SL-SHER CORRESPONDENT. THERE IS A CORRESPONDENT IN EACH DIRECTORATE AND
CONSERVANCY OFFICE